

A Meadowhall Meander

A walk led by Chris Booth

East Hecla Works



By the mid-1890s Hadfields Ltd needed to expand from their restricted site and so they bought 90 acres of land in Tinsley, previously occupied by the 19th-century Meadow Hall Iron Works owned by John Crowley and Co. On this they built a new works, known as East Hecla Works which opened in 1897.

In 1911 Hadfields was believed to employ more workmen than any other business in Sheffield and was "largely engaged in the production of war material". Their 14 inch Heclon armour piercing shot weighing almost 1,700 lb could perforate 12 inches of Krupp cemented armour plate without shattering. Hadfields foundry was by this time some 1,100 ft long and covered nearly 7 acres.

By 1918 Hadfields Ltd employed 15,000 workers and by 1920 the plant was capable of producing 150,000 to 200,000 tons of high-grade and special steels each year by employment of open-hearth and electric furnaces. The plant included some 300 electric steam and other overhead cranes, 21 large and small locomotives, more than 21 miles of railway, 250 heating furnaces and hydraulic forging presses up to about 2,000 tons capacity. As the plant increased in size the River Don was diverted to gain more land.

The bridge that carries Meadowhall Way over the river was built to allow access from Meadowhall Road direct into the steelworks, now being used to access Meadowhall shopping centre.

The 1960s saw rationalisation in plants and the merger of steel making companies across Sheffield, and soon the over-capacity of Britain's steel industry forced 1,800 employees to be made redundant from Hadfields Leeds Road plant in June 1981. The East Hecla workforce was much reduced and 1,900

redundancies at Hadfields Ltd were announced in November 1983 and the East Hecla Works closed. The site was demolished c1985 and the Meadowhall Shopping Centre was built on the site, being opened on 4 September 1990.

The industrial units on our right were once the site of several streets of housing, including Shaw Street, Amos Road, Hayland Street and Sanderson Road. Only the road names remain.

Turning right onto Jenkin Road, notice the Gothic looking **Brightside Nursery and Infant School** on the left. Take a look at **Brightside Station** from the bridge looking towards Sheffield (*compare with photo below*).

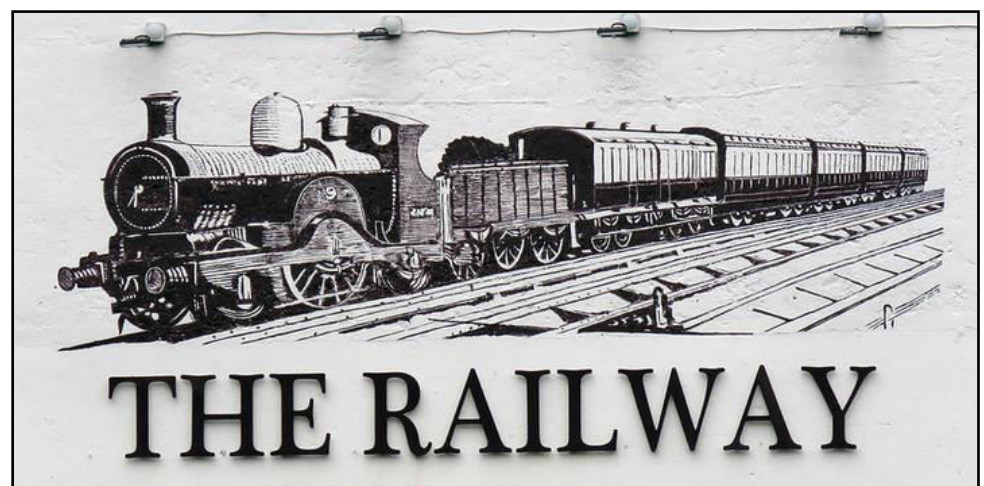


Brightside Station was opened on 1 Nov. 1838 by the Sheffield and Rotherham Railway with two platforms although four tracks passed through. The two outside tracks were for freight use whilst the two inside tracks served the platforms. Brightside did not have any goods facilities but a goods yard and several sidings were located to the immediate south of the station.

