



Sheffield
General
Cemetery
Trust

Samuel Worth

Samuel Worth, son of Thomas Worth and his wife Elizabeth, née Arnold, was born in Hougham a small village in Lincolnshire, 12 miles southeast of Newark. He was baptised there in All Saints' Church on 13 March 1798.

His parents married in Avenham, part of the village of Staythorpe near Newark, Nottinghamshire in 1789 and they had eight children, four boys and four girls, of which Samuel was the third child. Thomas had been apprenticed to a carpenter, Thomas Bend, in Balderton on the south easterly outskirts of Newark but he may have developed his skills further to be a builder. The first trace of Worth is his marriage, when at the age of 22, he married Elizabeth Turner in Girton, a village 10 miles north of Newark in June 1820.

In the early 1820s Worth decided to move to Sheffield, perhaps to broaden his experience in the growing town as he aspired to become more than a builder. In 1824 Worth was taken on as an assistant by architect Joseph Botham of Chapel Walk, an incomer from Warwickshire who in 1823 designed the Ebenezer Wesleyan Chapel in Moorfield. Here Worth would have gained experience of how an architectural practice worked and in June 1826 Worth became Botham's partner. One of their notable works was the Free Writing School in Townhead Street. The plans for the School show a plain, brick, workman-like building capable of accommodating 40 pupils and included a house for the Master. The partnership with Botham was dissolved in December 1827.

From 1828 to 1831 Worth worked with James Harrison who had come to Sheffield from Ripon at the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Together they produced plans and specifications for additions to large suburban houses including Moorgate in

Broomhill. In 1829 they designed the Surgeons' Hall at the end of Surrey Street on a site next door to the United Methodist Church. It remained in use as an independent Medical School until 1888 when the School moved to Leopold Street and was later incorporated into Sheffield University. The building continued in use after the School had left and latterly was an Army Recruiting Centre and Information Office. The building was demolished in 1971 as part of the development of the city centre. Above the central windows of the building was a plaque stating "Ars Longa, Vita Brevis" (Art is long, life is short). When the building was demolished, the stonework was moved to the Hallamshire Hospital.



Relocated artwork *Source: SGCT Archive*

No record of the death of Worth's first wife has been found but he was recorded as a widower when he married 36-year-old Anne Andrews on 11th March 1829 at Sheffield Parish Church.

Worth was working from his office in East Parade close to the Cathedral during the 1830s, a decade that saw an unprecedented amount of public building work in Sheffield. In September 1831 the Cutlers' Company issued an invitation for all architects to submit plans for a new Hall. 13 sets of plans were received and those of Worth and Benjamin Broomhead Taylor were selected by the Committee with Worth gaining 13 votes and Taylor 10. In November, the decision was reviewed and the two winning architects were asked to work together. As was the custom of the day individual contractors were employed with the architects acting as Clerks of Works.

The foundation stone of the new Hall was laid in June 1832 and despite the comparative youth and lack of practical experience of the two architects for such a large undertaking, the work went smoothly. By March 1834, the new Cutlers' Hall was completed.



The Cutlers' Hall Source: *Picture Sheffield*

The frontage of the new Hall was similar to the old with entrances at each side but in classical style with Corinthian pillars. The simplicity of the front façade to the building hid what proved to be a challenging commission for the architects in both size, shape and Company demands. *White's Directory of Sheffield* for 1837 commended it: 'The edifice is one of the handsomest and most substantial buildings in the town, and is highly creditable to the architects, Messrs Worth and B B Taylor'. The right-hand side of today was added in 1887 by J B Mitchell-Withers who became a pupil of Samuel Worth, hence the continuation of the earlier style. This filled the space between the Hall and the Sheffield and Hallamshire Bank.

In 1834 the design of Sheffield General Cemetery was put out to competition. Once again Worth was the winner. His plan for the Cemetery started at Ecclesall Road where two slender obelisks formed a sort of gateway to a drive which led to a Gatehouse. This was to be built on a bridge over the River Porter. A carriageway then snaked up the site over vaults to a Chapel and on to the Office at the top with

an entrance onto a bridleway, now Cemetery Road. The Chapel and the Office were aligned in the centre of the site and the whole plot was to be walled.

