

Castle House

Castle House stands on Angel Street and Castle Street, part of historic Sheffield. This grade two listed building is itself becoming part of Sheffield history. Angel Street is named after the Angel Hotel. This famous Sheffield establishment was situated around where Cockaynes store, later Schofields and now Argos is situated. It was built in 1657 out of local granite.

Sheffield's first theatre building was built in the yard of the Angel Hotel in 1728. The Hotel was a coaching house with a daily service to London. It was destroyed by enemy action in the blitz of 12th December 1940.

Other coaching houses were The Tontine Hotel on Haymarket (demolished after the coming of the Railway when the Victoria Hotel was built on Victoria Railway Station) and The Kings Head on Change Alley (now Arundel Gate by High Street) built before 1572. There was a bowling green and fine gardens situated by this pub and Alsop Field was on the site of the present Norfolk Street. It was Leonard Webster (Master Cutler 1748 – 49) and owner of the Kings Head who had the gardens dug up and extended Change Alley through Alsop Field. From 1745 it was the centre for meetings of the Cutlers Company. In 1821 the landlord is said to have driven the first stagecoach over the newly opened turnpike road between Sheffield and Glossop.

The Kings Head Hotel was a well known establishment in the city centre. It was destroyed by enemy action in December 1940. That terrible night saw Sheffield City Centre reduced to piles of rubble and destruction everywhere.

The Present Co-operative store entrance is on Castle Street, and Castle Street is, of course named after Sheffield Castle.

Just after the First World War, Brightside & Carbrook Co-operative Society bought the site of Sheffield Castle on Exchange Street / Waingate.

Before building work, an archaeological survey of the site, led by a man called Armstrong, took place. Some interesting artefacts were found. The design of the building was modified to accommodate the remains of the castle. In 1929 the magnificent City Stores was opened on the castle site. A souvenir booklet was produced to celebrate the opening of this department store. The City Stores only lasted for eleven years. It was destroyed by enemy action on the night of the 12th December 1940 in the Sheffield blitz. The castle artefacts which had been on display in a glass case were lost.

B&C and the Sheffield City Council came to an agreement to swap the site of the castle and a site on Angel Street across the road. In due course a temporary single storey department store was built on Angel Street, followed by the building of Castle House which was opened in 1964.

The board of the B&C Co-operative Society commissioned a painting of

Sheffield Castle as it might have looked and the painter was Kenneth Steel. This magnificent oil painting was hung in the boardroom in Castle House until the Co-operative Group sold Castle House in 2009. The painting was taken to Manchester to be looked after safely by the Co-operative. The good news is that the Co-operative has loaned the picture to Green Estate and it is on display at the Sheffield Manor Lodge.

After the merger of United Co-operatives and Brightside & Carbrook (now re-named Sheffield Co-operative Society) and then The Co-operative Group, a decision was taken to close the non-food departments, restaurant and coffee shop. The trading units which remained were food, travel and pharmacy, and also the Crown Post Office. The closure took place in 2007. The pharmacy was closed in 2011 followed by Travel and the Post Office. In 2009 Castle House was given grade 2 listing by English Heritage. Apart from the Co-op Food store, the building is still unused at the time of writing.

The closure of Castle House left the Castlegate area (Waingate, Castle Street, Fitzalan Square) a place of dereliction of mainly betting shops, amusement arcades, money loan shops and pawnbrokers. The Sheffield Market after 1,000 years left the area to be re-sited on The Moor. The Old Town Hall had been left derelict for many years and still is. The General Post Office in Fitzalan Square had also been derelict for a long time (it has now been renovated by Sheffield Hallam University).

On the Opening of Castle House in 1964

I re-print here an article published in **Sheffield Forward** June 1964.

Memorable Day For B & C 106,000 'Shareholders' share pride

When Lord Peddie, National Chairman of the Co-operative Party, and member of the C.W.S. Board, Co-operative Insurance Society, Co-operative Permanent Building Society director, opened Castle House on May 13th he crowned nearly 25 years of planning by the Board and staff of Brightside & Carbrook Co-operative Society.

A society which started in 1868, born in the minds of men employed at William Jessop & Sons, Brightside, led by William Shaw, which started life in a shop in Carbrook Street with the sum of 8s. 7d. And declared a dividend of £6 4s. 8d. On its first years working. A Society which since then has returned £11,154,000 to its members according to their purchases and who now total

106,000. An organisation which now employs 2,000 trade unionists.

A cruel blow struck the Society that night in December, 1940, when the magnificent premises only built in 1928, in Exchange Street, were destroyed by flames from an air raid. In those premises were displayed relics from Sheffield Castle excavated when the building was built, and the demolition of Oliver Cromwell. That castle now appears on the society coat-of-arms.

Many in adversity will remember the aid rendered by the society to its members during the pre-war days, when as many as 60,000 unemployed "signed-on" at the nearby employment exchange in the recently demolished Corn Exchange.

An exchange took place between the Corporation and the Society of the previous and present sites, where until 1959 prefabricated premises were used.

The New

The new premises were constructed in two phases to enable business to be carried on without interruption, the present secretary and executive officer, MR. L. HARTLE, taking over from MR. C. W. COLBERT when the first phase was completed.

We now see a unique architectural structure added to the city's skyline, incorporating ideas in design and layout resulting from a study of co-operative enterprise at home and abroad. The building is of five storeys in height in Castle Street, reduced to three and a half storeys at the higher level in Angel Street, where the main office entrance is situated. On the same level is the restaurant with its "unsupported roof." It is finished in blue pearl and Cornish grey granite to provide an unmistakable exterior, the floors being arranged as follows:-

GROUND – Food hall with confectionery departments and baking oven;

FIRST – Travel bureau, chemist's, photographic, men's outfitting and drapery;

SECOND – Ladies' and girls' fashions, footwear, men's outerwear;

THIRD – Furniture and floor covering with unique carpet display.

