

The story of Upperthorpe and Netherthorpe

HOW WE LEARNED

A city of ideas

As Sheffield's population grew rapidly in the nineteenth century, so did Upperthorpe. With little state education available, local communities took the lead. Children attended church schools, small "Dame Schools" run by local women—including one on Shipton Street—and Ragged Schools for poorer children.

Sheffield developed a strong tradition of radical politics and self-improvement. Ebenezer Elliott, the "Corn Law Rhymers", lived in Upperthorpe, while John Ruskin based himself nearby in Walkley.

"There is a peculiarity in the town of Sheffield. All classes of labourer dare to speak out the truth that is within them, and labour while they think."

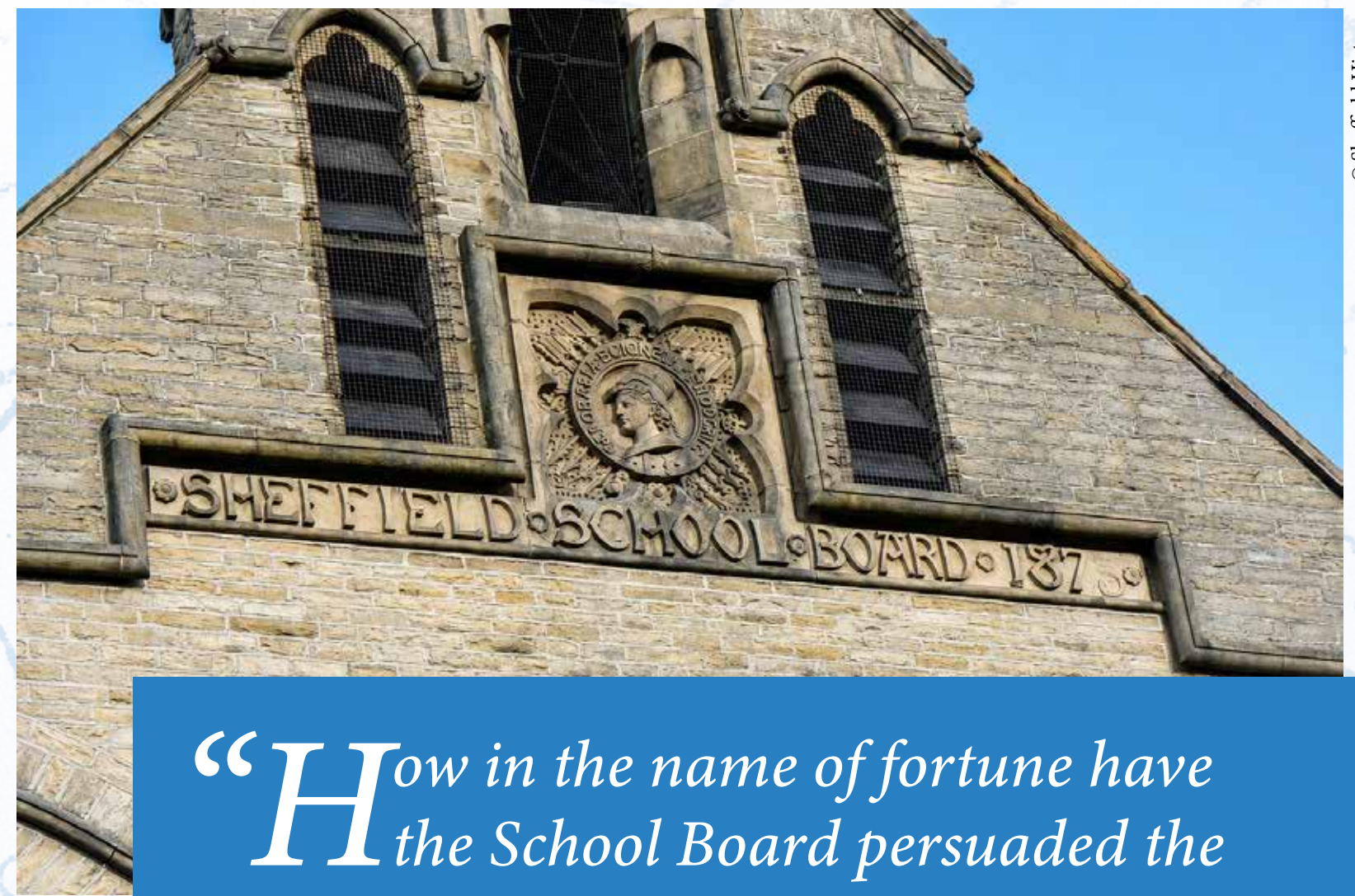
E.P Thompson:
Making of the English Working Class

The Mechanics' Institute, founded in 1824, provided a library and education, while the more radical Hall of Science opened in 1837. In 1919, the Sheffield Labour College was established to provide education for trade unionists.



