



## Welcome to Portland Works

Portland Works is the last remaining integrated cutlery works in Sheffield that is still in use for cutlery-making. It is one of the few buildings in Sheffield listed Grade II\* because of its architectural and historic interest and was built in the late 1870s by Robert Fead Mosley.

Originally the Works had a range of workshops with a steam engine giving power where needed. It highlighted the supremacy of traditional methods upon which Sheffield built its reputation. Visiting the Works today reveals how such buildings were laid out and we can still see both hand forges and a powered grinding room. These are rare survivals,

especially this close to the city centre.

The building was designed by JH Jenkinson, who also designed the nearby Stag Works. It is constructed of red brick with stone and white brick dressings, and a slate roof. The front elevation or “range” curves round the north side of Hill Street and Randall Street while inside are other ranges flanking the east and west sides of the yard. At the rear is a range with three original buildings projecting into the courtyard from its mid-point with an octagonal industrial chimney to the west. Within the yard are a number of early 20th century additions, from the height of Mosley’s time here.

Why not  
book on  
one of  
our tours  
to learn  
more?

# What's on at Portland Works

Some of these activities are summer months only so please check the website or get in touch for details.

- Tours of Portland Works every 1st Tuesday of the month.
- Visit to the Mosley Museum Room on the 2nd Wednesday of the month
- Bespoke Tours available for groups and individuals by arrangement
- Monthly Heritage Lectures
- Open Days each May and September as part of the Heritage Open Days national event
- Christmas Makers Market each December
- Summer community events, "Craft & Chat" and special one-off activities

Learn more by signing up for the free newsletter at [www.portlandworks.co.uk/newsletter-signup](http://www.portlandworks.co.uk/newsletter-signup)

## Contact us

Please get in touch to learn more about Portland Works, plan a visit, meet the tenants or find out how to support and save this historic place of international significance.

## How can you help

Visit the online store to buy merchandise:  
[www.portlandworks.co.uk/online-store](http://www.portlandworks.co.uk/online-store)

Donate or become a share or bond holder:  
[www.portlandworks.co.uk/donate](http://www.portlandworks.co.uk/donate)

Join the Friends of Portland Works charity:  
[www.friendsofportlandworks.org](http://www.friendsofportlandworks.org)

Additionally, you can hire the MakerSpace for events, exhibitions, meetings or workshops. It has a capacity of 60 and for smaller uses, the Mosley Museum Room is also available with a capacity of 8. Learn more and book at:  
[www.portlandworks.co.uk/roomhire](http://www.portlandworks.co.uk/roomhire)

Portland Works Little Sheffield Ltd.  
0114 275 9354 info@portlandworks.co.uk  
[www.portlandworks.co.uk](http://www.portlandworks.co.uk)  
Portland Works, Randall Street, Sheffield S2 4SJ  
Registered in England & Wales. Company No: IP031143



The Architectural  
Heritage Fund



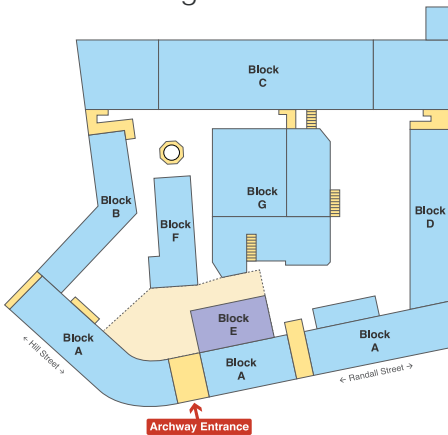
# PORTLAND WORKS

## Introduction

Robert Mosley's first business was on Brook Hill where he made "fine scissors and table cutlery". From there he moved to West Street, across Portland Lane from the Beehive Inn. Both these works (known as "wheels") have now been demolished. By the late 1870s the Highfield area of Sheffield was being developed and by 1879, Portland Works had begun to appear in trade directories. It stood in a block of works with adjacent blocks holding houses for the workers and corner shops.

## Portland Works site plan

In broad terms, the original functions were positioned to give a circular manufacturing flow:



- B** Hand forging (ground floor)
- C** Grinding and buffing
- D** Hafting
- E** Offices and showroom (later)
- F** Engine room, then silver plating

## Robert Fead Mosley and the early works history

The new Portland Works in Randall Street housed all of Mosley's cutlery manufacturing business with smithing, grinding, buffing, hafting, finishing, packing and sales all carried out on site. In addition, the Works was also home to some other related businesses and in 1881, both the cutler, George Gill and the spring knife maker, William H Green rented space there.

By 1901 R.F. Mosley also shared the Works with electro plate manufacturers, W. Mammate & Sons and steam joinery manufacturer, JT Johnson & Sons. Mosley produced high class products and by 1908, had a lucrative partnership with Alexander Clark Manufacturing Company of London. Mosley produced silver goods, "Welbeck" silver plate, cutlery and high-class canteens and boxes for Clark's to market through a prestigious shop in the very centre of London.

- G** Machine forging
- A** Inspection and packing

*Note that today, blocks F and G have been extended from their original form.*

## **Ernest Stuart and Harry Brearley**

In 1913 Harry Brearley discovered a new type of “stainless” steel while working in his own time at The Amalgams Company. The new metal was an erosion resistant low carbon plus 12% chromium but his chief employers, Firth Brown, were not interested in it as it was too brittle and hard for gun barrels.

In the following year, Ernest Stuart was manager at Portland Works. Brearley brought the new metal to Stuart but it proved difficult to forge, grind and harden and at first, broke the tool stamps. The two men worked together to find a methodology that allowed the metal to become workable and hold an edge. New machinery was developed to stamp out the “Rusnorstain” blanks, and production began with RF Mosley's being the first business to successfully sell “stainless” steel.

## **Saving Portland Works**

The Mosley business lasted 100 years until closure in 1969. There followed a series of landlords and a worsening lack of upkeep. The campaign to save the works began in 2009 when a planning application was lodged to convert the building into bedsits. A community share offer was launched, and the building was

purchased in February 2013 and is a Community Benefit Society.

The principle was to preserve the building structure and develop the Works as a site for small innovative businesses; an objective which remains unchanged today. A group of dedicated volunteers have repaired and renovated the workshops, and a number of improvement grants have been received including a major re-roofing project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

## **Portland Works today and in the future**

Having been saved as a working environment, the restoration of Portland Works has continued, and it has become an important place of “making” in the city. Ongoing improvements have created more workshop space and today, the Works has over 30 craftspeople and artists as tenants. Some of these knife-makers, engravers, silver-platers and tool makers might have felt at home in the metalworks of a century ago, but there are now also cabinet makers, artists, jewellers, photographers, technology start-ups and even a gin distillery in the building.

Learn more in our new publication, “Portland Works: Stainless Steel Cutlery” by Anna de Lange.