

## The Traditional Heritage Museum

The following PDF includes text from the archive of THM's website. For more information, please see <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/library/heritage/thm/museum>

### Introduction

The Museum forms part of the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition (NATCECT) at the University of Sheffield. NATCECT developed from the Survey of (English) Language and Folklore, initiated in 1964, and is now the principal national repository for material on all aspects of English language and cultural tradition. The Museum houses the Centre's material culture collection, complementing and extending the documentary information on file in the NATCECT archives. It is situated next to Endcliffe Methodist Church on Ecclesall Road (the A625 to Hathersage), about 300 yards east of the Hunter's Bar roundabout. It is housed in the Church's former Sunday School, built in 1928. The Museum and its collections are owned by the University of Sheffield. However, it is run entirely by volunteers, the day-to-day operation being the responsibility of Traditional Heritage, a supporting association of Friends.

Affectionately known as "Sheffield's secret museum", the Museum's success is dependent on visitors, sponsorships, and your support! All who share an interest in preserving our cultural heritage are invited to become members of Traditional Heritage, joining an enthusiastic group of Friends offering assistance to the Centre and the Museum. Traditional Heritage of course also welcomes individuals and organisations offering financial support, and/or advice, and expertise.

The primary aim of the Museum is to preserve and present an encapsulated historical record of life and work in the Sheffield area in the period 1850-1970, focusing particularly on local domestic life and the handcrafted trades. In the short term the Museum aims to conserve and document its collections, and to make them fully accessible for the benefit of users. In the longer term the intention is to improve, develop and extend the existing collections to provide a fuller and more detailed experience of traditional lifestyles and work practices of the period. This includes the augmentation of existing displays, as distinct from the acquisition of major new collections. This policy derives from the desire to present detailed displays in appropriate context. The Management Committee has embarked upon a major programme to extend and improve the systems and facilities of the Museum, and to promote it both to the local audience and to the wider community. The programme includes the implementation of the documentation plan, the upgrading and extension of current exhibitions and displays, the expansion of educational outreach, the construction of new storage and display facilities, the provision of appropriate environmental monitoring and control, and the development of new promotional initiatives.

The Museum's collections, assembled over some forty years, provide a unique picture of life and work in the city and the surrounding region in a period of dramatic and unprecedented change. They open a window on the past, giving fascinating insights into how people lived and plied their trades in years gone by. The collections are representative of typical local occupations and domestic scenes at various points during the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. Principal collections include:

- \* Pawnbroker's Shop
- \* World War II Air Raid Wardens' Post
- \* "Front Room" Corner Shop
- \* High Class Grocery and Coffee/Tea Merchant's Shop
- \* Basketmaker's
- \* Shoe- and Clog-Making
- \* Chemist's
- \* Optician's
- \* Horn Scalepressing Workshop
- \* Filemaking
- \* Buffing
- \* Knifegrinding

[http://librarysupport.shef.ac.uk/THM\\_archive.pdf](http://librarysupport.shef.ac.uk/THM_archive.pdf)

- \* Children's Toys and Games
- \* Early 20th Century Kitchen
- \* 1930s Front Room, Drawing Room, or Parlour
- \* Tool Merchant's Retail Shop
- \* Cutlery Works Office of G. Wostenholm
- \* Electrical Contractor's Shop
- \* Silversmith's and Engraver's Retail Shop
- \* Victorian/Early 20th Century Wash-house
- \* Early 20th Century Children's Nursery
- \* Muir Smith Puppet Collection

For details see the Brief Guide. The Museum also presents a continually changing sequence of smaller displays from its various other collections.

A separate gallery within the building, which doubles as a function room for conferences, courses, workshops, displays, and other events, features a permanent exhibition of material on local language, history, and tradition. It showcases the six principal fields in the teaching, research, archives, and publication programme of the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition. These are: language and communication; childlore; custom and belief; narrative; music, dance, and drama; material culture, work techniques, arts and crafts. The Museum has the unusual advantage of being able to draw on the substantial documentation of its principal material culture collections, and on information about the other five fields in the Centre's remit, deposited in NATCECT's library and archives. The University of Sheffield is the only institution in higher education in England that has established and maintained an integrated academic programme in these fields, which are an essential part of our cultural heritage.

Originally designed as a teaching and research resource for students and for professionals in the heritage industries, the Museum has been open to the public since 1985, and in 2002 achieved full Registration status under the national scheme for museums. Group visits, guided tours, and research facilities are available to all by prior booking. The Museum runs a very popular educational outreach programme for schools and for other educational and social institutions. This includes hands-on experience of artefacts and other materials in the collections, role-play such as shopkeeping, and participation in a Victorian washing day, opportunities for sketching and describing objects, and for focusing on earlier historical periods such as the Victorian era, the 1930s, World War II, housing and homes, local history, social change, and on specific aspects of Key Stages 1 and 2 and beyond in the National Curriculum. A designated learning resources area is available for visiting school groups. Discovery trunks, mystery objects, quizzes and other activities based on the collections and displays add to the fun and effectiveness of the learning experience. Teacher's packs and children's activity guides are also available. Members of the Museum staff give talks and presentations at schools and other venues, and themed educational display packs of artefacts are available for hire. The Museum shop offers a wide variety of souvenirs, traditional toys, publications, and other items for sale.

Open days are held regularly at the Museum on the last Saturday of each month, except December, and on Bank Holiday Mondays in the spring and autumn, from 10.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. Courses, conferences, dayschools, workshops, and exhibitions on a broad range of subjects are held throughout the year and are open to the public. The Gallery/Function Room, seating 50, is available for hire for educational, heritage, social, and other events, by arrangement. There is also a voluntary work experience programme for trainees in the heritage sector and for others interested in all aspects of museum work and in related fields.

The following pages offer an introduction to the Traditional Heritage Museum. This website offers an insight into some of the materials displayed at the Museum which have been collected over the last 40 years. It introduces a variety of themes, including the Sheffield trades, the Victorian era, the early twentieth century, and World War II. There are links to the Brief Guide to the Museum and to published articles about its collections and services.

