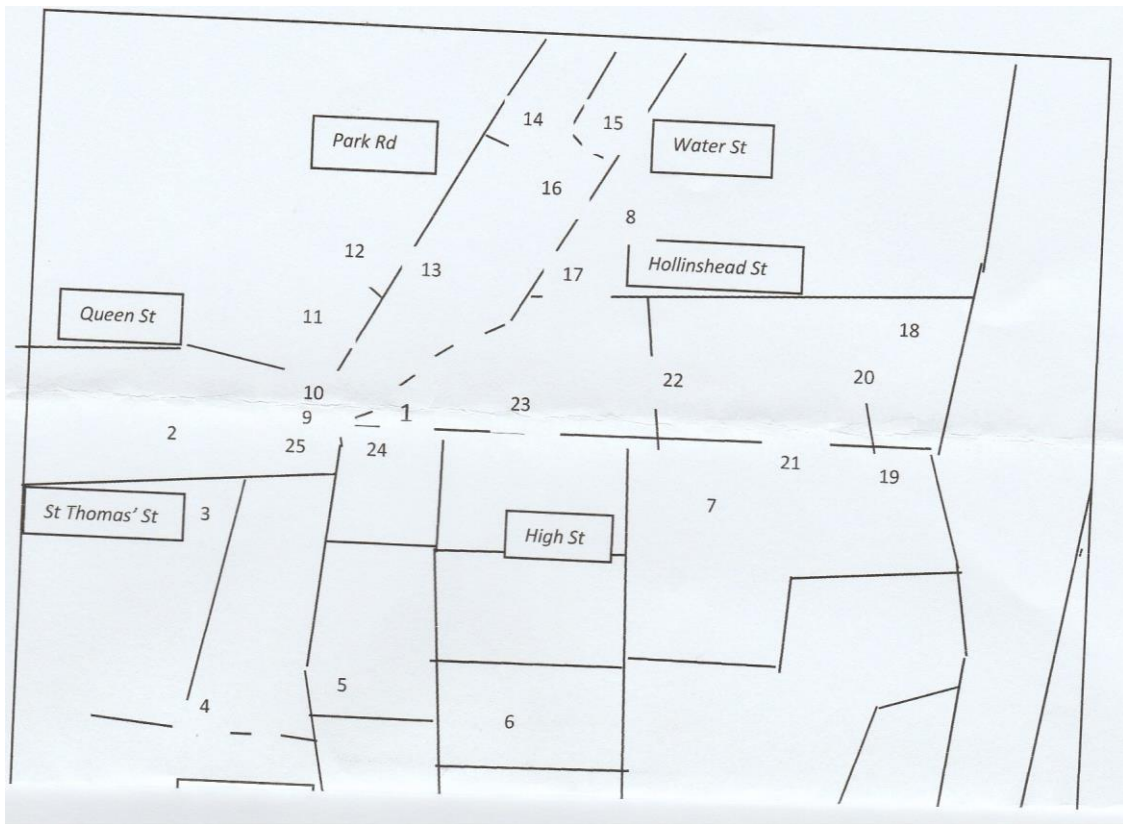


Walking The Past: Chorley's Town Trail

An introduction to the history of Chorley and its town centre.



Part One: Origins

We start at St Laurence's Church. (1) The central parts of this church date back to the fifteenth century, although it's clear there were crosses and chapels preceding the current building on the same site. The Church, until 1793 a mere chapel belonging to the parish of Croston, looked over a crossing point of the River Chor, which became more important as trade between the moorland east and the agricultural west developed in medieval times.



Across from the Church is the Town Hall and the square to its rear (2) This formed part of the original Town Green, where the first market cross stood.



The Site of the Original Town Square and Market Cross



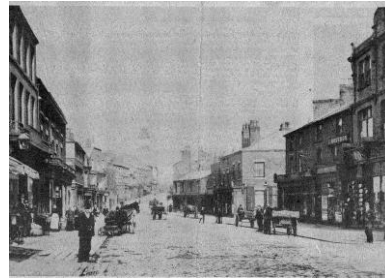
The Gillibrand "Manor" House

Typically markets emerged on the west (or people’s or even “Devil’s”) side of a church. So did Chorley’s, with additional stalls spilling down what is now Market Street. On the south side of St Thomas’ Road stands the Manor House.(3) This was more likely a steward’s or younger son’s house on the Gillibrand Estate.