Despite the opening of Meadowhall Interchange in 1990, the station remained open until 1995.

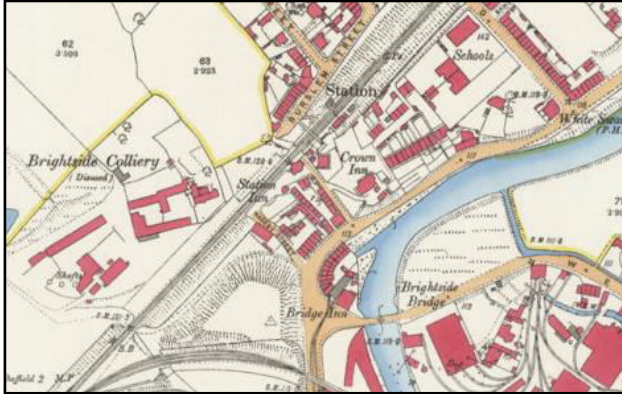
Continue to traffic lights and turn left onto Holywell Road. Notice **The Railway pub** on the right. Any guesses as to the type of loco on the sign?

Continue along Holywell Road passing the **Brightside Colliery memorial** on the right.

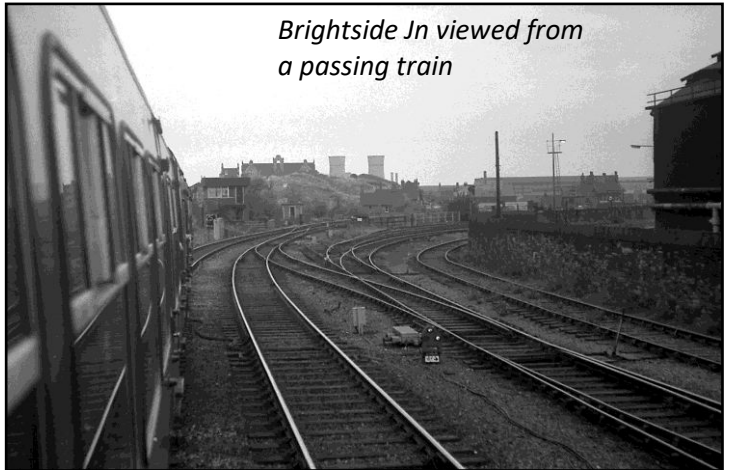


Brightside Colliery

Brightside Colliery was worked from 1855 to 1886 and the shafts were located at the end of Colliery Road. The colliery was owned by Unwin & Shaw Co. and the pit had two shafts, No. 1 from 1855 to 1871 and No.2 from 1868 to 1886. They both worked the Parkgate seam. From 1883 until around 1955 the site was occupied by the Brightside Chemical Works which was a part of the gas works dealing with sulphur produced from gas manufacture. Nowadays the land is used by a self-storage facility and a motor vehicle repair company.



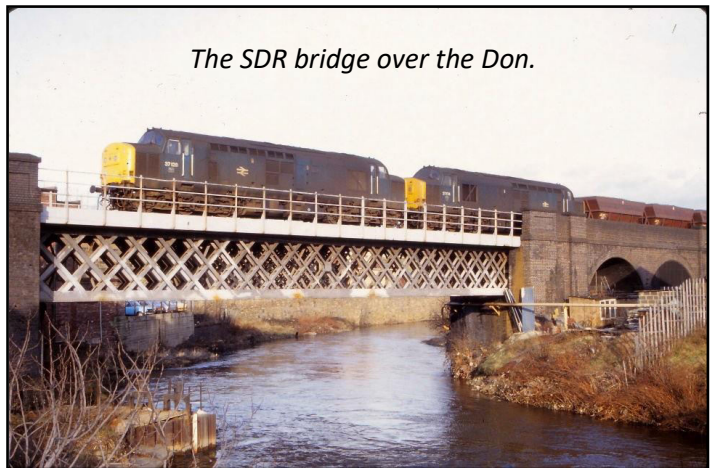
We now turn sharp left onto Colliery Road. Notice **Brightside Junction signal box** which controlled the junction to the Sheffield District line. Notice the different types of brickwork beneath the railway bridge, showing how the trackbed was widened over the years. After passing through the bridge, on the right were several steelworks sidings.