## **FACILITIES**

[http://librarysupport.shef.ac.uk/THM\\_archive.pdf](http://librarysupport.shef.ac.uk/THM_archive.pdf)

All the exhibitions and displays at the Museum are available for viewing on Open Days and during pre-booked visits by organisations, groups, and individuals. Those collections not currently on display may be made accessible to researchers by prior arrangement. Facilities for handling artefacts, and for research, observational drawing, writing, and other activities, are provided both in the main exhibition hall and in the Exhibition Gallery/Function Room. This room, seating around 50, is adaptable to the requirements of users, and is equipped with tables, chairs, projectors, screen, VCR, and display boards. A kitchen is available for serving tea, coffee, and light refreshments, and there are facilities for visiting school parties and other groups to eat packed lunches on the premises. A ramp is available at the rear of the building for wheelchair access; the majority of the exhibitions and displays are located at ground floor level. On Open Days, assistance can be provided to wheelchair users, by alerting staff via a bell outside the front entrance.

## **EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH PROGRAMME**

The Museum offers a wideranging outreach programme for schools and other educational institutions.

A variety of activities is on offer for children to experience what life and work were like in the area in the period 1850-1970.

Themes and topics covered include:

- \* Change
- \* Then and now
- \* Old and new
- \* Houses and homes
- \* The Victorians
- \* World War II
- \* The 1930s and 1940s
- \* Local history

and other subjects, including those directly relevant to the National Curriculum.

**Play and games.** In addition to viewing the toys and games on display, children can try their hand at various traditional indoor games and activities. Weather permitting, those who stay at the Museum during lunchtime can enjoy traditional outdoor games in the yard at the rear of the building.

**Victorian washday.** The old-style washday is recreated in the Museum to give children hands-on experience of everything involved in this household chore in days gone by. Children also have the opportunity to dress in costumes of the period in this and other role-play during their visit.

**Local crafts and shopkeeping.** Children are given hands-on experience of the handcrafted trades and retail shops of the area, as featured in the Museum, including pre-decimal coinage, and traditional weights and measures. This again offers considerable scope for various kinds of role-play, dressing in costume, and learning about the old domestic routine and the everyday work in domestic service.

**Handling artefacts.** A wide range of artefacts and materials is available for children to handle, examine, and explore.

**Observational writing and drawing.** Young people are free to observe, write about, and draw material on display and also individual objects selected by them and/or their teachers. A discovery trunk is available, containing a variety of interesting items for children to investigate, discuss, write about, draw, or place in the appropriate period and context.

**Stories and songs.** An introduction to traditional stories and songs, including opportunities for group interaction and role-play.

**Local history and environmental studies.** For older children, a full day's visit could include the Victorian Trail round Sharrowvale and the Porter Valley, or visits to the Botanical Gardens and the General Cemetery nearby.

[http://librarysupport.shef.ac.uk/THM\\_archive.pdf](http://librarysupport.shef.ac.uk/THM_archive.pdf)

Visits to Schools. Visits to schools can be arranged, to introduce the Museum and its services, and/or to present workshops or talks on the Museum's collections and activities, and on storytelling and aspects of local history.

#### Additional support

Themed loan boxes. Several themed loan boxes are available for schools to hire. The themes include:

- \* Washday
- \* World War II
- \* Kitchen utensils and equipment
- \* Shops and shopping
- \* Toys and games of yesteryear
- \* General artefacts

Teaching Packs. Advice, suggestions, and ideas for arranging a successful school trip, linking activities to the National Curriculum.

Museum Guide. The Guide provides an overview of the Museum and introduces its exhibitions, displays, facilities, and services.

Children's Activity Guide. This illustrated Guide offers a variety of topics for exploration in the Museum, including suggestions for learning more about the material on display and how it relates to life and work in the past and present. Puzzles, quizzes, traditional rhymes and games are also featured.

### **A Brief Guide to the Museum**

Visitors enter the Museum via the public entrance on Ecclesall Road. A wide variety of exhibitions and displays may be seen in some two dozen locations throughout the building.

On entering the Museum, visitors can step back in time as they view the sequence of permanent exhibitions and displays:

- **Entrance Hall.** This area provides a general introduction to the Museum, and an overview exhibition which includes a display of items representative of the principal exhibits in the Museum as a whole. Panels of photographs illustrate the construction of the displays and the history of Sheffield, and there is a map of the main exhibitions presented in the Museum. The decorative tiles showing the initials of donors who contributed to the building of the original Sunday School in 1928 have been preserved in this area, the initials being set in gold on a blue background.
  - **Pawnbroker's Shop.** From the entrance hall visitors first pass through the 1930s pawnbroker's shop or "pop shop", which is crammed from floor to ceiling with a fascinating variety of items which were brought to pawn at "Uncle's" (as it was euphemistically called). In the days when wages were low and ready money was scarce, it was quite common for some household items, clothing etc. to find their way to the pawnbroker's on a Monday morning to provide cash for the rest of the week. These items would be redeemed for use at the weekend and the cycle would begin again the following Monday. The three brass balls often seen outside a pawnbroker's date back to the time when this form of moneylending was conducted by the descendants of the Italian Lombardy banking family on whose coat of arms they appear. Look around to see the wide range of items awaiting redemption, and note how collectively they have an air of genteel poverty about them. Unredeemed items were eventually offered for sale. People on low incomes used pawnbroker's shops quite regularly. Wives might take their husband's best suit to the shop on a Monday morning, and perhaps get as much as twenty to thirty five shillings (£1 - £1.75p) to help them through the week, and then redeem it on Friday or Saturday ready for their husband to wear again on Sunday. As Sunday was normally the only day the suit was worn, the husbands were often unaware that it had been pawned. Sometimes even engagement and wedding rings were pawned, to pay fuel bills or for other household necessities. The variety of items on display tells us a lot about the people who used the
- [http://librarysupport.shef.ac.uk/THM\\_archive.pdf](http://librarysupport.shef.ac.uk/THM_archive.pdf)

pawnbroker's shop. Some people would only pawn items which were valuable but not essential, such as watches or jewellery, and would regard such items as a good investment in that they could be pawned when times were bad. Some families, particularly in the 1930s Depression, were so poor that they had to pawn even essential items to provide ready cash for them just to get by. As you will see in the display, these included washing equipment, clothes, and everyday household goods. In extreme cases, people would go so far as to pawn the blankets and quilts from the beds in the morning and hope to redeem them in the evening.

