On top of all the sights and sounds that have survived from the past in the city centre, there are countless fascinating stories to discover in what has been preserved at various museums across Sheffield — whether your interest lies in industrial, social or natural history.

Sheffield is filled with objects, signs and places with fascinating stories to tell of former lives – if you know where to look. Follow our hidden heritage trail to discover just some of these sites in the city centre, like the postbox that survived a suffragette’s bomb or the horse hospital turned birthplace of mushy peas.

As well as the treasures that the city’s preserved down its side streets and on its buildings, this tour also makes a stop at the many museums and collections that plot the history of Sheffield from its roots to the present day.

Look up, look around, listen. You never know what the past might be trying to tell you.

Don’t miss Heritage Open Days each September – expect tours of everywhere from the birthplace of stainless steel cutlery to a sprawling Victorian cemetery to historic pubs. And delve deeper into the city’s past with a visit to Sheffield Archives.

Words by Kat Hall, design by John Gelder.

Industrial history
Start with Kelham Island Museum for a comprehensive account of the people and the power behind Sheffield’s industrial progress. Be wowed by the mighty River Don Engine, and learn about little mesters, buffer girls and women of steel. (Pay a visit to the women of steel statue in front of the City Hall too, and look out for surviving signs of little masters in places like Arundel Street – these craftsmen tended to work in small workshops around courtyards, many of which have been converted into cafes, shops and galleries). The museum also houses the impressive Hawley Collection, containing over 100,000 items from the city’s toolmaking past. Head to the Metawork Collection at Millennium Gallery for more shiny things – from old knives, forks and tableware marked “Made in Sheffield” to a tureen shaped like a turtle, made for serving up soup to fancy Victorians. Step even further back in time at Shepherd Wheel, a grinding workshop that harnessed the power of the Porter Brook as early as the 16th century, and Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet, a unique and well-preserved 18th-century scythe-making works and collection of workers’ cottages.

Social history
Dating back to 1937, when it opened as Sheffield City Museum and Mappin Art Gallery, Weston Park Museum traces a timeline of Sheffield’s social history as well as leading visitors on expeditions into further flung parts of the world. Learn about the miners’ strike, Park Hill flats and the Great Sheffield Flood, before putting on a furry coat and exploring the Arctic with Snowy the polar bear. Head upfront from the city centre in one direction to Manor Lodge, a 16th century ruin surrounded by 20th century houses, most famous as the place that held Mary Queen of Scots prisoner; in another direction, up at Meersbrook Park, the timber-framed Bishop’s House offers more insight into 15th century Sheffield life. From its Norman bricks to its 1950s tower, Sheffield Cathedral is full of stories that reflect the evolution of the city, and has an array of interactive displays to help you uncover them. Seek out the Catholic St Marie’s Cathedral too, tucked away behind Fargate’s shops, it houses rare 15th century carvings of Christ. Meanwhile the National Emergency Services Museum will let you in on the origins of the name “bobbies” as well as allowing you to clamber into a bunch of old fire engines.

Natural history
Nowhere in Sheffield is so packed with curiosities of nature as the Alfred Denny Museum. Primate skeletons grin in glass cabinets, amphibians suspended in formaldehyde line the shelves, fossils fill chests of drawers, and a cross-sectioned dolphin sits on the window sill. Named after the University of Sheffield’s first professor of zoology, the museum dates back to 1870 but only opened to the public in 2012, with tours on the first Saturday of each month. On rotating display at Millennium Gallery, meanwhile, the Ruskin Collection owes its existence to the lofty social conviction of Victorian aesthete John Ruskin. In 1875 Ruskin opened a museum in a cottage in the suburb of Walkley with the aim of educating and inspiring Sheffield’s metalworkers by showing them patterns, colours, textures and sights of a wider world that they had no other way of accessing. The collection features colourful prints of exotic birds, glimmering minerals, botanical illustrations, and much more.

More info
Kelham Island Museum / Shepherd Wheel / Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet
sheffieldhistory.co.uk/joinupheritagesheffield.org.uk

Sheffield Cathedral
sheffieldcathedral.org

St Marie’s Cathedral
stmariecathedral.org

National Emergency Services Museum
emergencymuseum.org.uk

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National Emergency Services Museum
emergencymuseum.org.uk

Alfred Denny Museum
sheffield.ac.uk/alfred-denny-museum

Industrial history
Social history
Natural history
More info
Reminders of the past are scattered across Sheffield city centre. You might not notice them at first; they’re carved into the walls above high street chains. They’re marked into the columns that hold up concert halls. Some are tucked down quiet alleyways; others keep lookout from the rooftops of civic buildings.

