

Steel town Sheffield renews and diversifies

B&C shipping interests have been represented in Sheffield since the 1890s. Now the group has a modern BCA Travel outlet in a prime central position there. Continuing CLANSMAN's series on towns that feature in our business, G. W. Butterworth describes some of the changes in Sheffield's trade and townscape.

It may have been as early as 600 AD when the Anglo-Saxon invaders of Britain founded a settlement which they named Escafeld or Scafeld.

Sheffield has its share of history. In 829 AD King Ecgbert of Mercia was proclaimed King of England at Dore, now one of Sheffield's prettiest suburbs. An inscribed stone has been erected to commemorate the event.

Later history brought Mary, Queen of Scots, to Sheffield to spend 14 years in captivity in Sheffield Castle (since destroyed) with long visits to the local Manor Lodge.

Much of Sheffield's industrial history is incorporated in the newly-restored Abbeydale Works where in 1742 the first process for the production of crucible steel was invented and developed.

The making of cutlery was established here by the 14th century (Chaucer refers to the "Sheffield thwitel"—common knife—in the Canterbury Tales) and it remains to the present day the industry by which the city's name is best known to ordinary people all over the world. To the making of cutlery was added the manufacture of many other kinds of cutting tools and it was largely the need for more and better steel for such products that led to the establishment of the steel industry in Sheffield. The development of steel making proceeded during the second half of the 18th century and by 1835 Sheffield was established as the centre of tool steel manufacture in Britain.

From that time the steel industry has developed on the lines of the manufacture of alloy and special steels for sophisticated purposes such as the motor industry. Sheffield makes steels for machinery, aircraft and other specialist engineering, including forgings from single ingots weighing sometimes over 200 tons each.

Though Sheffield is traditionally asso-

ciated with steel, cutlery and engineering, the range of activity within the City stretches far beyond these fields, embracing a wide variety of different products and manufacturing processes—from fashion to confectionery, from brewing to food canning, even to Britain's largest producer of snuff. Exports feature largely among these products.

Sheffield's historic buildings provide an attractive contrast with modern buildings surrounding them—for example the Cutlers Hall built in 1832 is the administrative centre for the Cutlers Company in Hallamshire, while the City Museum houses a unique collection of cutlery and the finest collection of old Sheffield plate in the world.

Not so far away is countryside of unsurpassed beauty. This is Sheffield's "Golden Frame"—the dales of Derbyshire, the Peak District National Park, the glamour of Sherwood Forest and the austere beauty of the Pennines. There is a host of stately homes, all within a few miles of the city.

Modern Sheffield has a population of over half a million. It is a city that has removed most of the scars of the Industrial Revolution and replaced them with the excitement of the 21st century. Gone is the industrial smoke and grime, giving way to clean air and grand new developments. Among its new amenities, Sheffield now has full conference facilities available. Its central location together with modern communication means that the city is within easy reach of almost all the major ports, yet only a few hours drive from London.

From the 1890s Clan Line have been represented in Sheffield, later to include the Union-Castle Line. In that time many thousands of tons of steel, machinery and other Sheffield products have been—and still are being—carried to South and East Africa and India by B&C group vessels.

■ Below: Castle Square, Sheffield. This award-winning development is one of the main landmarks of the city centre, serving the triple purpose of traffic roundabout, safe pedestrian underpass and vehicle-free subterranean shopping precinct. Unusual in design, it is frequently visited by students of modern town planning. Picture: publicity department of Sheffield Corporation.