- World War II Air Raid Wardens' Post. Leaving the pawnbroker's, don't miss the WWII ARP post. This is where the Air Raid wardens had their local headquarters. In this dimly lit corner we find the equipment for reporting air raids, and for fighting fires and dealing with other wartime emergencies of the time. There are stirrup pumps, buckets of water and of sand to help in putting out fires, and other essential equipment. The light would be very dim so that it could not be seen from outside in case an enemy pilot caught a glimpse of it and unloaded his bombs. From here the wardens were in telephone contact with a central control room, and could report local incidents or call for assistance. Sandbags were used for putting over stray incendiary bombs in the vicinity, and tape was put over windows, not only in the ARP post but also in people's homes, to minimise injuries from flying glass.

In World War II (1939-1945), air raid wardens had a very important role to play. They were often men who were over the age limit or not fit enough for joining the armed forces. Women also served as wardens. Among their many responsibilities, wardens would warn local people about impending air raids, either by using a siren or by using a bell or a large rattle, like the one on display. They made sure that people were in aid raid shelters – either communal ones, or smaller Anderson shelters dug in gardens, or Morrison table shelters, made of steel, indoors. During the blitzes in Sheffield on Thursday, December 12th and Sunday, December 15th, 1940, the wardens helped to put out some of the fires caused by incendiary bombs. In the display there is a long-handled device for scooping up small unexploded bombs of this type. Wardens dug people out of bombed houses, gave emergency first aid, and evacuated people from areas where bombs remained unexploded. Teams of wardens worked in shifts every night. They walked around the neighbourhood to check that there was a complete "blackout". Thick black curtains were put up at windows, and bright torches, streetlights, or car headlights were not allowed, making it more difficult for the bombers to identify their targets. Metal covers were fastened over headlamps, allowing only a narrow beam of light to show through a small rectangular slit. There is a blackout torch in the display which would have been carried by the wardens on their rounds. It is designed so that the light points only downwards. Wardens also had to call at every house to register who was living there, recording their next of kin in case of injury or death in an air raid. They made sure that everyone carried a gas mask, which was intended to protect the wearer against chemical attack. Nearby are posters and news reports from the period.

- Thackerays' "Front-room" Corner Shop. As we enter the main exhibition hall this shop is on the right. It was run by Florence and Victor Thackeray, and is typical of many such shops in the city which were located in the front rooms of terraced houses, often at the corner of the street. Usually run by the wives of working men, they provided extra income for the owners or tenants, while at the same time offering a wide selection of groceries and household essentials for sale. The shop stood on the lower corner of Upper Hanover Street, close to the site at the bottom of Leavygreave Road where the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language, as NATCECT was previously known, was based in the 1970s. When all the houses in this section of the road were demolished, the Thackerays kindly gave permission for the shop window, the counter, and all the fittings to be removed and donated to the Museum. This shop has been reconstructed from the original fittings, exactly as it was just before its closure. Over the years many other donors have helped the Museum to fill the display with hundreds of colourful items which would have been on sale in similar local shops in the first half of the twentieth century. In addition to the essential groceries, these "front-room" shops sold all the little things that were needed in the house: candles, reels of cotton, pot-menders, shoe polish and shoe protectors, soap powders, black lead for polishing stoves and fireplaces, and countless other items, many of which are on display here. Notice the door opening into the sitting room and kitchen at the back of the shop, through which Mr. and Mrs Thackeray would come to serve customers when they heard the bell ring as people entered the shop. Corner shops were very useful when people used to buy groceries and fresh food several times a week, before supermarkets and fridges allowed us to shop perhaps only once a week, because food could now be kept fresh in the fridge. The shops were also useful for those who could not afford to pay for what they bought during the week, but who purchased goods "on [http://librarysupport.shef.ac.uk/THM\\_archive.pdf](http://librarysupport.shef.ac.uk/THM_archive.pdf)

tick” or “on the slate”. They would pay off the “tick money” on Fridays, when the weekly pay packet was received. Corner shops also used an “order book” to list items ordered in advance, and these would then be delivered to the customer’s home, in the same way as many supermarkets do today.

- Pollard’s High Class Grocery and Coffee/Tea Merchants. This shop, to the left of Thackerays’, originally stood on the corner of West Street and Fitzwilliam Street, Sheffield, and the family firm still enjoys a high reputation, not least for the quality and variety of its coffees and teas, which are among its specialities. Above it is a replica of the sign “Glossop Road Market” which was located on the wall above the shop, and can still be seen on West Street today. Peter Pollard and his brother kept the shop until its close, and after this their retail business in Sheffield was concentrated in premises in Charles Street in the city centre, where it continues to this day. The display includes most of the fittings from the shop. The interior has a very unusual shape, and there is space for only a few customers at a time. Details about the shop are displayed on the exterior wall to the right of the door, and include newspaper photographs of the brothers serving customers in the shop shortly before its closure. Pollard’s shops have supplied high quality tea and coffee to restaurants, hotels, and teashops in the area, as well as to the public, for over a century. Local people remember the inviting aroma of freshly roasting coffee which pervaded the surrounding streets, and which no doubt enticed passers-by into the shop, in addition to the loyal band of regular customers.

