

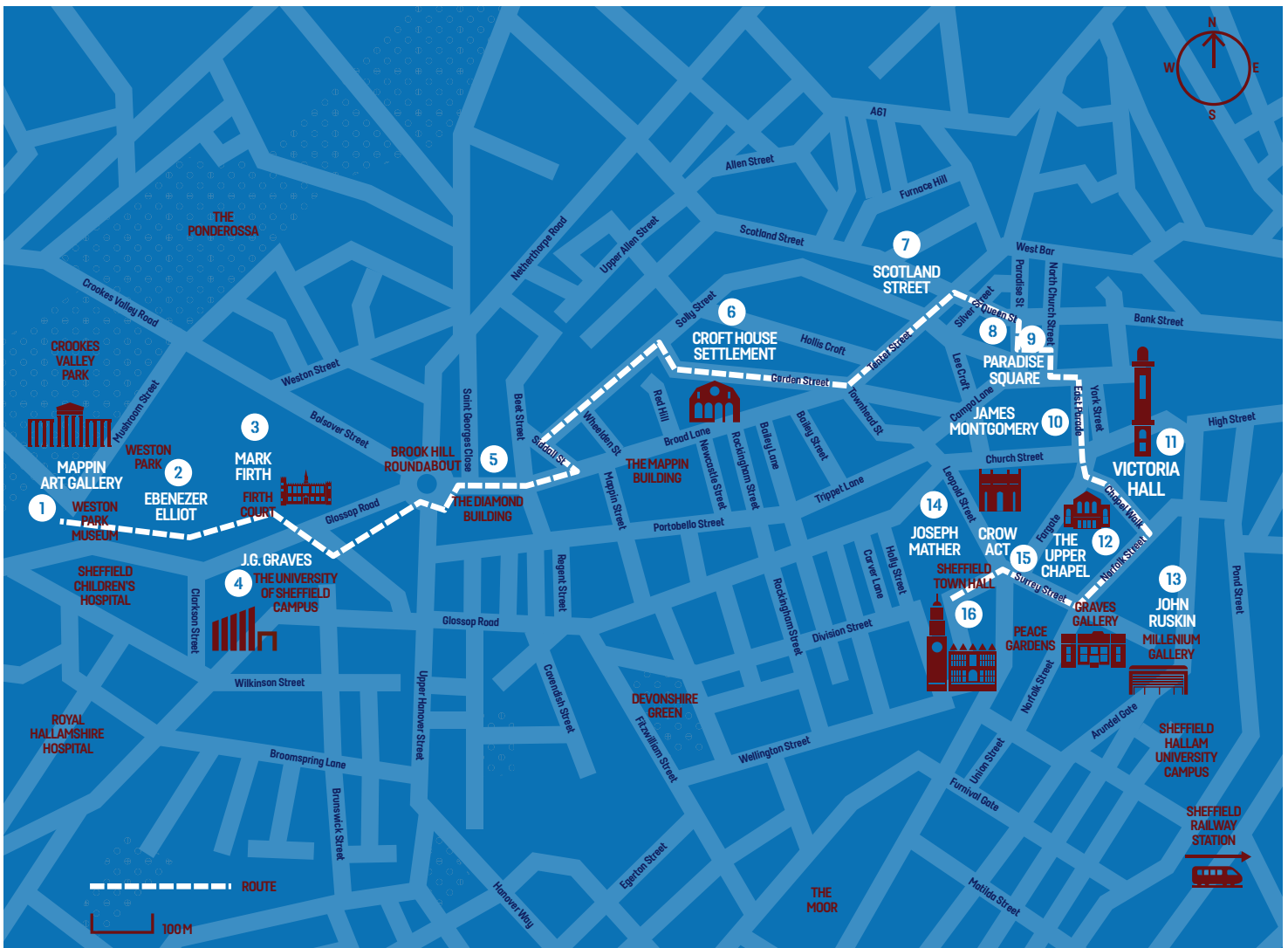
SHEFFIELD RADICALS WALK

A map & guide that walks you through Sheffield's radical history

Sheffield has a proud history of radical ideas. Over the last three hundred years, the men and women of this city have come together to try to change the world over and over again: from penning ballads on the cost of bread, to setting up revolutionary cafes; from demanding the right to roam in the land that surrounds the city, to donating land to the city itself.

