

Sheffield

The area now occupied by the City of Sheffield has been inhabited since at least the late Upper Palaeolithic period, about 12,800 years ago. The earliest evidence of human occupation in the Sheffield area was found at Creswell Crags to the east of the city. In the Iron Age the area became the southernmost territory of the Pennine tribe called the Brigantes. It is this tribe who are thought to have constructed several hill forts in and around Sheffield.

Following the departure of the Romans, the Sheffield area may have been the southern part of the Celtic kingdom of Elmet, with the rivers Sheaf and Don forming part of the boundary between this kingdom and the kingdom of Mercia. Gradually, Anglian settlers pushed west from the kingdom of Deira. A Celtic presence within the Sheffield area is evidenced by two settlements called Wales and Waleswood close to Sheffield. The settlements that grew and merged to form Sheffield, however, date from the second half of the 1st millennium, and are of Anglo-Saxon and Danish origin.

In Anglo-Saxon times, the Sheffield area straddled the border between the kingdoms of Mercia and Northumbria. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle reports that King Eanred of Northumbria submitted to King Egbert of Wessex at the hamlet of Dore (now a suburb of Sheffield) in 829, a key event in the unification of the kingdom of England under the House of Wessex. After the Norman conquest, Sheffield Castle was built to protect the local settlements, and a small town developed that is the nucleus of the modern city.

By 1296, a market had been established at what is now known as Castle Square, and Sheffield subsequently grew into a small market town. In the 14th century, Sheffield was already noted for the production of knives, as mentioned in Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, and by the early 1600s it had become the main centre of cutlery manufacture in England outside of London, overseen by the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire.[From 1570 to 1584, Mary, Queen of Scots, was imprisoned in Sheffield Castle and Sheffield Manor.



During the 1740s, a form of the crucible steel process was discovered that allowed the manufacture of a better quality of steel than had previously been possible. In about the same period, a technique was developed for fusing a thin sheet of silver onto a copper ingot to produce silver plating, which

became widely known as Sheffield plate. These innovations spurred Sheffield's growth as an industrial town, but the loss of some important export markets led to a recession in the late 18th and early 19th century.

The resulting poor conditions culminated in a cholera epidemic that killed 402 people in 1832. The population of the town grew rapidly throughout the 19th century; increasing from 60,095 in 1801 to 451,195 by 1901. The town was incorporated as a borough in 1842 and was granted a city charter in 1893. The influx of people also led to demand for better water supplies, and a number of new reservoirs were constructed on the outskirts of the town. The collapse of the dam wall of one of these reservoirs in 1864 resulted in the Great Sheffield Flood, which killed 270 people and devastated large parts of the town.[19] The growing population led to the construction of many back-to-back dwellings that, along with severe pollution from the factories, inspired George Orwell in 1937 to write: "Sheffield, I suppose, could justly claim to be called the ugliest town in the Old World".

A recession in the 1930s was halted by increasing international tensions as the Second World War loomed; Sheffield's steel factories were set to work manufacturing weapons and ammunition for the war effort. As a result, the city became a target for bombing raids, the heaviest of which occurred on the nights of 12 and 15 December 1940, now known as the Sheffield Blitz. More than 660 lives were lost and many buildings destroyed.

In the 1950s and 1960s, many of the city's slums were demolished, and replaced with housing schemes such as the Park Hill flats. Large parts of the city centre were also cleared to make way for a new system of roads. Increased automation and competition from abroad resulted in the closure of many steel mills. The 1980s saw the worst of this run-down of Sheffield's industries, along with those of many other areas of the UK. The building of the Meadowhall shopping centre on the site of a former steelworks in 1990 was a mixed blessing, creating much needed jobs but hastening the decline of the city centre. Attempts to regenerate the city were kick-started when the city hosted the 1991 World Student Games, which saw the construction of new sporting facilities such as the Sheffield Arena, Don Valley Stadium, and the Ponds Forge complex.



Sheffield Super Tram

Sheffield is changing rapidly as new projects regenerate some of the more run-down parts of the city. One such, the Heart of the City Project, has initiated a number of public works in the city centre: the Peace Gardens were renovated in 1998, the Millennium Galleries opened in April 2001, the Winter Gardens were opened in May 2003, and a public space to link these two areas, the Millennium Square, was opened in May 2006. Additional developments included the remodelling of Sheaf Square, in front of the recently refurbished railway station. The new square contains The Cutting Edge, a sculpture designed by Si Applied Ltd and made from Sheffield steel. Sheffield was particularly hard-hit during the 2007 United Kingdom floods and the 2010 Big Freeze.



Winter Gardens

Sheffield has an international reputation for metallurgy and steel-making. Many innovations in these fields have been made in Sheffield, for example Benjamin Huntsman discovered the crucible technique in the 1740s at his workshop in Handsworth. This process was rendered obsolete in 1856 by Henry Bessemer's invention of the Bessemer converter. Thomas Boulsover invented Sheffield Plate (silver-plated copper) in the early 18th century. Stainless steel was invented by Harry Brearley in 1912, and the work of F. B. Pickering and T. Gladman throughout the 1960s, '70s, and '80s was fundamental to the development of modern high-strength low-alloy steels.



Forgemasters, founded in 1805, is the sole remaining independent steel works in the world and dominates the north east of Sheffield around the Lower Don Valley. The firm has a global reputation for producing the largest and most complex steel forgings and castings and is certified to produce critical nuclear components, with recent projects including the Royal Navy's Astute class submarines. The firm also has the capacity for pouring the largest single ingot (570 tonnes) in Europe and is currently in the process of expanding its capabilities.

Of course Sheffield is the meeting point of several branches of the family tree. The O'Haras who started their journey in County Mayo and arrived via Carlisle in South Lanarkshire, the Pridmores who originated from Rutland and Lincolnshire, the Machins of Essex and the McGradys of Cumberland.