Also incorporated is a ladies' hairdressing salon and a record bar.

There are four passenger lifts and three main circular staircases.

Incorporated in the building will be an entrance to a future pedestrian subway under Angel Street, similar to the one on the opposite side of the road.

PURPOSE

In 1844 the Rochdale Pioneers Co-operative Society was formed in Toad Lane. Its fame spread until it became a national and then international movement. This democratic movement was founded to pass on to its members the benefits derived from wholesale buying and manufacturing, of quality goods and foodstuffs at reasonable prices, the surplus profit of each trading year being returned to its members in the form of dividend on purchases made.

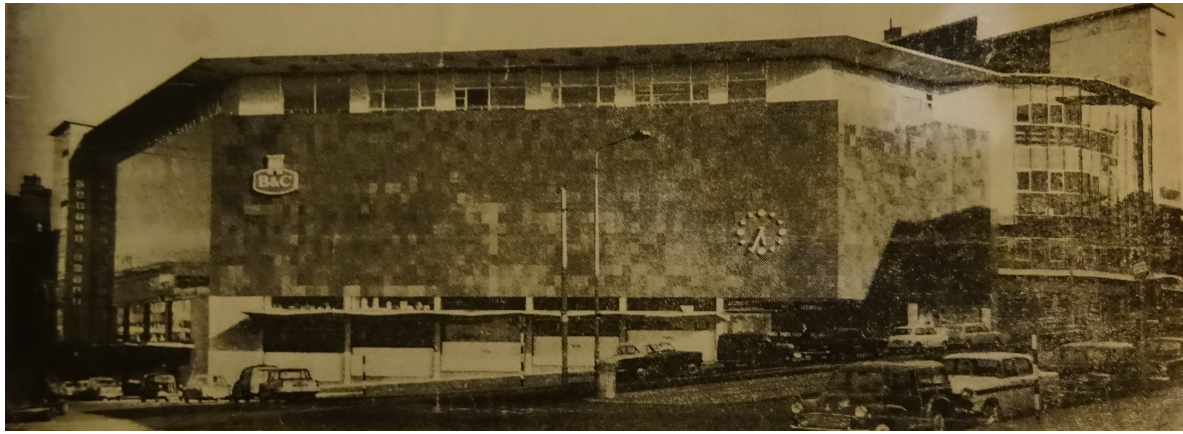
Its members can elect and be elected to its Board of Management and its Education Committee – for the education and social requirements of its members through the famous Guild movement was, and is, an important part of education for life in a co-operative way.

The co-operative movement has over the years been the main bulwark against the monopolistic tendencies inherent in capitalist society which seeks to profit from another's labour. Its practical policies to provide people with goods and services without exploitation, at fair prices and of a uniform high quality, have curtailed profiteers in peace and war.

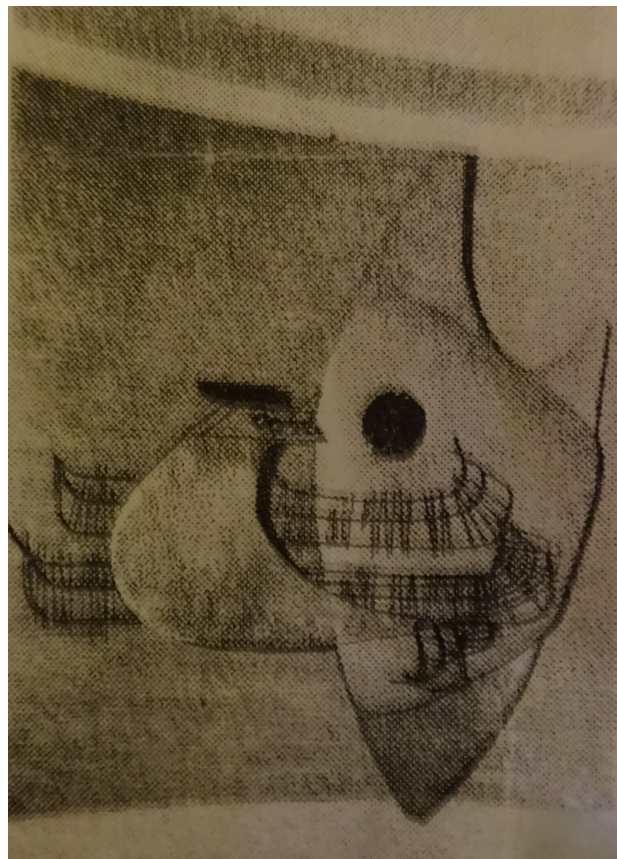
It forms with the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress the trinity of the National Council of Labour pledged to advance and support the interests of those who toil by hand and by brain to rid Britain and the world of exploitation of one by another and to seek by common ownership the fruits of their labour.

We salute Mr. G. H. Shepherd, President of the Society, and his board of elected members on this memorable day.

We call upon all workers to give them the support their enterprise so richly deserves.



Castle House



Fish and fowl motif outside restaurant,
carried out in stainless steel for fish
and iron square rods and copper sheet
for fowl. Fowl's comb and fish's eye
in red glass.

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Castle House seen from Castle Street July 2013



Painting of Sheffield Castle by Kenneth Steel.
Commissioned by B & C Co-op Society
for the Boardroom in 1964

Steve Thompson
October 2018