

Sheffield story

Kate Betts:

Sheffield is often called the ‘Steel City’. This is because it’s one of the most important places in the world for making steel - the industry really took off about 250 years ago. Connected with that there’s tool making, engineering and the manufacture of cutlery... have a rummage in any kitchen drawer and you’ll probably find a knife or fork saying “Made in Sheffield”.

Now, these days not so many people work in the steel industry, but it’s said more steel than ever is now being made in Sheffield. With all that industry you might think that Sheffield would be a rather unpleasant place to live... well my name is Kate Betts and I came to live here about 15 years ago. One thing I noticed is how green the city is.

There are something like 2 million trees in the city – that’s more trees per person than any other European city. And there are dozens and dozens of parks – like this one – Meersbrook Park, near where I live.

Sheffield has five major rivers running through it, one of them being the River Sheaf, which gives the city its name. And Sheffield is said to be like Rome in Italy in that it’s built on seven hills, but ask anyone to name those hills and these are typical of the answers you’ll get:

Woman: I don’t think I can name the hills.... It’s not like Park Hill? There’s Park Hill, there’s erm... oh that’s a road....No I can’t name them! I can’t... no, not off pat, no I mean... I’m sure if I saw them in front of me I’d think ‘Oh yeah’.

Woman 2: No. Sorry, I'm not much help, am I?

Kate: Have you heard the saying?

Woman 2: Oh very much so, very much so. And I know that Sheffield is very hilly...

Kate: Have you heard the saying that Sheffield's like Rome, it's built on seven hills?

Man: Yes, I have heard that saying before.

Kate: Can you name the seven hills?

Man: No.

Kate:

Ask them to name the city's two football teams and everyone could say Sheffield United and Sheffield Wednesday... but not everyone knows about Sheffield FC – they're said to be the oldest football club in the world. They were formed back in 1857 and are still going strong...

Now, I came to live here from another part of Britain, but lots of people have come to Sheffield from other parts of the world. In the 1930s people came from Somalia to work in the steel industry. In the 1950s and 60s they came from the Yemen for the same reason – and people have come for lots of reasons from places as diverse as Chile, Vietnam and Poland. Blerta Sylja came from Kosovo in 1999 to escape the fighting with the Serbs.

Blerta: I can consider Sheffield as my second home. I have settled here very well since I came over in 1999. It's a place that I wouldn't swap with anywhere else – I feel very comfortable, people are very friendly and it's very multicultural.