Netherthorpe
School Football
Team 1930

Education was closely linked to growing demands for social and political change. The 1870 Education Act established School Boards, and by 1880 schooling was compulsory for children aged 5–10. In 1873, the Sheffield School Board opened Netherthorpe School, which is still in use today. The 1891 Assisted Education Act brought state funding, although many working families struggled to send children to school when their wages were needed at home. Evening classes also helped open education to adults.



"How in the name of fortune have the School Board persuaded the ratepayers of Sheffield to tolerate their extravagance in spending £100,000 in the building of 14 or 15 schools as substantial as so many castles!"

Liberal MP David Chadwick, when invited to open Park School in 1875.

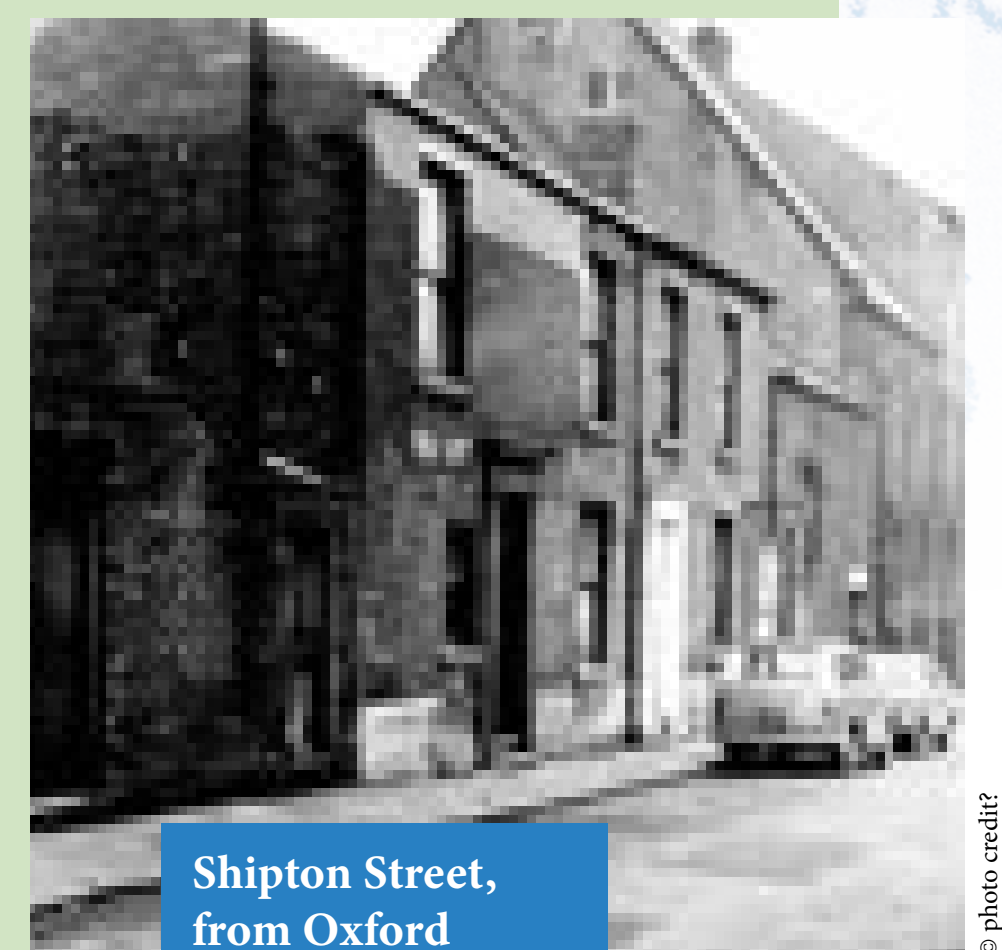
The Settlement Movement

Beginning in London in 1885, the Settlement movement created educational and community centres within working-class neighbourhoods. Sheffield followed with the Neighbourhood Guilds Association, founded in 1897.

Its Shalesmoor branch moved to Shipton Street, Upperthorpe, in 1908. After closing in 1918, the YMCA briefly occupied the building, where a small stage helped launch the "Little Theatre."

In 1921, Arnold Freeman established the Sheffield Educational Settlement there. The Settlement became a lively centre for education, political debate, camping trips and social activities, offering residents an escape from crowded housing. Its colourful history was later recorded by member Winifred Albaya in *Through the Green Door*.

The Settlement remained an important part of Upperthorpe life until the area was redeveloped in the 1960s. Freeman retired in 1955, leaving behind a valuable collection of interviews that provides a remarkable insight into the lives and experiences of local people.



Shipton Street,
from Oxford
Street, prior to
demolition in 1966