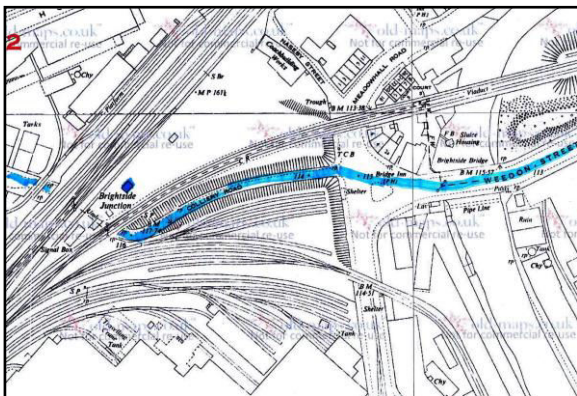
Brightside Jn viewed from a passing train

On emerging from Colliery Road look at the **railway bridge** on the left that carried the Sheffield District Railway over Meadowhall Rd.

Then cross over the road onto Weedon St and on to the bridge over the River Don ('Brightside Bridge' on the map) to view the SDR bridge

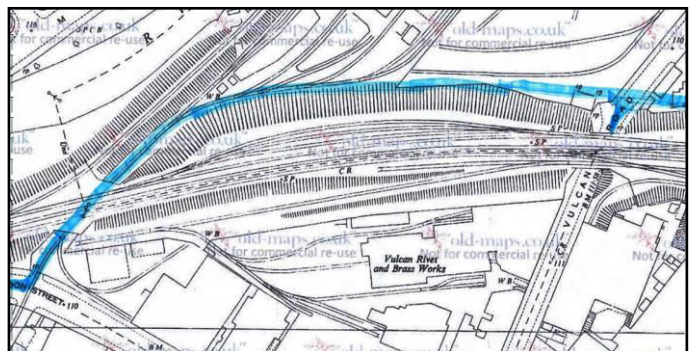


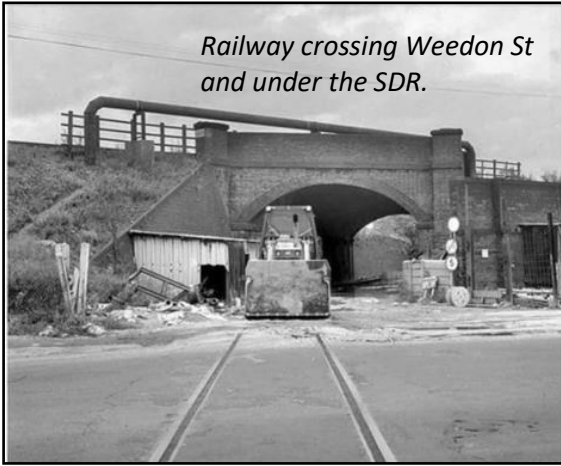
The SDR bridge over the Don.



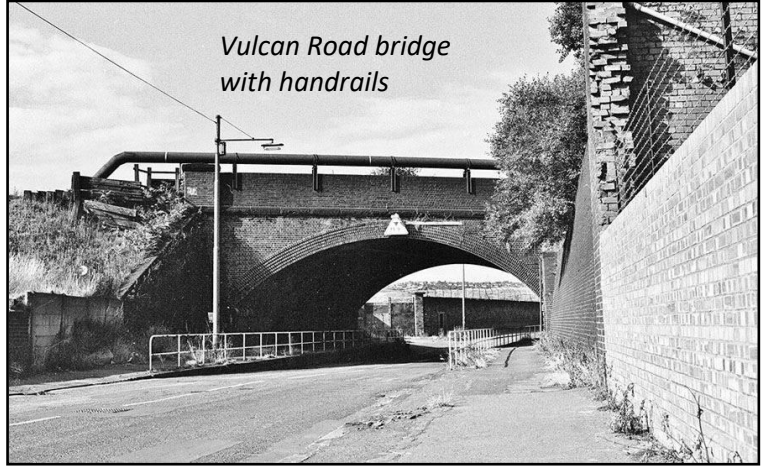
over the Don (see photo of 37s on right).