This short walk, from Weston Park Museum to the Town Hall, aims to introduce you to just some of the individuals, groups and causes that have grown up within our hills. Some are familiar, some are forgotten; some were revolutionary, others were slow and steady; some were successful (eventually) whilst some ended in abject failure. But all are testament to a simple fact: that this small city has seen its fair share of big ideas.





Directions

- Start at Weston Park and pass Weston Park Museum (1).
- Walk down through the park, passing the war memorial on your right, and on to the Elliot monument on your left (2), which celebrates Ebenezer Elliot.
- Exit the park through the gates on your right, then turn left and walk down past Firth Court. At the entrance to Firth Court, you'll see a plaque to (3) Mark Firth.
- Continue forward down the steps. Walk under the underpass, and keep going straightforward, down the winding path next to the students' union. On the left of the door facing you, you'll find a plaque to (4) J.G. Graves.
- Retrace your steps along the path to the underpass. Turn right up the slope, then walk downhill, to Brook Hill roundabout. Turn right to the pedestrian crossing, cross the dual carriageway, then on the other side, turn left, and carry on around the shiny Jessop West university building. Opposite you, you'll see Noodlesta restaurant, which was the site of (5) Butler's Cafe.
- Keep walking down Broad Lane, past the 'Diamond' building, and over the pedestrian crossing at St George's Terrace. At the next crossing, cross the road. Keep going down hill, then take the next left into Siddall Street, and immediately right onto Solly Street. Walk downhill until you see Garden Street on your right. Climb to the crest of this hill, then follow the street down again. Towards the bottom, on your left, you'll find (6) Croft House.
- At the bottom of the hill, turn left down to Tenter Street and over Hollis Croft to the pedestrian crossing. Cross over the road, then keep heading down hill. When you reach Queen Street, stop. On the other side of the road, you'll see Scotland Street, the site of one of Sheffield's most radical cafes. This was the (7) Commonwealth Café.
- Turn round and head along Queen Street. The Democratic Temperance Hotel, which was the venue for the inaugural meeting of the (8) Sheffield Women's Political Association once stood at no.33, which unfortunately no longer exists.
- Continue along Queen Street, over Silver Street and then turn right up the cobbled hill of Paradise Street into (9) Paradise Square.
- Turn left through the gennel called Wheats Lane, onto North Church Street. Cross the road and head diagonally up St Peter's Close. Continue through the archway onto Campo Lane. Turn right, cross the road, and walk up East Parade, where you'll find the statue of (10) James Montgomery.
- Cross the tramlines and Church Street, and head slightly to the right, down the narrow Chapel Walk, which leads to Norfolk Street. On the left is (11) Victoria Hall.
- Turn right and walk up Norfolk Street, passing on your right the (12) Upper Chapel.
- On reaching Surrey Street, opposite the Central Library you will see the Millennium Galleries which are home to part of the collection dedicated to (13) John Ruskin.
- Turn right along Surrey Street, and walk to the top end of Fargate. In front of the present Town Hall, at the top of pedestrianised Fargate, stop to consider (14) Joseph Mather.
- The Town Hall was the location of (15) The Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire.
- On the left of the town hall entrance is a commemorative plaque for those who campaigned for access to the countryside, leading to the (16) Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000).



THE CROOKESMOOR RIOTS

Though the walk begins in Weston Park, particular mention should be made of nearby Crookesmoor. In the late 1700s, the area was an actual moor, surrounding the then village of Crookes, which anyone could use. The 1779 Ecclesall Enclosure Act led to this common land being enclosed – literally fenced off and transferred to private ownership. Crookesmoor became the property of landowners such as the Duke of Norfolk, as well as local bigwigs such as the Gell, Spooner and Hoole families (whose names you'll find on street signs in the area today). The enclosure led to riots in 1791, in which locals drove officials off the land, and burnt down the property of the families who were being gifted the moor. The riots only ceased when soldiers were brought in.

1

MAPPIN ART GALLERY

Before this museum was redeveloped as Weston Park Museum, it was also home to the Mappin Art Gallery (1887 – 2006). The gallery and the works inside it were bequeathed to the City of Sheffield by John Newton Mappin, who was a brewer, art collector and grouse shooter.

