

Walking the Past

Chorley's Village Trails

An introduction to the history of the villages surrounding Chorley



Dale Art daleart.co.uk

Brinscall and Withnell

The best of Lancashire all in one place

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Brinscall and Withnell are two adjacent villages in the Borough of Chorley, Lancashire, and the parish of Withnell, located approximately five miles Northeast of Chorley.

The villages were originally small farming communities, with a quarry nearby and linked by a waterway known as the Goit. In the 19th century, the thriving cotton industry arrived, along with associated industries, leading to an influx of workers and increasing the need for more housing, schools, churches, shops and pubs.

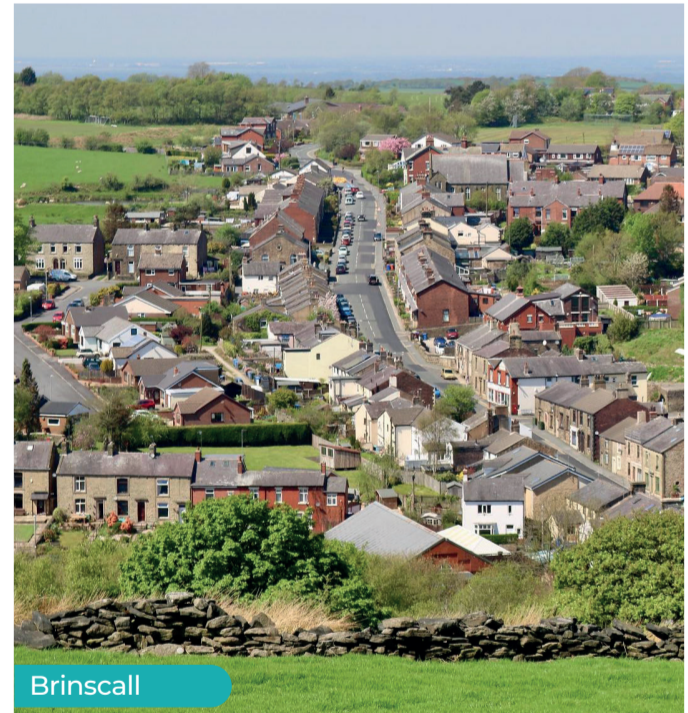
Brinscall is known for its traditional swimming pool, opened in 1911, and both villages are popular for their scenic beauty and walking routes.

With acknowledgements to

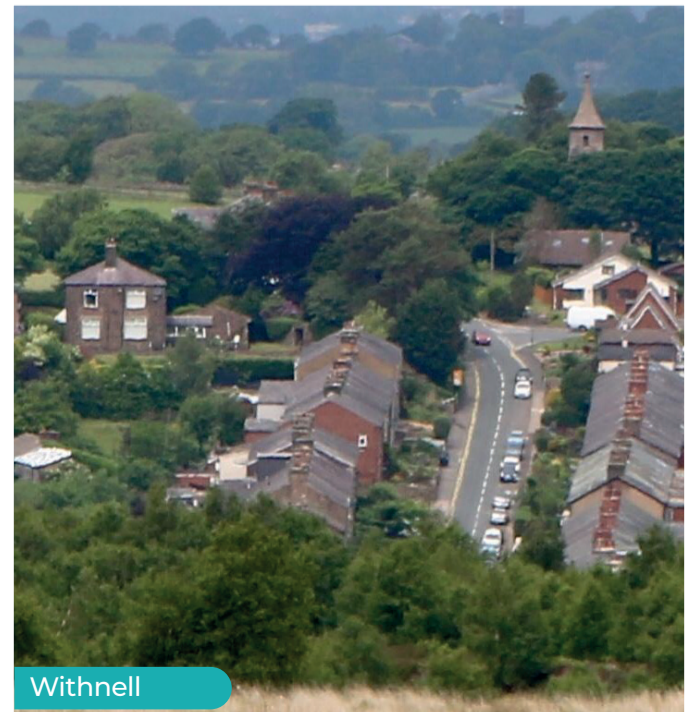
Chorley Council for their kind grant; Debbie Pope, for the development of the routes and historical content; Margaret France for coordinating activities, and Dale Art for the original front cover artwork (daleart.co.uk).

