

Grid Iron Terraced Housing

Areas within this zone:

'Norton Woodseats'; 'Highfields, Sharrow and Abbeydale Road'; 'Meersbrook'; 'Hillsborough'; 'Wadsley Bridge'; 'Crookes, Walkley and Broomhill'; 'Sharrow Vale and Hunters Bar', 'Pitsmoor, Burngreave, and Firth Park'.

Summary of Dominant Character



Figure 1: A typical high density landscape of slate roofed brick properties in the 'Sharrow Vale and Hunters Bar' character area © 2005 SYAS

This zone was first subject to large-scale urbanisation in the period 1864-1919 with the development of housing in regular grid patterns. Whilst the dominant housing type is predominantly that of simple and generally standardised terrace property of a type which evolved directly from the design of earlier Sheffield back-to-back forms (Muthesius 1982), these areas frequently include estates developed by Freehold Land Societies, where

semi detached and detached properties of more unique designs and grander proportions can be found. Elsewhere a distinct hierarchy of building types can be discerned from simple two-up-two-down designs originally sharing open yards, through to large townhouses providing dedicated scullery kitchens, larders, entrance hallways and bathrooms in addition to a small privately enclosed garden area.

Housing in these areas is associated with contemporary institutional buildings especially churches and primary schools built by the Sheffield School Board. Many also feature Vestry Halls (e.g. at Meersbrook Park Road, Cemetery Road (Sharrow), and Crookesmoor Road) built for the collection of rates, administration of local neighbourhoods and to provide local places of assembly.



Figure 2: Former St Luke's Methodist church, Crookes Road © 2004 Ivor Hutchinson.
Licensed for reuse under a creative commons license -
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>

These suburbs were provided with shops and pubs (often on street corners). In addition, earlier settlement cores such as Owlerton, Crookes, and Woodseats became commercial districts, as did important termini of the tramway networks, such as Firth Park Market, with purpose built variations of larger terraced properties provided with shop fronts on the ground floor frontages. Most of Sheffield's terraced suburbs featured at least one larger co-operative society store.

Many of these suburbs absorbed earlier elite houses built in the 18th century by industrialists and merchants, with some examples of parkland set aside by the municipal authority or provided by benefactors forming centrepieces to the suburbs such as Meersbrook, Hillsborough, and Firth Parks. Further recreational space was set-aside in most of these areas for allotment gardens, the largest area of plots being at Meersbrook.

Cemeteries contemporary with later terraced housing developments in these areas can be found in Burngreave, Crookes and Norton, both of which are typical of their period with sandstone mortuary chapels and geometric layouts of avenues mirroring the grid iron patterns of the surrounding housing.

The suburbs that make up this zone are all to be found in close association to industrial river valleys. All were provided with connections on Sheffield's tramway network allowing commuting from residential districts to more distant workplaces. Some dispersed smaller industrial buildings can be found within most groups within this zone especially in the transitional zones between this and other zones, and where this zone crosses older established residential or industrial zones (for instance at the Porter Valley at Sharrow Vale), but they tend not to lie in nucleated groups.

Inherited Character

The most obvious early landscape features in this zone tend to be found where earlier hamlets have been absorbed in or used as the central place of 19th century suburban developments. Good examples of this process can be found at Crookes, in parts of Norton Woodseats, Woodseats Dale and at Owlerton.



Figure 3: Meersbrook House in Meersbrook Park. © 2005 SYAS

The historic parklands of Meersbrook, Firth Park and Hillsborough preserve earlier designed and semi natural woodland landscapes around large previously private residences of the 18th century although all were modified on their municipalisation. The parks preserve legible traces of earlier agricultural land-uses. In a similar vein a number of other 18th and early 19th century large residences are a feature of this zone, good examples being Abbeydale House; Mount Pleasant and 10 Sharrow Lane - formerly the Charnwood Hotel (Highfields); Pispah House (Walkley); Meersbrook House (figure 3); Abbeyfields House; and Page Hall (now the Abbey Grange nursing home).

Suburbanisation of these areas was frequently as a result of the organic extension of earlier industrial suburbs- Sharrow, Highfields and Abbeydale Road represents the steady advance of housing southwards along the Sheaf Valley from the older hamlet of Little Sheffield. Generally older terraces can be discerned closest to these earlier cores, for instance the late 18th or 19th century listed terraces on Barnabas Road, some of the oldest in the city. Development of new terraces took place over a variety of earlier landscapes. Where earlier land enclosure left a regular pattern, for instance in the former Club Gardens in Sharrow; the parliamentary enclosures of Sharrow and Pits Moors; or the enclosed strips to the west of Crookes historic core, then development sometimes fossilised earlier patterns. However, where such regular patterns were not available then old

boundaries appear to have been cleared and the new grid patterns laid out wholesale across the land.