- Basketmaker’s Shop. Opposite Thackerays’ is a reconstruction of a basketmaker’s workshop, trading under the name of E. Renwick, of Burgess Street, Sheffield. Most of the material here is from the Widdowson Family Collection, but also includes oak skeps and besoms made by members of the Fisher family from Holymoorside in Derbyshire. Basketmaking is an ancient craft which developed into a major industry in England. On the floor of the workshop is a board on which the basketmaker would sit to make the baskets, with a gas jet above it to provide light. The exhibits include a large cradle used by the children of successive generations of the family. There are baskets of many different types here, and Mr. H. D. Widdowson, the proprietor, made all kinds of baskets, from laundry hampers to the smaller items shown. One of these is a small square basket with a decorative handle incorporating a motif displaying ears of corn. The basket was used by a butler in an upper-class household to carry keys. Mr. Widdowson grew his own willows at Cottam, Sutton, and other villages near Retford, and the willows used in making the baskets could be barked or “stripped”, giving them a characteristic pale straw colour, or the bark could be left on, resulting in a dark brown colour. The willow could also be split and used for fine work such as covering the handles of metal jugs, coffee pots, teapots etc., to prevent users burning their hands when the containers had hot liquid in them. The tools of the trade, many of them made by Mr. Widdowson and his father, are displayed on the left, and further details about his life and work are seen in the photographs and information in the wall cabinet to the right of the shop. Among his many accomplishments was the propagation, at Norton Hall Nurseries, of the “Chantreyland’ viola, a unique apricot-coloured variety named after the renowned sculptor, Sir Francis Chantrey, who was born in Norton, and whose workshop stood in the grounds of the nurseries.

- Shoe- and Clog-making Shop. Next door to the basketmaker’s is Ben Bradley’s shoe- and clog-making shop which was originally located at 345 Shalesmoor, Sheffield – an area since redeveloped to incorporate the route of the Supertram. Here are his workbench, stool, and many of the materials he used, just as he left them when he vacated the premises. The tins of nails and sprigs are nailed to the bench to keep them secure while he worked. The shop features a selection of clogs, boots, shoes, and ice-skates, together with wooden clog soles and leather uppers awaiting assembly into footwear. The rectangular “butts” or “billets” of wood for clog soles used to be cut in such local areas as Tinsley Wood, and were then shaped with the three clogging irons seen hanging on the wall of the shop. A small blade was used to cut the rim around the sole, and leather uppers were then nailed onto it. Today, clogs are seen as having been typically northern and working-class, but their popularity was due to the fact that they were cheap, and ideal for industrial use, as they protected the feet and were comfortable and waterproof.

Also on view are samples of soles, heels, and other materials used for making and repairing boots and shoes. Around the walls are the old advertisements, dating mainly from the 1930s and 1940s. A well made pair of clogs could be bought for three shillings and threepence, and as low as two shillings and elevenpence, or even for one shilling and elevenpence if old boot uppers were used.

- Chemists' Shop. Opposite the entrance to Ben Bradley's shop is a 1930s style chemists' shop. The stock is mainly from Elliot and Chadwick, of Whittington Moor, Chesterfield. Few of the intriguing items on display would be sold by chemists today, but they reveal the fascinating variety of medicines, potions, pills, surgical aids and dressings which were in everyday use in the first half of the twentieth century. Unlike today's chemists' shops, the distinctive aroma of some of the old remedies still lingers here. Although many different kinds of branded medicines are on view, most common remedies would be made up on the spot. The ingredients of powders and pastes were ground up by the pestle in a mortar. Many of the bottles had glass stoppers to avoid corrosion by their contents, and some bottles were ridged to denote poison. Among the patent medicines on display are castor oil, syrup of figs, Beecham's pills, Epsom salts and other laxatives such as the Sheffield-made Carter's Little Liver Pills. Laxatives were given to children, often on Fridays, to "keep them regular". There were also numerous tonics and remedies claiming to "cure everything". Notice the old-style dentist's chair and equipment outside the shop.
- Optician's Shop. Next door is a reconstruction of a 1930s-style optician's shop run by Elliot and Chadwick as part of their chemists' business at Whittington Moor, as was common practice at that time. Note the old-style eye-testing equipment, and the tubular steel chair and desk, typical of the period. Also on display is a large range of spectacles, frames, and lenses from the early to mid-twentieth century. It is interesting to compare the material in the optician's shop, and the old-style dentist's chair and equipment, with the state-of-the-art accommodation, equipment, and technology in their present-day equivalents.
- Horn Scalepressing Workshop. This is probably the only example of a horn scalepressing shop on display in the country, and certainly in Sheffield. Horn scalepressing was the manufacture of knife handles from ox, cow, and buffalo horn, imported in bulk mainly from India, but also from South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and South America. Before the invention of plastics, horn was the main material used for the handles of knives. The round horn was cut down into a thin slice or "scale" which was then made malleable. The scale was cut to make the outer cover of, for example, a penknife or a pocket knife, and then riveted on to the metal section of the knife which encloses the blades. The penknife, of course, takes its name from its original use in cutting the ends of quill feathers to make pen nibs. Until the nineteenth century, cutlers made both knife handles and blades. The horn industry then became a separate craft. The ancient craft of horn scalepressing was originally a cottage industry. Each family member had a different job. One person would slice the horn thinly. Another family member would boil the scales of horn to make them soft. Another person would flatten the scales. After this, rivet holes were drilled with a bow-drill, a deceptively difficult piece of equipment to use. A metal breastplate was tied round the front of the worker's body, and the string of a bow was wrapped round a bradawl-like instrument called a parcer (from the French percer, to pierce). One end of the parcer was held steady by being slotted into one of the holes in the breastplate. The parcer and bow could drill two holes at the same time. The final task was to insert the body and blades of the pocket knife or penknife between the two finished pieces of horn. Any leftover horn was used for making such items as buttons and combs. Horn cutters would also make handles for walking sticks, umbrellas, riding crops, and tankards, and for bell pulls, sections of billiard cues, and horn lanterns. However, by the 1930s, plastics began to be used for knife handles and other items originally made of horn, so the industry largely died out. In the early nineteenth century, Sheffield's horn industry was based in what is now Cambridge Street. By 1850, there were 145 horn firms in Sheffield, employing over 1000 people. Demand for horn was insatiable. In 1880, in just three months, 350,000 tons of Cape ox and cow horn were imported, together with large amounts of ivory, obtained originally from mammoths frozen for centuries in the Siberian permafrost. The horn was transported from London and Liverpool docks where it was auctioned by the candle. A pin was inserted into a candle a short way down from the frame at the beginning of the bidding, and offers were taken by the auctioneer until the pin fell out of the candle, when the last bid accepted secured the lot under the hammer. Consignments of horn were first brought up to Sheffield by canal, then later by train. When a load came into Victoria Station, the road from there to St. Mary's Gate would be lined end to end with horse drays. As industrialisation progressed, what had originally been a cottage industry made the transition to mechanised production in workshops and factories. The machinery was driven by belts attached to a power source, as is seen in the fully functional workshop presented here.