**Police box**
Gang warfare was so rife in 1920s Sheffield that it earned the nickname ‘Little Chicago’. Chief constable Percy Sibbitt (who would go on to be a successful chairman of the New York Times) credited with bringing an end to the gangs, and one way he cracked down on them was by installing a network of 120 police boxes across the city – one of which still stands on Surrey Street. This green "Tardis" was used by officers to quickly report back to the station while on the beat and to quickly report back to the

**The Tory family’s carvings**
On first glance Sheffield’s high street appears fairly modern. Look a bit closer and you’ll find Samuel Pimlott, inventor of the Pimlott line, aimed at preventing unscrupulous traders from loading ships. In the Crucible theatre, a plaque marks the site of major sporting developments: the formation of Yorkshire Cricket Club, Ernest and Lane Cricket Ground. The Sheffield Potters Club’s new home, Paradise Square, has a couple – one celebrates John Wesley, a Methodist who preached here in 1779 to “the largest congregation he ever saw on a week day”, while another marks the former home of David Daniel Drew, a physician who helped to deliver Queen Victoria. As you stand on the steps of the Town Hall and if you look up to the rambler that campaigns for public access to the city’s surrounding hills and moorlands, and on International Women’s Day 2018 a plaque was installed at what was once a suffrage shop occupied by the Women’s Social and Political Union on Chapel Walk, opened in 1908 by Adela Pankhurst, Emmeline often forged daughter – if you head up to Broomhill you’ll also find a plaque in front of her former home on Marlborough Road.

**Plaques**
Plaques dot the city centre’s walls and pavements, reminding perceptive passersby of celebrated lives and moments of Sheffield past. Notable are those from Samuel Pimlott, inventor of the Pimlott line, aimed at preventing unscrupulous traders from loading ships. In the Crucible theatre, a plaque marks the site of major sporting developments: the formation of Yorkshire Cricket Club, Ernest and Lane Cricket Ground. The Sheffield Potters Club’s new home, Paradise Square, has a couple – one celebrates John Wesley, a Methodist who preached here in 1779 to “the largest congregation he ever saw on a week day”, while another marks the former home of David Daniel Drew, a physician who helped to deliver Queen Victoria. As you stand on the steps of the Town Hall and if you look up to the rambler that campaigns for public access to the city’s surrounding hills and moorlands, and on International Women’s Day 2018 a plaque was installed at what was once a suffrage shop occupied by the Women’s Social and Political Union on Chapel Walk, opened in 1908 by Adela Pankhurst, Emmeline often forged daughter – if you head up to Broomhill you’ll also find a plaque in front of her former home on Marlborough Road.

**The Old Queens Head**
The Old Queens Head on Pond Hill is a fine timber framed building dating from c1625 and is the oldest pub in the city. It’s early history is unclear, but the original name of ‘The Armstrong in the pond’ is a reference to the wetland that was a feature of the area around Pond Street. It was originally part of the estate of Sheffield Castle and the queen in its name is thought to Mary Queen of Scots.

**Paradise Square**
This corner of the city centre is often overlooked by a total of 120 police boxes across the city – one of which still stands on Surrey Street. This green "Tardis" was used by officers to quickly report back to the station while on the beat and to quickly report back to the

**Father and Daughter postboxes**
Next to the Town Hall on Surrey Street stand a smart family of postboxes: one dedicated to King George V, another to his daughter Queen Elizabeth II. In 1913, suffragette Molly Morris posted a bunch into George V’s to draw attention to the campaign for votes for women. A detective at the scene apparently turned to Molly and blamed it on "the London lot", finding it unimaginable that a nice young working class Sheffield woman like her would do this sort of thing.

**Sewer gas destructor lamps**
Potented in 1895 by JE Webb, sewer gas destructor lamps were designed to draw up the gases and germs that built up in Victorian sewers, burning away their stench and hazardous nature. The lamps were adopted around the country, but Sheffield, with its hilly terrain, and its natural habitat, had more than any other city. There are still 25 Webb lamps standing in Sheffield, some of which burnt to this day. Spot one near the junction of Eldon and West Street.

**A hospital for horses**
As you stand on Lady’s Bridge – the oldest bridge over the River Don in Sheffield, no less – look across to the matching Royal Exchange and Castle House Buildings overlooking the river. The history of this place is as colourful as its glazed brick facade. Built for a vet and breeder John Henry Bryars in 1899, it originally housed a horse hospital and dogs’ home with internal ramps resembling a multi-storey car park for the horse-drawn era. Sheffield’s famous steel-working elephant Lizzie slept in a stable here during the First World War, and in the 1930s it was the birthplace of musing peas when it became a factory for Batchelor’s.

**Two Vulcans**
Vulcan is the Roman god of fire, metalworking, and the forge. It’s no surprise, then, to find a statue of the god at the scene of the battle for votes for women.

**The 1 o'clock signal**
The first time you pass the Town Hall at 1am you may be startled to hear a siren. No, Sheffield is not on fire. The 1 o'clock signal dates back to 1894 and was originally linked to the Royal Observatory at Greenwich. Jewellers Horace Brown used it to mark the time that their watches were accurate – and that everyone knew it. Your only warning was the understated sign on the corner of the shop.