An alternative early development pattern active in most of these areas can be seen in most of these suburbs where older properties of greater variety can be found. This type of development pattern, where land is first divided into plots which are subsequently developed in turn by individually designed properties before amalgamation and development as terraces has been noted in Barnsley and Sheffield as well as elsewhere in Rotherham as typical of 'Freehold Land' societies. This process may well reflect the fact that the primary motivation behind the subdivision of these areas of land was the 'acquisition of land' by a wider sector of society in a deliberate attempt to widen the franchise rather than develop housing.

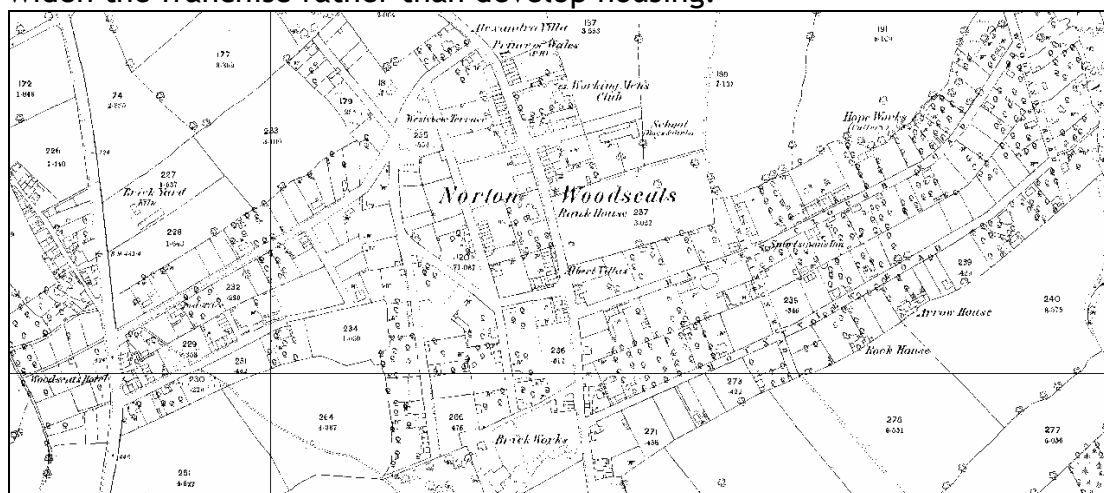


Figure 4: Land Society development in Norton Woodseats in 1894 © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 200X) Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024

These societies provided an important impetus to the development of 19th century suburbs. Once established a society bought up whole estates and divided them into individual plots, members of the society paying a monthly contribution to costs and charges for making roads with the society being wound up once costs for the land had been met. These types of land society were popular because they enabled larger numbers of people to vote as voting rights were linked to property ownership (Harman and Minnis 2004, 282).

Excellent examples of Land Society development in this zone have been recorded by the project in Norton Woodseats (fig 4), Crookes, Heeley, Walkley and Meersbrook. Historic map evidence shows that often these areas did not develop past the building of a few large villas - the 'building plots' being shown as undeveloped on some occasions for 40 years or more. In many cases final development of these areas was undertaken in standard terraced form.

Inherited Character

Wholesale 20th century changes to this character zone are limited, with housing clearance by and large restricted to areas of older housing in other zones- in Sheffield this process was undertaken on a large scale across grid iron terraced areas in the 1960s and 1970s and has been separately described in the 'Terraced Housing Clearance Areas' Zone . However social change over the past one hundred years has led to significant changes to the way these houses are occupied and maintained. Most notably the now widespread phenomenon of multiple car ownership has had a significant effect on the streetscape of these areas, with off-road opportunities for parking near completely absent and on road opportunities limited by the inherent short street frontage of each property. Within properties the most notable change has probably been the introduction of bathrooms and toilets within the main living accommodation rather than contained within the back yard. Changes in property maintenance impacting on the general character of the built forms of the area include the widespread replacement of wooden doors and windows with double glazed uPVC units; the replacement of Welsh slate roofing with concrete and other composite materials; and the introduction of TV and satellite aerials.

Changes in attitudes and practices concerning religion and schooling are also manifesting themselves in the changing characteristics of former institutional buildings in this zone with the buildings generally provided for these purposes now often put to re-use as community centres, clubs or youth centres.

Later Characteristics

Later developments of this zone have been most pronounced on the sites of former brickworks and quarries related to their construction. Frequently these sites have been reused for infill development of housing or commercial developments - often retaining dramatic former quarry faces through sandstone geological sequences. Good examples of such reuse can be found at Brincliffe and Woodseats. Elsewhere there has been considerable redevelopment of earlier allotment garden sites for housing, mostly small areas of semi detached housing in the early to mid 20th century.

Clearance of terraced housing has been limited in this zone. The most notable exceptions being at Highfields and Lowfields where three blocks of late 19th century grid iron terracing were demolished in the 1970s, and within Burngreave and Page Hall where further small areas have (and continue to be) subject to clearance programmes.

Bibliography

- Harman, R. and Minnis, J.** 2004 *Sheffield*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press
- Muthesius, S.** 1982 *The English Terraced House*. New Haven: Yale University Press.