The material exhibited, donated by Mr. K. W. Hawley, is from Hill Brothers of Broom Close, Sheffield. The photographs show what the works looked like, and this display forms part of what was originally a very long workshop with five windows. Also featured are samples of original horn and examples of its processing into scales and other finished objects.

[http://librarysupport.shef.ac.uk/THM\\_archive.pdf](http://librarysupport.shef.ac.uk/THM_archive.pdf)

- **Filemaking Workshop.** Filemaking was a very important industry in Sheffield before the 1950s but has since almost disappeared, and machine tools have taken over from files in many trades. An extraordinary range of files and rasps was made in the city before the last of the many local filemaking firms ceased trading in 1990. As was the case in the cutlery industry, the manufacture of files comprised a number of processes. The “blank” files were made in several mills in the Rivelin and Loxley valleys. Files were made out of high carbon steel and cropped to various lengths, depending on their size, usually from four to sixteen inches. Sitting on his swing chair, the file forger, a skilled and respected craftsman, shaped the rectangular blanks in the furnace until they were red hot. Then the forger started work on the blank file with the large goff hammer to “draw out” the “shoulder” and the “tang” (the thin, tapering end of the file), which would be inserted into a wooden handle. Once the tang had been drawn, the forger then slightly tapered the file at the opposite end. Speed was obviously of the essence in the forging process, because once the steel began to cool it quickly lost malleability, hence the usefulness of the forger’s fast-moving swing chair. As a consequence of the tanging and tapering process, the molecular structure of the mild steel file became unstable, and therefore at this stage the files were annealed to restore a uniform molecular structure. This involved placing them again into the furnace, fired for up to eight hours at 800 degrees centigrade. They were then left in the furnace for a further nine hours as it gradually cooled down before they were removed. After this, the files were smithed. Smithers stood at bench-mounted anvils, such as the one situated in front of the door in the workshop, and glanced down the file held at arm’s length to assess whether it was straight. If it was not, using his hammer, the smith would straighten the file. Following smithing, the files were taken to the grinding shop, where a smooth finish was applied to the file edges.

Until as late as the 1930s, the next process, filecutting, was largely undertaken by self-employed outworkers, many of whom were women working in their kitchens at home. The files were usually laid on a bed of soft lead on a small anvil or “stiddy” or even on the kitchen table. A hammer and chisel were then used to cut the teeth on each file. The soft lead protected the teeth of the file already cut once it was turned over. It was tedious and exacting work, paid at a rate of thirteen to the dozen. Children as young as seven, including girls, were taught the trade. Sometimes several hundred teeth per side were cut by hand. The sound of the fast-moving hammers striking the chisels led to filecutters being known as “nickerpeckers”. After the teeth had been cut, file hardeners collected the products and heated them in boiling lead before plunging them into salt water. Sometimes a mixture of black lead powder/graphite and water was applied beforehand to protect the files’ teeth. Finally, before being packaged, a form of quality control, known as “proving” was undertaken. The prover would pick a handful of files and would then let them fall onto a metal block. By the ring and tone of the files as they hit the block, the prover would be able to tell if any of them were faulty.

Many of those employed in this branch of the trade died prematurely of lead poisoning, although apparently the risks associated with filecutting were well known. In 1865, the first Medical Officer of Health for Sheffield recommended that workers should not touch their faces, should brush their hair frequently, rinse their mouths, and wash their hands thoroughly before eating. He also suggested that a room should be provided with running water, protective clothing should be worn, and children should not start such work so young. With the later mechanisation of the filecutting process, many of these precautions became less necessary.

The bed of lead on top of the anvil, on which the files were placed to be cut, was held down by a leather strap attached to a stirrup, through which the filecutter would put his foot. This workshop includes an ancient filemaker’s stone anvil on which files were cut by hand. There is a forge for heating the files, and a large goff hammer on the left of the forge which stamped out the shoulder and the tang. A large collection of filemaker’s tongs, used for inserting files into the forge, is also displayed. Most of this material came from the filemaking works of Horton Brothers, formerly Austin and Dodson, of Love Street, Sheffield. The display also includes examples of the large early magnets made by H. Shaw and Son, also located on Love Street. This firm, founded in 1774, specialised in making magnets and compass needles. Steel was magnetised by the old “stroke method”, by which it was stroked against a large compound magnet such as those seen here. In 1954, Ernest Horton Sr. acquired the business to add to that of the family’s filemaking works. His son, Ernest F. Horton, kindly donated the representative sample of artefacts from both industries now on display.

- **Buffing.** On the exterior side wall of the filemaking shop is a display illustrating the process of buffing – the polishing of knife blades, forks, spoons, and other domestic utensils, using wheels covered with leather or cloth. The word “buffing” is derived from the French *buffle* meaning buffalo – the leather from this animal being originally used for covering the wheel. The display includes a selection of buffing wheels made by James Farrer and Sons of Division Street, Sheffield. The firm made and repaired buffing wheels and grinding wheels for sharpening the blades of knives for over a century, before closing in 1970. Buffing was an important part of the Sheffield cutlery, holloware, and tableware trades, providing the final polish given to eating utensils made of steel, and also silverware items, before packing. A series of brush-wheels of graduated softness was used to smooth and shine individual items. Buffing was very much “women’s work”, being almost exclusively their preserve, especially in the cutlery industry. They protected themselves and their clothing from the fine dust and the oil generated in the process by covering themselves with brown paper from head to toe. Their brown paper aprons were known as “buff-brats”. These “diamonds in brown paper”, as the women were called, gained a fierce reputation for their colourful language, and were not renowned for their social graces! The “buffer girls” worked hard and took pride in their work. They were fairly well paid for women workers. It was a dangerous job and many buffer girls unfortunately suffered serious accidents. They were well-known for living life to the full – dancing, drinking and singing when they got the chance. They had a reputation for being tough and outspoken but good-hearted. They were also famous for marching down the street arm-in-arm in large numbers.

