

ASSOCIATION FOR INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY

ANNUAL CONFERENCE - SHEFFIELD 1995

Tour notes - Sunday 10 Sept

Programme

- 8 00 Breakfast
- 9 00 AIA Annual General Meeting
- 10 00 Award presentations
- 10 30 Heritage Bodies reports
- 11 00 Coffee
- 11 45 Rolt Memorial Lecture, 'The Fairbanks of Sheffield: Surveyors' Records as a Source for Regional Economic Development in the 18th and 19th Centuries' - David Crossley
- 13 00 Lunch
- 14 15 Walks leave Ranmoor House - see below
- 19 00 Dinner
- 20 00 'Thomas Newcomen and the Newcomen Engine' - John Allen
- 21 30 Videos of Sheffield trades

Walk 1 - Porter Valley and Shepherd Wheel

Walk leader - Harold Taylor

A gentle walk through suburban streets, parks and woods. Most paths surfaced but please wear sensible shoes. Tea available at Forge Dam. Return by bus from Fulwood.

From Forge Dam, where the walk ends, the little River Porter or Porter Brook was used by water powered industry over most of its length until it falls into the Sheaf under Sheffield Station. This walk passes the dams and slight remains of a number of these water powered sites. Most were cutlery grinding wheels but there was a saw works built by Thomas Boulsover, the inventor of Old Sheffield Plate, at Wire Mill Dam, and a small forge at Forge Dam.

The main attraction, though, is Shepherd Wheel, the only one of Sheffield's water powered cutlery grinding wheels to be preserved complete as it was in its working days. Its recorded history goes back at least to 1584 and its name comes from a Mr Shepherd who was renting it in 1794. There are two 'hulls' (grinding workshops), each with several 'trows' or 'troughs' for the grinders. It is powered by an overshot water wheel, 5.5m in diameter. It last worked commercially in the early 1930s. The predecessor of the SYIHS arranged occasional demonstration openings until 1940. Demolition was threatened in 1957 but the Council for the Conservation of Sheffield Antiquities persuaded the City Council to keep it as a site museum, and itself did much of the restoration. Two more recent threats to close it as an economy measure have been averted after local and national protests including, on the first occasion, one from the AIA.