We hope you have enjoyed your walk around the villages.

To view Brinscall and Withnell Trail extended information, please scan Qr Code



Brinscall



Withnell

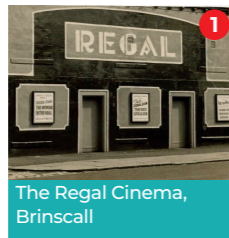
There's so much to discover in Chorley. For inspiration for great days visit:

checkoutchorley.com

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We begin our walk at the corner of School Lane and Railway Road, once the site of 3 houses and a shop that were converted in the 1920's into **The Regal Cinema (1)**, which remained open until 1957 and was demolished in 1970: 'here the dream world of children took shape upon a silver screen' (Jim Lancaster, 2001).



The Regal Cinema, Brinscall

Crossing School Lane (with care!), pass through the **stone carved entrance gate (2)** to Brinscall Playground, once the site of a Methodist Chapel. The stone carvings, made out of local millstone grit, were completed by sculptor, Thompson Dagnall in 2004.



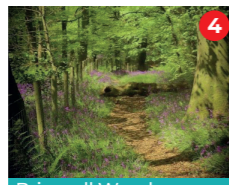
Entrance to Brinscall Playground

After enjoying views of the scenic Lodge, pass through the car park behind **Brinscall Swimming Pool (3)**. The pool was opened in 1911 by Herbert T. Parke, of the prominent Parke family, mill owners and local philanthropists.



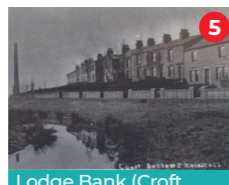
Brinscall Swimming Pool with Herbert T. Parke (left), Fred Butterworth (first manager) and his wife Edith and sons.

As you now walk along Lodge Bank (Croft Bottoms), enjoy the views across the Lodge towards **Wheulton Plantation (4)**, also known as Heather Lea Woods or Brinscall Woods. Between 1898 and 1902, the moors were taken over by Liverpool Corporation Waterworks Department who planted trees to improve drainage and to 'persuade' farmers to move from the hillsides, providing the beautiful backdrop you can see today.



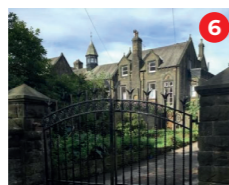
Brinscall Woods (Withnell Plantation)

As you walk along Lodge Bank (Croft Bottoms), the Lodge ends and you reach an area of land on the left which was once the beginning of a large industrial complex, running alongside for approximately half a mile. Hard nowadays to believe that thriving cotton **bleaching, dying and printworks factories (5)** existed here, built and run by Christopher Wood and sons, and employing over 300 people in 1890.



Lodge Bank (Croft Bottoms) with the industrial complex in the background.

At the end of the houses on the right, take a right turn under the old railway bridge and up towards Dick Lane. [Note. If this path is too muddy, you could continue straight on across the cattle grid and proceed for half a mile, eventually turning right past three ruined cottages and barn to eventually reach Brinscall Hall].



Brinscall Hall

At the top of the slope, turn slight left and you will see the impressive **Brinscall Hall (6)**, built in 1876 by (William) Christopher Wood. Before the current Hall was built it is believed that two other buildings existed on the site; the first being a 13th Century mediaeval manor house.

Now turn back and continue along tree-lined Dick Lane back towards Brinscall. On the left where the road meets School Lane, you can see an old Methodist chapel (now occupied by a private business) and the **war memorial (7)**. There are 81 men named from the 1914-18 conflict showing the increased population at the time, and 14 local men named from the 1939-45 conflict. Two of the men on the memorial were awarded gallantry medals: James Miller VC (more later) and Allan Parke MC.



Allan Parke MC

You now have a choice of returning to the beginning of the trail down School Lane, passing some of the **old pubs in Brinscall (8)**: The Oak Tree Inn (now the Little Tiger restaurant), St Joseph's Social Club (once the Printer's Arms), and the Bull's Head (now a private house).



The Bull's Head (now a private house) on School Lane.

On this shorter route, you will also pass by the old **Wesleyan (Methodist School) (10)**, now a private nursery.