Here we find information on the firm of James Farrer and Sons, including framed photographs of senior family members and a signboard from a cart or early lorry. An interesting item is the brass plate which originally directed visitors to the firm’s registered office, and which has been polished so vigorously that the lettering on it has almost disappeared!

- **Knifegrinding.** Directly opposite the buffing display is a reconstruction of the “hull” or workshop in which knives and edge tools were sharpened by grinding on a wheel. Grinding was essential for all forged blades, not only to remove black “scale” – a coating of iron oxide on a forging – but also, of course, to give them the necessary sharp edge. As the knifegrinders sharpened and smoothed knives, scythes, files, scissors, and other items, they sat straddled on the wooden “horsing”, a saddle-shaped block of wood, and bent forward to grind blades on the wheel. The grindstone sat in a trough, or “trow”, which was filled with water, during some of the grinding processes. At other times grinding was done on a dry wheel, which inevitably created a lot of dust. Power to rotate the wheel was supplied by the driving belt, turned by the wooden drum on the far left. Long periods of sitting like this would often make grinders bow-legged. The “swarf catcher” or “splat board” in front of the wheel caught the grit, dust and metal (“swarf”) created by the grinding process. A lot of this dangerous waste material was also inhaled by the grinders, especially if the wheel was being used when it was dry. This gave rise to fatal lung diseases at an early age, and grinders were said to be old at the age of thirty or forty.

Grinding was originally an occupation in rural smallholdings, and grinding wheels were powered by fast-flowing rivers and streams. The Porter Brook in Sheffield once had many thriving water-powered grinding shops along its banks. The Shepherd’s Wheel in Endcliffe Park is a surviving example of these. Grinders in these small workshops were renowned for their independence. Steam-powered grinding wheels were invented in 1786, and by 1850 steam had superseded water power. Grinders moved into the centre of Sheffield and hired steam-powered workrooms called “hulls”. Working conditions deteriorated, and grinders lost both their health and their independence.

The grinding wheel in this display came from a firm at the top of St. Philip’s Road, Sheffield, and is fully operational. The large wooden-slatted drum-shaped wheel which drives the belt that turns the grinding wheel was restored by members of the team of volunteers at the Museum under the direction of Mr. K. W. Hawley. A selection of grindstones and anvils is on view in front of the workshop. Photographs depicting grinders at work can be seen below the display of buffing on the wall of the filemaking shop opposite.

- **Children’s Toys and Games.** The Museum particularly welcomes children and young people. Visits from and to schools are central to our educational outreach programme. The exhibition of children’s toys and games is an essential part of this programme, and is a very popular attraction for children, and indeed for many adults! The toys and games enjoyed by children in bygone days provide a revealing contrast with their modern equivalents such as computer games. During a recent Open Day at the Museum, two young girls who were looking at the toys asked their parents what these were – amply illustrating the great

[http://librarysupport.shef.ac.uk/THM\\_archive.pdf](http://librarysupport.shef.ac.uk/THM_archive.pdf)

changes that have taken place in recent years. Nowadays, children often have to be introduced to many of the items on display, and shown how the games were played. The exhibition offers a fascinating glimpse of the variety and ingenuity of old toys and pastimes: dolls, dolls' houses, the toy cars, boats, planes, animals, and soldiers of yesteryear, building bricks and blocks, Meccano, whips and tops, marbles, yo-yos, skipping ropes, gyroscopes, ball and cup, and all kinds of board games such as snakes and ladders, ludo, and many more. Some of these items are of course still available in a more modern form today, but they differ in many ways from the much older toys and games on display.

- **Learning Resources Area.** An open area in front of the Children's Toys and Games exhibition is equipped with tables and chairs, and a wide range of resources for schoolchildren and other visitors to use. Information about the Museum and its various exhibits and collections is available here. Visiting groups and individuals can examine and handle artefacts, write about, draw, paint, or research items, topics, or periods featured in the Museum, and participate in various kinds of activity, including role-play and hands-on experience of specific objects of interest. A "discovery trunk" containing a number of intriguing and unlabelled items representative of various historical periods, themes, crafts, industries, and other specific topics is available to explore. An activity guide and a series of quizzes have been designed to assist children in their investigation of the Museum and its collections.

Also in this area is the

- **Museum Shop.** The shop offers a wide variety of goods for sale. These include publications on English language, traditions and local history, as well as souvenirs, novelties, postcards, greetings cards, broadsheets and other paper ephemera, writing and drawing materials, traditional toys, games, and pastimes. The Museum Guide and general information about the Museum are also available here.

Stairs from the Learning Resources Area to the mezzanine level lead to the:

- **Early 20th Century Kitchen.** This is typical of the kitchen of local "back-to-back" houses of the period, with its Yorkshire range for both heating and cooking, and the characteristic everyday household items and utensils in a room where families spent most of their time at home. This type of house, built as part of a row, and sharing its rear wall with another house in the row directly behind, was intended to provide basic accommodation for working class families, and two adults and several children would have lived, cooked, eaten and washed in this tiny space. Before the days of central heating, which we now take for granted, the kitchen was the only room in the house which was warm when the weather was cold. When someone in the house wanted to have a bath, the galvanised steel bath hanging on the wall outside was brought indoors, put in front of the kitchen range, and filled with water from the coal-fired copper or "set pot" or from the small boiler heated by the fire in the Yorkshire range, or just from a kettle. Toilet arrangements were confined to the "privy" or "closet" down the yard, augmented at night by the chamber pot or "gazunder" as it was usually known. Often, the only hot water came from heating a kettle on the fire, and most of the cooking was done on the fire or in the oven of the range. This family also had the additional luxury of a gas ring, together with electric lighting and a single plug socket. The building of back-to-back houses was discontinued in the 1880s but many still remained until the slum clearances of the 1960s.