The three buildings, the Gatehouse, the Chapel and the Office, were all designed with Greek Doric and Egyptian features and together with the similarly designed classical buildings on the other side of the Porter Valley, the Wesleyan School (now King Edward VII School) and the Botanical Gardens created a classical Grecian valley, reflecting Nonconformist beliefs the whole of which became known as the 'Classical Porter Valley'.



The Gatehouse *Source: Andrew Littlewood*

The Gatehouse at the main entrance was important in establishing the first impression of the Cemetery which would have been clearly visible rising in tiers up the hillside. The main gateway, side lodges and supporting bridge, spanning the River Porter, were designed in a Greek revival style and built of blocks of Millstone Grit. Although not mentioned in contemporary accounts it has been suggested that the bridge over the River Porter was an allusion to the Greek myth of the souls of the dead crossing the River Styx to reach the Elysian Fields, the afterlife, or as a Judeo/Christian one of crossing the River Jordan to reach the Promised Land.

The building has Greek-Doric columns, the outer ones being attached to form the sides of a recessed portico which has a lion's head carved in stone. Not just an

entrance to the Cemetery site, the side wings of the Gatehouse provided accommodation for workers such as the Sexton or gravedigger and their families.



The Gatehouse *Source: SGCT Archive*

Halfway up the hill, the main path swept eastwards towards the Nonconformist Chapel which sits squarely in the middle of the site, the centrepiece of Worth's plan. Described in the Pevsner Architectural Guide as 'Egypto-Greek' and again constructed using Millstone Grit, the Chapel was built to a great depth: the subterranean part of the structure being equal in depth to the height of the building above ground. The front of the Chapel has a portico with substantial fluted Doric columns beneath it and above the door there is a sculptured relief panel of a dove representing the Holy Spirit descending. Each side elevation has four simply framed Egyptian windows with octagonal iron fretwork.



The Nonconformist Chapel *Source: Andrew Littlewood*

The Cemetery Office was built at the top of the site near to the southerly entrance. The square building has pairs of long, sloping, simply framed windows on each

side shaped like the doorways to Egyptian tombs and Classical style pillars on either side of the door.



The Cemetery Office *Source: SGCT Archive*

The boundary wall on the south side of the Cemetery had two Egyptian gateways only one of which survives. The ouroboros, snakes eating their tails, in the centre of each gate, is an ancient symbol of immortality and rebirth. The fasces are an Etruscan and later Roman symbol of magisterial power and sometimes of unity. The winged orb, a symbol of Egyptian mythology, commonly found over the entrances to ancient Egyptian tombs, symbolises the triumph of day over night, light over dark and good over evil.



The Egyptian gate *Source: SGCT Archive*

The finished work drew much acclaim with *White's Directory* for 1837 stating that 'the cemetery is indisputably one of the most beautiful establishments of its kind in

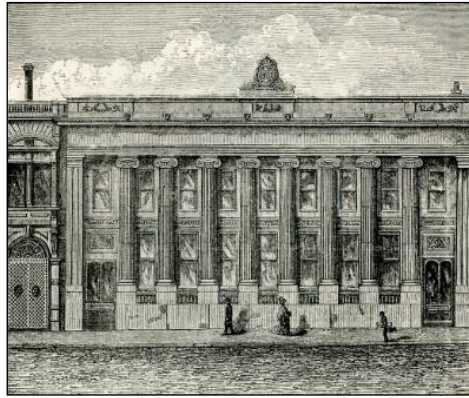
the kingdom, and though some of its chief attractions are attributable to the situation, it is much indebted to the skill and taste of the architect, Mr S Worth, who has made it a delightful spot for the perambulations of the living, and a safe depository for the dead'. The Pevsner Architectural Guide states that 'Worth's use of an Egypto-Greek style is possibly one of the first examples in England.'

In 1835 Worth purchased a plot of land at 463 Glossop Road, at the east corner of Broomhill Terrace, now Westbourne Road. Here he built an impressive residential house, later called West Mount, with a frontage of slender Ionic pillars, which looked sideways at Flockton's recently completed The Mount. Worth is believed to have occupied the house until a buyer was found. The building is still standing but has now been converted to offices.