A stroll along Dole Lane and a left turn by the very active Chorley Theatre, originally the Empire Cinema of 1910, takes you down Peter Wink, now called Theatre Walk, leading to Market Street.(4)

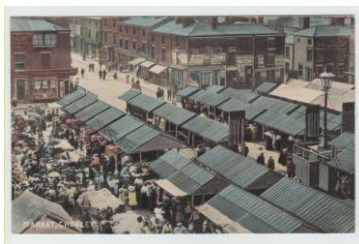


The Chorley Theatre



Market Street

This street fronted farms two centuries ago with the gradual sprawl of stalls becoming shops. Across is Fazackerley Street.(5) This was named after H.H.Fazackerley, respected magistrate and heir to the Gillibrand Estate, who decided Chorley should have a new market place. Hence the current, highly successful market area dating from 1828.(6) It came to be surrounded by diverse buildings, one notable being the Chorley Pilot Industrial Co-operative Society (1864).



The Market c. 1900



Fazackerley Street



Site of the Co-op shop

The market extension (1876), known as the Flat Iron was once a cattle market.(7) It also hosted Chorley Fairs and temperance meetings. Here stood Sante’s Theatre, destroyed by fire in 1914.



The Flat Iron (a market extension of 1870s) and The Chorley Pals memorial



Water Street c. 1950

At the start of the nineteenth century Chorley had around 4000 inhabitants, but it was soon to be more than a market centre. Running northwards from the west end of St Laurence’s is Park Road, known initially as New Road in 1822. At its start you can appreciate Church Brow leading down to Chorley Bottoms; this was the original steep route towards Preston. Beyond Chorley Bottoms is Water Street where Chorley’s first, water-powered, textile mills gathered.(8) One could say its industrial revolution sprang from here.

On the opposite side of Park Road, is St Laurence Lodge, once the home of Chorley’s perpetual curate, Oliver Cooper, who served his chapelry and community from 1756 to his death in 1825.(9) Before the fountain, at the

south corner of Queen Street there is the site of Terrace Mount cottages, now replaced but once the birthplace of Henry Tate, the sugar magnate. (10)



St Laurence's Lodge



The Fountain

Shortly before Astley Park Gates, there is a fountain set in the wall. This was placed by Cooper's daughter Anne and her husband, John Pollard, who was one of the first great doctors in the town. (1)

Astley Park Gates are soon looming, reminding us that landed estates once reached the very heart of Chorley.(12) Astley Hall was begun as an Elizabethan manor house, much extended in the next century and seen as the jewel in Chorley's crown. However, these imposing gates were moved from the edge of the Gillibrand Estate when, after the First World War Reginald Tatton donated Astley Hall and its surrounding park as a memorial to Chorley's people who had given their lives in war service. The war memorial itself stands just inside the gates.



The Astley Park Gates



Beresford House (The Old Rectory in 1823)



The Islamic Education Centre



The Foundation Stone of Park Road Chapel

On the east side of Park Road the first dwelling is Beresford House, a fine symmetrical Georgian building. This was Chorley's first rectory, built in 1823. (13) More fine town houses, once belonging to merchants, millowners and professionals, line that side of the road. Beyond Park Street is the Ah-Rahmah Academy, Islamic Education Centre, using the building of the former Wesleyan Methodist Church, itself replacing the early one of 1842.(14)

Park Street leads to the foot of Parker Street where there are some fine handloom weavers' cottages(15) close by the Unitarian Chapel dating from 1726.(16) The owner, replacing the Chorleys at Chorley Hall, was Abraham Crompton, who gave land for what was originally a Presbyterian chapel. His grave is found by the north side. A famous connection is Beatrix Potter, granddaughter to Jessie Crompton, herself granddaughter to the first Abraham Crompton.



Parker Street Handloom Weaver Cottages



The Unitarian Chapel

Descent of Chapel Steps takes you to Water Street. At the town centre end is Chorcliffe House, once the mansion of John Silvester, local gentleman and magistrate. He was one of those agreeing to the action of the Yeomanry at the infamous Peterloo of 1819. He also read the riot act in Water Street Chorley in 1826 when Bolton's Mill was attacked. (17) Hollinshead Street, is named after John Hollinshead, landowner, merchant and benefactor. At the head of the street stands the elegant Hollinshead Street Chapel on 1792, originally a Countess of Huntington Chapel. (18)



Chorcliffe House



Hollinshead Street Chapel

Union Street, runs alongside the Flat Iron. (19) The street was likely named after the Act of Union with Ireland in 1801, a plan to draw Ireland close in the midst of the French Wars. This may be a good point to rest or even leave the second part of the tour until another day. Shops, cafes and transport are to hand.