- **1930s Front Room, Drawing Room, or Parlour.** Several rungs up the social ladder is this re-creation of the drawing room or parlour – known locally as "t' front room" or just "the room" – in a more affluent household. These rooms were only rarely used except maybe on Sundays or when the family had "company", and in consequence always had a damp chill to them. If the doctor or minister of religion called, they might well be invited into this room. It was used on festive occasions such as Christmas, but also when someone died and the coffin remained in the house for a short time before being carried out through the front door on its funeral journey. Although the house itself would be older, the room is presented as it might have been in the mid-1930s when many people were able to afford a little more comfort – hence the wireless set and Gilbert wind-up gramophone (made in Sheffield and still in working order). The elaborate overmantel, typical of such rooms at the time, dates from around 1884 – a copy of the Weekly Dispatch dated Jan. 13, 1884, was found under the mirror of the overmantel, where it had been used as packing during manufacture. Note also the red plush tablecloth, red plush being the dominant fabric for heavy cloths and curtains from Victorian times until the 1930s. A harmonium or piano was also a distinctive feature

of these rooms, together with numerous ornaments, and the characteristic potted plant behind the window.

Retracing our steps downstairs we find a replica of the display window at the front of the

- Tool Merchant's Retail Shop. This display represents one of the front windows of K. W. Hawley's well-known shop originally situated on Earl Street, off the Moor, Sheffield, where he sold a wide variety of hand tools and machine tools until his retirement in the early 1990s. Over a lifetime of experience in the trade, Ken Hawley has gathered together a unique and amazingly comprehensive collection of tools, and especially of those made and used in Sheffield. Most of the estimated 350,000 items in the Hawley Collection are housed in a building named after him at the University of Sheffield. The rest are stored in two large containers nearby. A trust has been formed to look after the Collection, and the material includes some 7000 catalogues which are essential in piecing together the history of the numerous crafts and trades involved in manufacturing the tools for which Sheffield became famous worldwide. For half a century Ken Hawley has also documented this history, by observing and filming craftsmen at work, becoming an internationally recognised authority on the subject in the process. The skills necessary in many of the old trades such as the manufacture of saws, open or "cut-throat" razors, scissors, gimlets, spokeshaves, and wire gauges have been largely lost in the city today, and Ken Hawley's overriding concern is to ensure that knowledge of these skills is passed on to future generations. His dedication to the huge task of preserving the artefacts and creating an enduring record of their manufacturing processes for posterity deserves particular admiration and respect.

The display presented here can only hint at the full extent of the Collection as a whole. All the items have been kindly loaned by Mr. Hawley, and he himself set up the display much as it would have been in the window of his Earl Street shop.

- On the wall opposite the Tool Merchant's Retail Shop are displays of cutlery made by J. Green and Sons of 82, Backfields, Wellington Street, Sheffield, which was one of hundreds of small cutlery manufacturing firms in the city before the terminal decline of the industry in the second half of the twentieth century. The firm was one of the earliest to specialise in the manufacture of stainless steel knives, which freed users from the chore of cleaning knife blades made before the invention of stainless steel.
- Alongside is a representative sample of glassware and other items from the well known Sheffield silversmiths, Roberts and Belk, originally located at Furnival Works, Furnival Gate, before the redevelopment of that part of the city in the 1980s. The firm made silver accessories and embellishments for a variety of glass ornaments, vases, and other domestic items, as well as many other kinds of silverware.

Double doors from this area lead to the

- Exhibition Gallery/Function Room. This houses a permanent exhibition of material on the history, language, and traditions of the Sheffield region and beyond. It provides a showcase for the extensive programme of teaching, research, archives, and publication in English language and cultural tradition at the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition at the University of Sheffield, of which the Museum is a part. The exhibition covers the six principal categories in the Centre's academic programme: language; childlore; custom and belief; narrative; music, dance, and drama; and material culture, work techniques, arts and crafts. Aspects of local and oral history are also covered in the exhibition. On Open Days, a series of temporary and visiting exhibitions, displays, demonstrations, and videos of local crafts and trades is presented in the gallery.

This room, seating some fifty, is also used for conferences, courses, dayschools, workshops, meetings, and a variety of other functions such as craft fairs, recitals, and social events. Local societies hold their meetings in the gallery, which is available for hire. A kitchen and toilet facilities are adjacent.

Returning from the Exhibition Gallery/Function Room to the Main Hall, and resuming our tour of the principal exhibits, our first port of call is the

- Cutlery Works Office of G. Wostenholm. Most of the material displayed here came from the Washington Works of George Wostenholm which was on the corner of Fitzwilliam Street and Wellington Street, Sheffield. Washington Works was originally built in 1793 as a “tenement factory” – a precursor of modern factories. The building was designed to accommodate a large number of individual independent craftsmen who rented space in these large purpose-built premises. When material was salvaged from the derelict building in 1973 it was noticed that on the top floor there was a long row of small windows so that each workbench would have natural light, which was a rarity in the late eighteenth century when windows in workshops were less common. However, the idea of the “tenement factory” proved to be less successful than envisaged, as local craftsmen had not yet accepted the idea of large numbers working under one roof rather than individually as independent “little mesters”. Nevertheless, when George Wostenholm bought the works in 1848, the idea had begun to be accepted. At first the craftsmen still rented space, but eventually up to 400 people worked there and the firm exported goods all over the world, particularly to America. Note the trademark IXL (I excel) by which the firm became internationally renowned.

George Wostenholm inherited his family firm in 1833, and moved from Rockingham Street to the large Washington Works because of the firm’s growing success. Within the works, which was a warren of passages and busy, dirty little rooms, many craftsmen laboured in separate workshops, but all sold their work to Wostenholm. He was generally thought of as a good master, but he demanded high standards. However, he was also infamous for his rule of “fourteen to the dozen” – paying for a dozen items, but demanding fourteen items for the price. Trade with North America became the most important part of his business. The “Bowie” knife, designed by the American frontiersman James Bowie, was one of Wostenholm’s most famous products, and an IXL knife was found on Bowie after his death at the Alamo.