West Mount *Source: SGCT Archive*

The Sheffield and Hallamshire Bank with its business growing rapidly, acquired a site in Church Street to the right of the Cutlers' Hall for its new headquarters. In 1837 Worth made another substantial contribution to Sheffield's architecture when he was commissioned to design the building. He produced a structure similar in many ways to its neighbour. The building was extended in 1878 and refurbished in the 1960s due to World War II bomb damage.



The Sheffield and Hallamshire Bank *Source: Picture Sheffield*

In 1838 Worth surveyed a 12-acre site in Broomhill and designed a house, Ashdell, for John Shepherd similar to, but plainer than, West Mount. There were differences of opinion between the architect and client and William Flockton was brought in to finish the project. Ashdell is now part of Westbourne School. In the same year, Worth's design for the Union Workhouse, Hayfield, Derbyshire was accepted, with a maximum cost of £2000, for a workhouse for 100 to 120 persons. The Workhouse was completed in 1841 and was altered and extended a number of times; latterly it was taken over by the NHS as Ollersett View Hospital. The buildings still exist and were converted in 2002 to residential use. Worth was appointed Architect and Surveyor for North Derbyshire in 1841. The Hayfield work had perhaps led to this appointment and the Buxton one below.

Around 1840, with his work on Sheffield General Cemetery complete, Worth entered into partnership with John Frith and together they designed the Moorgate Cemetery, near Rotherham for the Rotherham General Cemetery Company. It opened on 8 September 1841 and initially comprised about seven acres. A Chapel was erected, which had an entrance at each end and a central partition which enabled use both by Anglicans and Nonconformists. The Cemetery was extended in 1869. The partnership with John Frith lasted until 1846, during which time Worth, his wife Anne and three children Harriet, Anne, and Eliza were living on St George's Terrace, near St George's Church, Brookhill.

Later in the 1840s the family moved back close to Worth's roots to the small village of Holme in Nottinghamshire, 10 miles north of Newark and 15 miles from Hougham. By 1849 Worth had set up an additional office in Retford although his main business base remained in Sheffield.

The Royal Hotel, Winster Place (now Spring Gardens), Buxton was designed by Worth and built between 1849 and 1852. The Clerk of Works was Robert Ripon Duke who went on to design many of Buxton's buildings including the Octagon. Records indicate that the hotel was financed by Andrew Brittlebank, a solicitor from Winster, which is why its address is Winster Place. The prestigious building is three stories high and has a curved frontage. The hotel was enlarged by Robert Ripon Duke in 1882 but was taken over by the Buxton Lime Company in 1914 and renamed the Royal Exchange. The building now accommodates retail use.

Finally, Borough Bridge, over the River Don was completed in 1853 at the foot of Corporation Street to give access to the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire railway's Bridgehouses goods depot. It was designed by Worth in conjunction with Samuel Holmes. The decorative two arch bridge withstood the waters of the Sheffield Flood in 1864 and is still in daily use.



Borough Bridge *Source: David Worth*

In 1856 Worth moved his offices from 46 High Street to 8 George Street where amongst the pupils in his practice was John Brightmore Mitchell-Withers who was later to become one of Sheffield's most respected architects. Mitchell-Withers was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1871, for many years was the architect for the Sheffield School Board and was also employed by the Duke of Devonshire to superintend the restoration of the painted ceilings in the state rooms of Chatsworth House. Another of Worth's pupils was John Dodsley Webster who designed more than 15 churches in Sheffield in various Gothic styles, hospitals and commercial buildings, small country houses, and private dwellings.

Anne Worth died on 29 December 1855 aged 62. By 1861 Worth and his three daughters had moved to Worksop where Samuel Worth died at his home in Clinton Place on 26 January 1870 aged 71. Despite the couple spending their later years in Nottinghamshire, Anne and Samuel Worth were buried in plot Q 88 in the Anglican area of Sheffield General Cemetery, the site of one of Worth's greatest achievements.

Worth's obituary in the *Sheffield Independent* of 28 January 1870 recorded that

'He was the senior member of the profession in Sheffield and enjoyed the esteem of all his brethren. During the active years of his life he designed and carried out some of the principal buildings in the town.'



Worth's grave *Source: SGCT Archive*