2

EBENEZER ELLIOT

Ebenezer Elliott (1781 – 1849) was born in Masborough, across the River Don from Rotherham. He was the son of an ironmonger and foundry owner, and became a steel merchant in his own right when he moved to Sheffield in 1819. At the same time, however, Elliot was writing radical poetry, taking aim at the conditions of his fellow man. Elliot is best remembered as 'The Corn Law Rhymer', for his tirades against the laws that were keeping the price

of bread artificially high. One of his verses even ends with 'God save the People', as a socialist riposte to the national anthem. Elliot was also a countryside rambler, and was concerned about the effects of enclosure. This statue, created in 1854 by Neville Burnard, depicts Elliot sitting on a granite rock in one of his favourite haunts, the Rivelin Valley. It was thought to be a poor likeness, at the time.

3

MARK FIRTH

Mark Firth (1819 – 1880) was an industrialist, philanthropist and civic leader. By the mid 19th century, his steel mill was the largest in the city. Firth built Firth College (the building in front of you) for the city in 1879, which eventually became part of the University of Sheffield, and he donated a thirty-six acre estate to the city, which became Firth Park. However, he also owned vast swathes of moorland around Moscar, including Bamford, Strines and Moscar moors, which, just like Mappin, he denied the public access to, keeping it for shooting grouse.

4

JG GRAVES

JG Graves (1866 – 1945) was another prominent local businessman and civic leader, who had a mail order business based where the University of Sheffield Students' Union building now stands (and which he helped fund). He was influenced by local rambler, GHB Ward and by scenery protectionist, Ethel Gallimore, to purchase huge acreages of land for the city, including Blackamoor, Ecclesall Woods and, of course, Graves Park. Just like Mappin and Firth, Graves was a benefactor to the city, but with a very different position on public access to the countryside.

5

BUTLER'S CAFE

Butler's was a small greasy spoon, which existed on this site for over 80 years. It was most famous, however, as the place where Pablo Picasso drew his famous Peace Dove on a napkin, whilst visiting the city to speak at the Second World Peace Congress in 1950. The congress was widely seen as a Communist front, and the Labour government of the time banned local politicians from attending, which, Sheffield being Sheffield, they promptly did anyway. After the conference, Picasso gave the napkin to the bodyguard who accompanied him around the city. It's now displayed at Weston Park Museum. (Rumours abound that Picasso drew more doves on various napkins around the city. Check your Granny's attic).

6

CROFT HOUSE

Croft House Settlement was set up in a former chapel by the Rev. William Blackshaw (1866 – 1953), Minister of Queens Street Congregational Chapel. The refurbished chapel was opened in 1902 as 'Croft Settlement Hall'. The aim of the settlement was to improve the lives of the poor, and the hall had a gym, a boys' club, a snooker room, a reading room, and even a soup kitchen. Croft House is still in operation today, home to a day-care centre for adults with disabilities, salsa classes and even marching bands.

7

COMMONWEALTH CAFÉ

The Commonwealth Café was opened by the Sheffield Socialist Society, formed in 1886. The society was committed to revolutionary socialism, and was led by Edward Carpenter, a socialist poet, lecturer and early activist for gay rights. The society took on a large house and shop in Scotland Street, and opened the Commonwealth Café, along with meeting rooms and lodging-rooms for comrades. The café attracted such speakers as Annie Beasant, a socialist and women's rights activist, and anarchist theorist Prince Kropotkin, who proposed the theory of mutual aid. Though the café was successful in promoting revolutionary struggle, it fared less well as a café: it closed after a year.

8

SHEFFIELD WOMEN'S POLITICAL ASSOCIATION

The struggle to gain women the vote in Britain began in the mid-nineteenth century. The Sheffield Women's Political Association was the first in the country to be run by women, for women. The first meeting was held on the 26th February 1851, and was reported as opening with the amazing words 'TO THE WOMEN OF ENGLAND – BELOVED SISTERS – We, the women of democracy of Sheffield, beg the indulgence of addressing you'. Very few of those sisters would see women get the vote however – it only began to happen in 1918. The Democratic Temperance Hotel, run by a Mr G Cavill, was located at 33 Queen Street, which unfortunately no longer exists.

9

PARADISE SQUARE

Paradise Square was the scene of many radical assemblies in Sheffield's history: a local minister describes it as having been 'thronged with excited crowds who came to hear what their leaders had to say on all the stirring topics of the time'. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, preached here on 15th July 1779, to what he later described as 'the largest congregation I ever saw on a weekday'. Later, the Chartists, a radical social movement demanding democratic reform and the vote for working men, held huge rallies in the square, including one on 12 September 1839, when the agitated crowd was dispersed by troops, leading to running battles through the city streets. (The Chartists would have all their aims met within a hundred years).