There were two offices in the building in the late twentieth century: the directors’ office on the ground floor immediately inside the main entrance, and the general works office towards the rear of the building. The unusual bow-fronted glass display case on view here was rescued from the directors’ office. The mahogany table, Roneo duplicating machine, and large roll-topped desk came from the general office. The desk is unusual not least because it was made in Washington DC in the USA, linking that city and George Wostenholm’s business interests in North America with Washington Works itself. Notice also the small portable typewriter which has a pre-QWERTY keyboard and a revolving cylindrical printing mechanism, which prefigures the IBM Selectric machines of the late twentieth century, soon superseded by the advent of the computer. Washington Works was demolished in 1978, but the Washington public house nearby incorporated part of the stone name tablet of the Works in its signboard.

Next door to Wostenholm’s office is the

- Electrical Contractor’s Shop. Established in the 1920s by Mr. Albert Holmes, this electrical contractor’s business was located at 6, Meadowhead, Sheffield, in a row of retail shops. The business closed in the 1980s, and although Mr. Holmes and his staff were primarily general electrical contractors they were pioneers of early radio, and later were very active in television rental and the retailing of electrical goods. Most of the stock and other material comes from the firm’s retail shop and workshop, and appears here much as it was in the premises on the day of its closure. It gives an intriguing insight into the changes and developments in both the technology and the design of radios, televisions, and a variety of other electrical appliances in the mid- and later twentieth century.

Moving a little further along this side of the Main Hall we come to

- Lecleres’ Silversmith’s and Engraver’s Shop. This is an accurate reconstruction of the retail shop of the Leclere family, of Howard Street, Sheffield, opposite what is now the main campus of Sheffield Hallam University. The founder of the business, Mr. Henri Leclere, came to the city from Paris in 1861, and the firm quickly established a high reputation in both silversmithing and engraving. The Lecleres were master engravers, and successive generations of the family were much in demand for supplying fine work to many of the aristocratic families and embassies in Britain and Continental Europe. They were particularly renowned for being able to reproduce any engraving design so accurately that it was indistinguishable from the original. As silversmiths, they also produced cutlery, tableware, trophies, presentation caskets and numerous other items, as well as repairing silverware, and replating worn items, drawing on their renowned skills and expertise in these highly specialised trades. The Museum’s collections also include the contents of [http://librarysupport.shef.ac.uk/THM\\_archive.pdf](http://librarysupport.shef.ac.uk/THM_archive.pdf)

Lecleres' workshop, which was situated above the retail shop. Photographs of the workshop are on display here. These include a workbench, cabinets and chests of drawers, and a set of large brass scales and weights for weighing silver. The weights can be seen in the cabinet on the left side of the retail shop.

As they were highly skilled craftsmen, silver engravers were well paid. In a complex series of processes, they inked the design onto the silver, and then varnished it so that the design stood up in ridges. The ink was then removed with turpentine, leaving the design bare. The varnished areas were then covered with a protective coating while the design was acid etched. After etching, the design was "brought up", with shaped tools and soft pads. This latter final task was undertaken by the "buffer girls".

The display includes all the original showcases, fixtures and fittings from the Howard Street shop, together with a wide variety of cutlery, silverware, and other items of tableware, and samples of engravings and engraving designs for which the firm was justly famous. The manufacture and engraving of fish knives and fish servers was one of Lecleres' specialities.

Moving on towards the exit the final three exhibits are:

- **Victorian/Early Twentieth Century Wash-house.** Before the invention of modern washing-machines and other labour-saving devices, and the advent of gas and electricity in the home, washing was an arduous and time-consuming regular task in every household. The weekly routine of housework used to be quite predictable, various essential chores typically being undertaken on specific days. For example, Fridays were often reserved for cleaning the house, and for blackleading the Yorkshire range, although some people cleaned on Wednesdays and Thursdays. At least two days each week would be set aside for baking. Washing was traditionally done in the kitchen on a Monday, and usually took up the whole of the day. Early in the morning the fire under the copper, or "set-pot" as it was known locally, would be lit to heat up the water in which the washing was boiled. Many items would be washed in a washtub – locally called a "dolly-tub", using a wooden "dolly-peg" or "dolly-stick", a cumbersome device which was turned to and fro in semi-circular movements in the tub. A "posser" or "posher" was used to press the washing up and down in the tub, and a "rubbing board" was used to help to clean the washing. Household soap, sometimes grated into flakes, was used as a cleaning agent, while washing soda and "blue bag" helped to keep sheets and other uncoloured fabrics white. After washing, the clothes, household linens, and fabrics would be rinsed. They were then passed through a hand-operated mangle to remove as much water as possible before being hung to dry, either outdoors on a washing line or indoors on a clothes-horse or a wooden rack hoisted up close to the kitchen ceiling. Once dry or damp-dry, the items were then ironed, using heavy flat irons heated on the hob or bars of the Yorkshire range. How times have changed!
- **Early Twentieth Century Children's Nursery.** Here we see something of how infants and very young children were looked after a century or so ago. The wooden high chair, the cradle and other fixtures and fittings in the rooms where young children ate, slept, and played not only reveal how the child's world has changed but also remind us of our own childhood days in more recent times. In the past, children were brought up in comparatively basic surroundings, often with only the simplest of aids, equipment, toys, and pastimes. This glimpse of early childhood and its environment in former times contrasts markedly with our current child-rearing practices, and with the often lavishly furnished and equipped bedrooms enjoyed by children today.
- **Muir Smith Puppet Collection.** This final exhibition on our tour of the Museum gives visitors an opportunity to see a representative sample of material in the collection of puppets, marionettes, and masks made by Dr. James Muir Smith and his wife, Edith, of Northwich, Cheshire. This remarkable and unique collection adds a further dimension to the research and performance of traditional drama in England, which from the outset has been a major focus of attention at the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition. The collection includes around a hundred marionettes, many of very elaborate construction, along with numerous hand puppets, the original miniature theatre in which Dr. Muir Smith presented his puppet shows, and a number of masks and accessories which he made for adult theatrical performances. James Muir Smith made his first puppet for his son in 1934, and over the years refined his craft to make dozens of marionettes for every conceivable show: pantomime characters, singers, dancers, circus performers, and fairytale characters. Each puppet began as a carefully designed drawing. Each limb was skilfully carved, with

joints precisely engineered to mimic anatomical movement. The carving and paintwork were so effective that under the magic of the lighting in the miniature theatre the features seemed to come alive.