For a longer walk after the war memorial, turn left on to School Lane passing the Cricketers Arms.

Whichever route you take, be sure to notice the diversity of houses along **School Lane (9)**, illustrating over 200 years of architectural development, both pre- and post- the 19th century industrial era.

You will arrive at the village store, on the corner of Chapel Street, once known as **No. 3 Co-Operative Branch (11)**, opened in 1899. The Withnell Industrial Co-Cooperative Society was originally created in 1861, establishing its Central Store at 3 Railway Road in 1867 (now private houses). New co-operative premises were then opened in: No. 1 Branch Bolton Road, Abbey Village in 1874, No. 2 Branch Bury Lane, Withnell Mill (**see 24**), and No. 3 Branch on School Lane.



Withnell Co-Op 50th anniversary (1911) memorabilia

Now continue up School Lane a short way, until you reach **Hillside Methodist Church (12)**. Hillside Methodist Church was built in 1899. The cost of the building was raised by members of the local community, along with a large donation from the Parke family.

Opposite the church on School Lane, once stood a strange little building called the **Salt Pie House (13)**, so called because of its shape and once used as the first catholic school in the villages in 1874.



Salt Pie House visible on the right of the car.

As you walk up School Lane, you arrive at **St John's CE/Methodist School (14)** on the corner with Harbour Lane. St Johns was the first combined Church of England/Methodist Primary School in the country and was formally opened on 26th March, 1969, by HRH Princess Margaret.



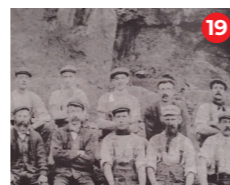
HRH Princess Margaret at the opening of St Johns School

Cross over Harbour Lane to the bus stop, walk for around 100 yards and look across at the buildings that housed **Withnell Coronation Hospital (15)**. The hospital, incorporating Coronation Cottages and Coronation House, was opened in 1902 and the land and most of the building was funded by the Parke Family, and functioned mainly as a 'cottage' or isolation/fever hospital.



Withnell Coronation Hospital

Cross over the road and walk along Sandy Lane. Don't turn right into Balmoral Drive but continue up along the path until you reach a fork and take the footpath on your right. **Pike Lowe (16)** contains some of the oldest buildings in the village and derives its name from two common Old English terms: 1. Pike: A sharp, pointed hill or a summit, and 2. Lowe: Derived from hlāw, meaning a hill or mound.



A group of workers from Brinscall Quarry, c1910

Turn left on reaching Sandringham Drive for about 50 yards and then continue straight on along the footpath by the post box that goes over the tops to Withnell. For a shorter route, at this point, you can cross Sandringham Drive and take the footpath directly down the hill back to the starting point.

Once you pass the houses and come out into the open, look left and you will see the **Pike Lowe (Boardman's Heights) reservoirs (17)** which still supply the villages with water today. You can also see here the **Brinscall Trig Point (18)**. Now redundant, triangulation pillars or 'trig points' created a precise network for surveying and mapping using trigonometry.

Continuing along the path, you have good views of the moors, Darwen Tower and **Brinscall Quarry (19)** on the right. Existing for over 200 years, the stone from Brinscall Quarry was used to build the sites of the Royal Ordnance factories in Chorley and Blackburn and, more recently, supplied sandstone for the completion of the Sagrada Familia Cathedral in Barcelona.

On reaching Bury Lane, cross over the road and head towards St Paul's CE Church, passing the Grade II listed **James Miller VC memorial (20)**. In 1916 Private Miller was ordered to take an important message under heavy shell and rifle fire. He completed his mission whilst mortally wounded, posthumously receiving the Victoria Cross, the highest award for gallantry.

St Paul's CE Church (21) at the top of Bury Lane, was consecrated as a place of worship for the Church of England in 1841. It now includes the only graveyard in our villages.

Now turn back and head down Bury Lane. **St Joseph's Catholic Church and School (22)** are on your right. The Catholic chapel was founded in 1884 and is the highest parish in the Liverpool Archdiocese, standing at 850 feet (259m) above sea level.

