



The walk with too many titles – or is it the indecisive walk? A couple of miles with a finish at 12.00ish,

**Sheffield in Microcosm – a recumbent cow, stables, ten industrial workers on a wall, a feminine theme in poems and Sheffield suffrage, perhaps a tall tale, and, if we dare a short cut or trespass for a few of us?**

The route starts from Lady’s Bridge, but as that isn’t the best of “waiting around points” for a group, probably best if we meet in Castle Square, there is a nice spot mid-way between The Bankers Draft and Primark, leaving there at 10.25 to make sure we are at Lady’s Bridge for 10.30 – you can join at either point.

**Summary.**

Start at Lady’s Bridge, find a little and seldom visited garden and read a poem about our city’s river. Pass a royal titled and many tiled building with stables, follow a riverside walk under a footballer, sigh for the passing of Victorian ambition and on to read a moving poem by our Poet Laureate. Follow the spider’s way under the massive Wicker Arches, we can shake our heads or find a depth of artistic appreciation for the recumbent cow. Onwards to explore a Denuta Reah murder scene, more sculpture and the aesthetic of coal merchants. A nod towards the Sheffield Women’s Social and Political Union, a flare of gas light, 10 hardy workers, a burning mail box and another Sheffield poet. Moving to the end, a debate about age, an iconic or ironic entrance and finally, to trespass or tread the usual path. Finish outside the main Hallam University building just opposite the Millennium gallery, probably about 12.30

The walk detail.

Start at Ladysbridge and move off to the Nursery Street Gardens to see this little and seldom visited garden and read a poem. Sheffield’s very own Carolyn Waudby’s River Don. Carolyn has taught journalism and creative writing at the University of Sheffield, the University of Leeds and Sheffield Hallam whilst continuing to work as a writer in both genres.

**River Don**

Today I hope to remain undiscovered  
 Peace. Almost silence. The stillness of stopping  
 It is I who drives the wheel  
 The world comes to me – sun, clouds, trees  
 Paper, curses, whispers  
 I do not let them in  
 Send them back

Back to Ladysbridge and it’s The Royal Exchange building

The grade II listed building was originally built by Flockton, Gibbs & Flockton for Blonk Street-based vet and animal breeder John Henry Bryers, on vacant land he owned. His development included the adjacent Castle House and the Royal Victoria Buildings across the road. The Royal Exchange Buildings included 20 two-bedroom flats, a house and surgery for the vet and a house for the groom, as well as shops. At the back was accommodation for sick horses, while Mr Bryers also included a dogs home for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals at the rear of the property.

Now it's off along the Five Weirs Walk North bank to see information board, then head to the Wicker Riverside and sigh for the demolished Victoria station.

But, very soon, take the riverside Five Weirs Walk path and cross under Derek Dooley way and immediately above the river and on the side of the dual carriageway we find Carol Ann Duffy's

**The Five Weirs Walk.**

<p>I have a mother's hand and you a child's          Hand in my hand you walk beside me now,          for miles under the cutlery silver grey          of the clouds the old buff spoon          of the sun the river Don rolling away          From Lady's Bridge now like the rusty industrial past          now like the blue of your future, infinite, clear</p>	<p>This is the Five Weirs Walk, we are here          and if an X were to mark the spot we would stand          at the heart of a kiss where change and history,          knotweed and balsam meet. Come on then          follow the river's narrative as the city wakes          from dreams of itself. Some walk ahead of us or behind          I walk with you holding the flowering bud of your hand.</p>
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Let's keep going and admire as we cross the remarkable Cobweb Bridge under the viaduct.

The Cobweb Bridge, also known as Spider Bridge, completed in 2002, its design solves a difficult problem: passing the riverside cycle- and footpath (the Five Weirs Walk) under the massive Wicker Arches viaduct while linking one bank of the River Don to the other. Without the Cobweb Bridge, the footpath would have had to make a one-mile detour. Designed by Sheffield City Council's Structures Section, the entire 100-metre-long bridge is suspended on a web of steel cables secured to the underside of the viaduct, hence the name. Completing the theme, large steel likenesses of spiders conceal the overhead lighting. While the bridge has been prone to vandalism in the past (the wires forming the parapet having been stolen more than once), the bridge was repaired in 2015 to reduce the risk of future vandalism. The newly restored bridge no longer uses wires in the parapet, having been replaced with metal plates with spider web designs.