Continue along Weedon Street, noting the **SDR viaduct/embankment** on the left. Turn left onto the cycleway. There used to be a railway track running along this route, part of a complex of lines serving local steelworks including the East Hecla Works (see photo on next page).





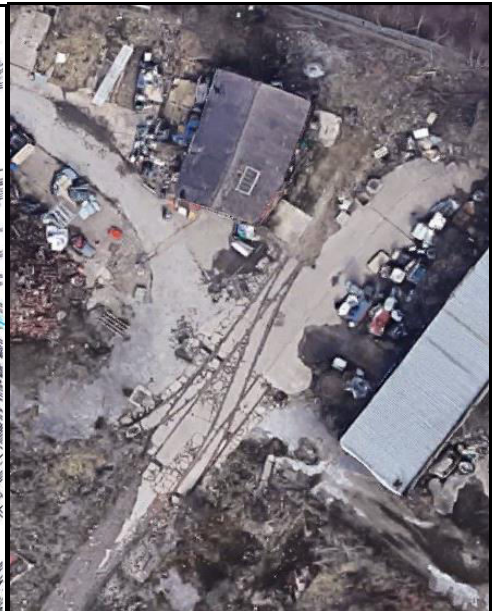
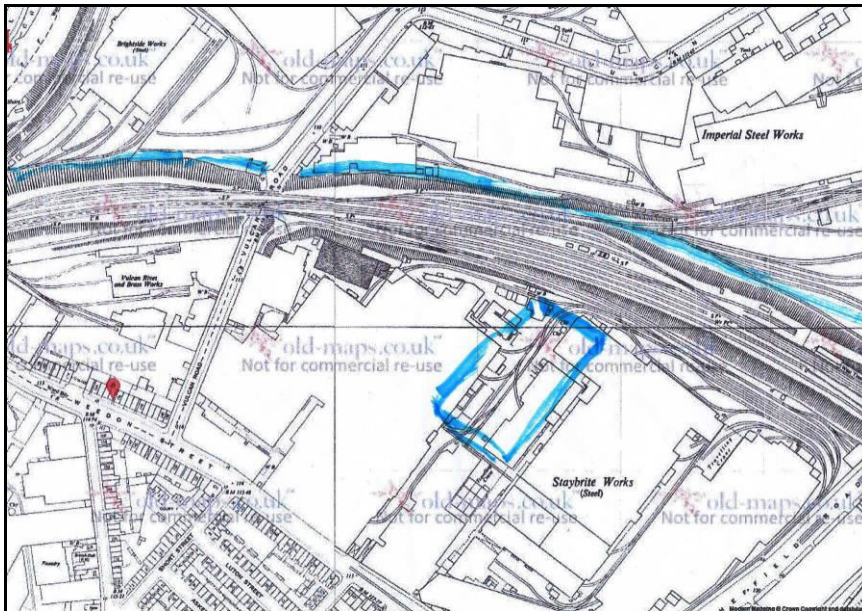
Railway crossing Weedon St and under the SDR.