As you head down Bury Lane, with a range of solid brick houses built to house the Withnell Mill workers, note the site of the old Methodist chapel (now Chapel House on the right) and the site of **St Paul's CE School (23)**, which once stood on the right, now the entrance to the Fellstone Vale estate.

You can now choose one of two routes: The first route takes you down from Fellstone Vale along the nature trail (old railway line) behind Railway Road towards Brinscall (**see 29**). However, we shall continue towards the bottom of Bury Lane.

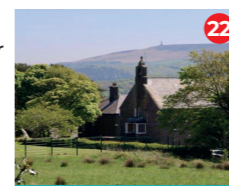
There is a small car park and a row of commercial premises on the right. The building on the right of the chemist was once **No. 2 Co-operative Society Branch Bury Lane, Withnell Mill (24)**. You can see the wording above the upper windows but 'Withnell' was removed during World War 2 when place names were removed to fool the enemy, should there have been an invasion.



Private James Miller VC



St Paul's CE Church, Withnell.



St Joseph's Catholic Church and School



St Paul's CE School, Withnell



No. 2 Co-operative Society Branch Bury Lane, Withnell Mill



Withnell Cotton Mill

Continue to the bottom of Bury Lane and turn right into Railway Road. Although little remains, here once stood a large cotton mill on the right.

Withnell Cotton Mill (25) was built in 1839 by Robert Parke. By 1905, 40,000 spindles and 877 looms were operating, one of the largest cotton mills in the area. Withnell Mill closed as a large-scale cotton mill in 1930.

Continue walking along Railway Road, passing the old red brick water pumping station. **The Gantry Bridge (26)** once crossed the road nearby, taking stone from the quarry over to the railway line, behind the mill. It can clearly be seen in the background of old photos.

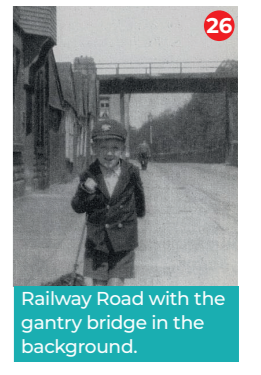
As you continue along Railway Road, you can see a raised grassy area on the left beyond the pavement. This is the roof of a brick tunnel, built in 1905-8, which covers the **Goit waterway (27)**. The Goit transports drinking water, linking the Roddlesworth reservoirs beyond Abbey Village with those lower down at Anglezarke and Rivington, built essentially to provide drinking water for Liverpool. The whole Goit area is now owned and maintained by United Utilities.

As you pass along Railway Road, note some of the **road names on the right (28)** which gives a clue as to when the houses were built. Churchill Road, Hartington Road, Salisbury Road and Derby Street are named after four influential politicians of the time of the late 19th century, with Churchill Road being named after Lord Randolph Henry Spencer-Churchill, the father of Winston Churchill.

For those who took an alternative route via the Nature Trail behind railway road, you pass by **Shale Holes (Shaloes) (29)**, now a picturesque fishing pond. The Withnell Brick and Terra Cotta Company (1912) Ltd. operated two brick works in our area: The main works in Abbey Village, and a second works, the Brinscall Blue Brickworks situated between Brinscall and Bury Lane in Withnell. The clay for the Brinscall works came from Shale Holes.

The railway line, running between Blackburn and Chorley was opened in 1869 and closed in 1966. The route of the railway has been turned into a nature trail between Abbey Village and Brinscall. **Brinscall Station (30)** was once the busiest station and highest point on the line built above an embankment, with a bridge that crossed School Lane. A small wall that formed the entry gates to the goods yard, can still be seen towards the end of Railway Road but nothing remains of the station or the bridge over School Lane.

We hope you have enjoyed your walk through the villages. There are many more beautiful and interesting walks up on the moors and through the woods and, for those who wish to explore further, three interesting spots nearby are described more fully on the website: **Brinscall waterfall (31)**, **World War II bombing (Starfish) decoy site (32)** and **Cocker's Folly farm ruins (33)**.



Railway Road with the gantry bridge in the background.



The covering of the Goit waterway.



Shale Holes (Shaloes) - source of clay for Brinscall Blue Brickworks



Brinscall Station



The railway bridge crossing over School Lane, Brinscall