Along the side of the arches and then back under the railway to find our way to the Upper Level Victoria Quays (steps opposite Ant) – let's pause to admire, gawp or just shake our heads at the Recumbent Cow sculpture.

Sheffield Canal Basin, now known as Victoria Quays, is at the head of the Sheffield and Tinsley Canal. The basin dates from 1814, when the canal opened to connect with the River Don Navigation, allowing canal boats to reach the heart of Sheffield for the first time. By the 1970s, it had declined into a forlorn and unwelcoming state, with the warehouses becoming dilapidated. The whole area received a new lease of life in the 1990s, when the warehouses were restored and new buildings were added. The Sheaf works were turned into a pub, the derelict railway arches were converted into shop units and a marina was created on one side of the basin.

Into quay for another sculpture, this time Heron & Fish and Admire:

The "Straddle" Warehouse, built on stilts across the basin, at a time when more storage space was needed but there was no room to expand.

The Terminal Warehouse, or Grain Warehouse, with loading bays where the boats could go inside for the grain to be unloaded under cover before being sent on to breweries. The building has now been converted into flats.

The aesthetic of the Coal merchants houses - two storeys at the front and just one at the back.

Resume walking

March 8<sup>th</sup>, was International Women's Day, so its past the site of the old Corn Exchange, (serious fire in '47, demolished in '62) – hence the names Exchange Place and Exchange Street. In July 1912, a suffrage meeting organised by WSPU, (Women's Social and Political Union), Women's Freedom League and Sheffield Trades and Labour Council, just before a by-election in Attercliffe. The platform: vote out the Government, any Government, who won't give the vote to women.

Lower level approach to and up ramp to Sheffield United Gas Light Company building. Fitzalan Square – 10 workers on White Building (Relief frieze depicting Sheffield trades. Reading from right to left across the facade the figures as described by J.B.Himsworth (a contemporary of the brothers Tory) are:

"a Silversmith (with a blowpipe): a Chaser: an Engineer: a File Cutter (known locally as a 'nicker pecker'): a Steel Roller: a Cutler (with parcers on the background): a Grinder (using a flat-stick): a Hand-forged (who flourished before so much machine forging came into use): a Buffer (i.e. of non-ferrous articles and not a cutlery grinder's buffer): and a steel crucible teemer (with sweat rag in his mouth).

Here is the old Post Office, from a time when people wrote letters and in April 1913, the main post box outside the building was set on fire by members of Sheffield Women's Suffrage Society (SWSS) – founded 1882. The Sheffield branch became part of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies in 1897, when the NUWSS was formed.

and it's time for a poem at the head of the steps.

Its Noel Williams and Over Looking Bakers Hill. Noel is Associate Editor of the poetry magazine Orbis, and he has an MA in Writing from Sheffield Hallam University (where he is also a lecturer).

### **Over Looking Bakers Hill**

Rather a long poem so we'll just take the first verse.

I see them where they never stood above those tessellated steps, a staircase steeply doubled back, cupping the tread of decades.

Hand in hand: brother, father, brother.

His heavy yellow fists rough comfort for their mittened fingers.

Through railings ungreened by rust they gaze exactly as they never did, the folded stair dropping into a tide of mail vans and sidings.

Is the Old Queens Head really one of Sheffield's oldest buildings?

The Old Queen's Head public house occupies the oldest domestic building in the city. This timber framed building is thought to date from c.1475, although the earliest known written record of it is in an inventory compiled in 1582 of the estate of George Talbot, the 6th Earl of Shrewsbury that included the furnishings of this building, which was then called "The hawle at the Poandes". As a part of the Earl's estate, it may have been used as a banqueting hall for parties hunting wildfowl in the nearby ponds. These ponds, which formed in the area where the Porter Brook meets the River Sheaf, are now gone, but are commemorated in the local names Pond Street, Pond Hill (formerly Pond Well Hill) and Ponds Forge.

The ironic... iconic entrance portals to Ponds Forge Works.

Time for a short cut – or is it a little trespassing through Hallam building? Finish outside main Hallam University Building

## **Steel City Wanderers.**

**Pat & Clare Ryan**

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