10

JAMES MONTGOMERY

James Montgomery (1771 – 1854) is often remembered as the composer of various hymns, and the quotations that surround his statue reinforce this connection. However in his earlier life he was a radical, editing the subversive newspaper, 'The Sheffield Iris', from 1794. Born in Irvine, Scotland, Montgomery moved to Sheffield in 1792, where he stayed for the rest of his life. He was imprisoned twice in York Castle, on the second occasion for his account in the 'Iris' of the Norfolk Street riots of 1795, in which soldiers opened fire on rioters. The experience of prison quietened him down, and he became a pillar of local society.

11

VICTORIA HALL

Victoria Hall was the headquarters of the Sheffield Clarion Ramblers - a working class rambling group, led by G. H. B. Ward (1876 – 1957), and named after The Clarion Socialist Newspaper, which campaigned for access to the moors belonging to our friends Messrs Firth and Mappin. The ramblers took direct action: they were involved in an illegal mass trespass of Bleaklow, in 1907. This was a fore-runner of the historic 1932 Mass Tresspass of Kinder Scout, in which five people were arrested and given hefty prison sentences, gaining massive public sympathy for the ramblers' cause. Victoria Hall was also used by Sheffield Campaign for Access to Moorland, in the 1980s and 90s.

12

UPPER CHAPEL

The Upper Chapel was built in 1700, founded by radical nonconformists. These were Christians who believed people should be free to practice whichever religion they chose, and, as such, were cast out by the official church, and barred from holding public office or attending university. When it was initially built, the chapel boasted a congregation of more than 1000 – a sixth of Sheffield's population at the time.

13

JOHN RUSKIN

John Ruskin (1819 – 1900) was an art critic, painter, social thinker and reformist. Though he held a mix of political opinions, which ranged over time from old school Toryism to some definition of communism (he once stated 'there is no wealth

but life'), he remained a major influence on British socialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ruskin founded the Guild of St George in 1871, in an attempt to put some of his ideas into action. In 1874, he chose Walkley as the location for the St George's Museum, whose purpose was to educate the metal-workers of Sheffield. The fortunes of this museum mirror the esteem in which Ruskin was held: it first moved to a bigger building in Meersbrook Park, remaining there until 1953, when diminishing interest in Victorianism in general and Ruskin in particular led to the contents of the museum being moved to Reading. After a revival of interest in the 1970s, Sheffield City Art Galleries negotiated for the contents to be returned to the city. Today, a fraction of the collection is on display in the Millennium Galleries.

14

JOSEPH MATHER

Joseph Mather (c1737 – c1804) may have been born in Chelmsorton, Derbyshire, or in 'Cack Alley', near West Bar Green in Sheffield. Mather, a file cutter, became famous in Sheffield as a ballad-maker and singer, despite being incapable of reading or writing (his friends transcribed his songs onto bills which he sold around town to supplement his earnings). His notoriety was sealed by his performance style: he sang scurrilous and satirical ballads whilst sitting backwards on a donkey, facing its rear end.

15

THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Whilst most of the rest of the country was succumbing to Thatcher's 'no such thing as society' ideology, Sheffield City Council under David Blunkett was resisting. The left-wing city council in the 1970s and 80s became an almost independent enclave, with a politics that was radically different from central government. Policies ranged from the practical – bus fares were 5p and arts, music and youth clubs were generously supported – to the ideological – the city was declared a nuclear free zone, and the Red Flag was regularly flown above the town hall. Eventually, with funding cut by central government, the buses privatised and the city hollowed out by the collapse of the steel industry, the policies of the Socialist Republic came to an end. Though some might argue that the ethos of the republic still remains in the city.

16

COUNTRYSIDE AND RIGHTS OF WAY ACT (2000)

The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 was implemented in 2004, and finally gave ramblers the right to roam. The plaque to the left of the main entrance to Sheffield Town Hall was made by Doug Hewitt and erected in celebration of the act. The image is based on photographs taken in the 1930s at large rallies of ramblers in the Winnats Pass and Cave Dale near Castleton. The central figure is our friend GHB Ward himself – the leader of Sheffield Clarion Ramblers we met earlier on. More than 120 years since it had first been demanded in parliament, public access to all our mountains and moorland was granted to everyone.



Many thanks to Terry Howard and Dave Sissons for creating this walk, and to Sheffield Campaign for Access to Moorland (SCAM) as it was them, who rekindled the access campaign in the 1980s.