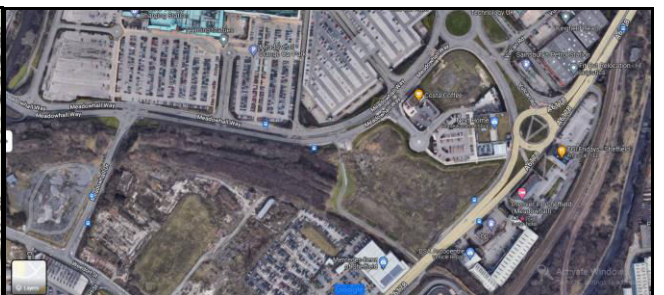
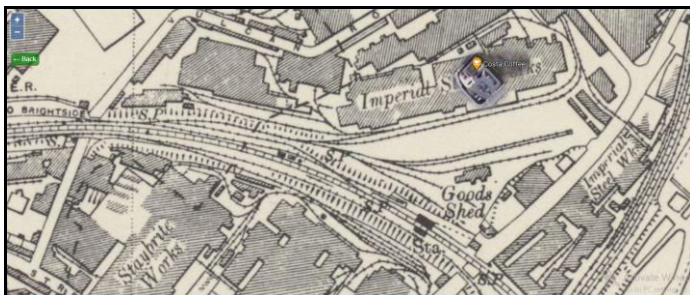
Vulcan Road bridge with handrails

Follow the footpath, keeping right at the junction of the two paths, then turn right when reaching Meadowhall Way. At the next junction look right along Meadowhall Drive, formerly Vulcan Road, and note the green handrails still in situ as the road passed under the SDR (see photo above).

Cross over to the footpath on the other side of Meadowhall Way. We are continuing to walk alongside the SDR and its multiple sidings as shown by the blue line on the map below. Some of the tracks in the blue square are still visible on Google Earth.



Notice how the trackbed opposite us begins to descend - this is where a siding came down into the Imperial Steelworks and West Tinsley station goods yard. **Costa Coffee** can be visited for a refreshment/rest break. This is on the site of the Imperial Steelworks as shown by the overlay on the old map below!



Now walk back along Meadowhall Way and take the footpath that goes off to the left along the edge of the wooded area. This takes us across the goods yard of **West Tinsley Station** and onto the alignment of the embankment on which the station stood. It opened as Tinsley Road on 30 September 1900 and closed just before the outbreak of the Second World War.



West Tinsley station looking towards Brightside Jn

When the footpath ends on Attercliffe Road, you can see the remaining bridge abutment on the opposite side of the road. Turn right and walk along Attercliffe Road passing the old **Tinsley tram depot** on the right. This was the first tram depot in Sheffield, opening in 1874. Cross the road at the lights and then turn left onto Lock House Road with IKEA on the left. On reaching the Carbrook tram stop turn left and cross over the footbridge and follow the path that leads to the canal towpath.

The Sheffield & Tinsley Canal runs 3.9 miles from Tinsley, where it leaves the River Don, to the Sheffield Canal Basin (now Victoria Quays) in the city centre, passing through 11 locks. The basin we see to the left was rebuilt to accommodate the **Broughton Lane to Shepcote Lane curve** that was built to access Tinsley Yard. Other basins were also rebuilt to accommodate the **Tinsley South to Shepcote Lane curve**, both curves meeting up with the SDR at Shepcote Lane (see aerial photo on right).



Due to the towpath closure we must return to **Carbrook tram stop** to take a tram back to Meadowhall. The tram service to Meadowhall started on 21 March 1994. The tram follows the route of the former GCR Woodburn Junction to Tinsley and Rotherham line. The BR track was singled and the tramway took the remaining trackbed. At Tinsley West we take a left turn to follow the Blackburn Valley route as far as the Midland main line where we abruptly turn left to enter the Meadowhall terminus tram stop. The heavy rail line continues from Tinsley West to Rotherham. After the Meadowhall South tram stop a new junction has been put in place to allow the tram-train service to pass under the M1 viaduct and rejoin the heavy rail route and continue to Rotherham Parkgate.

Our journey has now come to an end. I hope you have enjoyed your Meadowhall Meander.



Route of the 'Meadowhall Meander'

Red line indicates walking route. Blue line indicates tram ride back to Meadowhall