Alternative language versions found by...

We hope you have enjoyed this stroll. More can be found out by accessing a fuller version on the Chorley Heritage Centre Group website- www.chorleyheritagecentre.co.uk.

With acknowledgements to Chorley Council, Chorley Heritage Centre Group and the Chorley Chamber of Trade

Part Two: From Township to Town

In 1800 Chorley was still a village and township with around 4000 souls. By 1900 it contained some 30,000 people.. Off Union Street, in Byron Street, there is the Congregational schoolroom. It also carries a plaque in memory of Walter Norman Howarth, the chemist who synthesised Vitamin C in 1933 and was awarded a Nobel Prize.(20)

Across the road is the fine memorial to the Chorley Pals, part of the East Lancashire Pals who nobly volunteered in the First World War and were slaughtered at the Somme (21). Fellery Street covers one of Chorley town centre's four lost coal mines (22) Further on looms the Library. From 1906 the grammar school was located here. The site was the brainchild of one of Chorley's greatest sons, Henry Hibbert- self-educated businessman, sportsman, politician, mayor, MP, educationalist and fire service patron. (23)



The Chorley Pals' memorial



The Library

On the car park (and planned new Town Square) site at the corner opposite St Laurence's was once Chorley's first town hall, provided by John Hollinshead in 1802.(24) Chorley's old coaching inn, the Royal Oak dominated the rest of the site until demolition in 1937.



The Old Town Hall (1802)



The "New" Town Hall (1879)

The current Gothic Town Hall stands across. It dates from 1879 and appeared two years before Chorley was incorporated as a borough.(25) The St Laurence's vestry had managed affairs until 1853, when an Improvement Commission took on town government prior to 1881. The Commission's prime mover was Robert Rawlinson, public health expert and the major force behind the establishment of Chorley Cemetery in 1860.

Southwards along Market Street, there is a fine gateway to Mount Pleasant, the site of St Mary's Catholic Church of 1852.(26) The arch itself is a tribute to Dean Crank, a priest much committed to the poor of Chorley at the turn of the nineteenth century. To the right of the arch there is a stone commemorating Roger Wrennall (or "Wrenno") a noble Catholic martyr of Elizabethan times.



Across Market Street is the pedestrianised Chapel Street, so called because one of the earliest Methodist chapels was at the foot of it (1792). The building was later used by Chorley's Catholics and then became a Mechanics' Institute. (27)



Dean Crank's Arch Possible site of the first Methodist Chapel (1792) The Site of Disraeli's statue The Baptist Chapel

At the junction of Cleveland Street, an empty plinth above the first storey used to hold a striking statue of Benjamin Disraeli, a monument currently hiding in Astley Hall garden.(28) Another chapel, the Baptist, was established further up Chapel Street ; one can date it in 1848 from its wall plaque.(29)

At the head of this street, another row of Chorley's handloom weavers cottages appears on the left, with St George's Church (1825) standing tall on the right. (30,31). This was one of the large new churches funded by the Church Building Commission under the 1818 Act.



Handloom Weavers' Cottages, Chapel Street

St George's Church (1825)

Further on the left is the fine ornamental Shepherd's Building, revealing the relative wealth of Chorley by 1903. Be certain to look up to find the Good Shepherd. (32)



The Shepherd's Hall



The Modern Station Building

Across the busy dual carriageway sits the railway station, a successor to that of 1843.(33)

St George's Street leads back to Market Street past pleasant Victorian terraces. Gillibrand Street holds the site of Chorley's first dispensary (1828) and the cottage hospital, established in 1890-98, by Alderman Rawcliffe, a great benefactor of the town.(34)



Cunliffe Hall

The Cottage Hospital

On the east side of Market Street, is Cunliffe Street and Cunliffe Hall. This was a Primitive Methodist Ebenezer of 1866 and now a Masonic lodge.(35) The end of Market Street faces a massive Asda car park.(36) The nearest section of this, in the cleft of Bolton Street and Pall Mall, was the old Chorley township town land. Hence came the National School in 1825 (later St George's), then the fire station, public convenience and abattoir. The junction was known as Big Lamp, after the standard that once stood here. Off to the right are the fancy London street names the vestry gave to the emerging streets of 1804: Pall Mall, Cheapside, Fleet Street. At the junction of Fleet Street and Cheapside is to be found the base of the Weeping Cross, a structure which once marked the southern edge of town.(37)



St George's School (1825), the Institute to its right



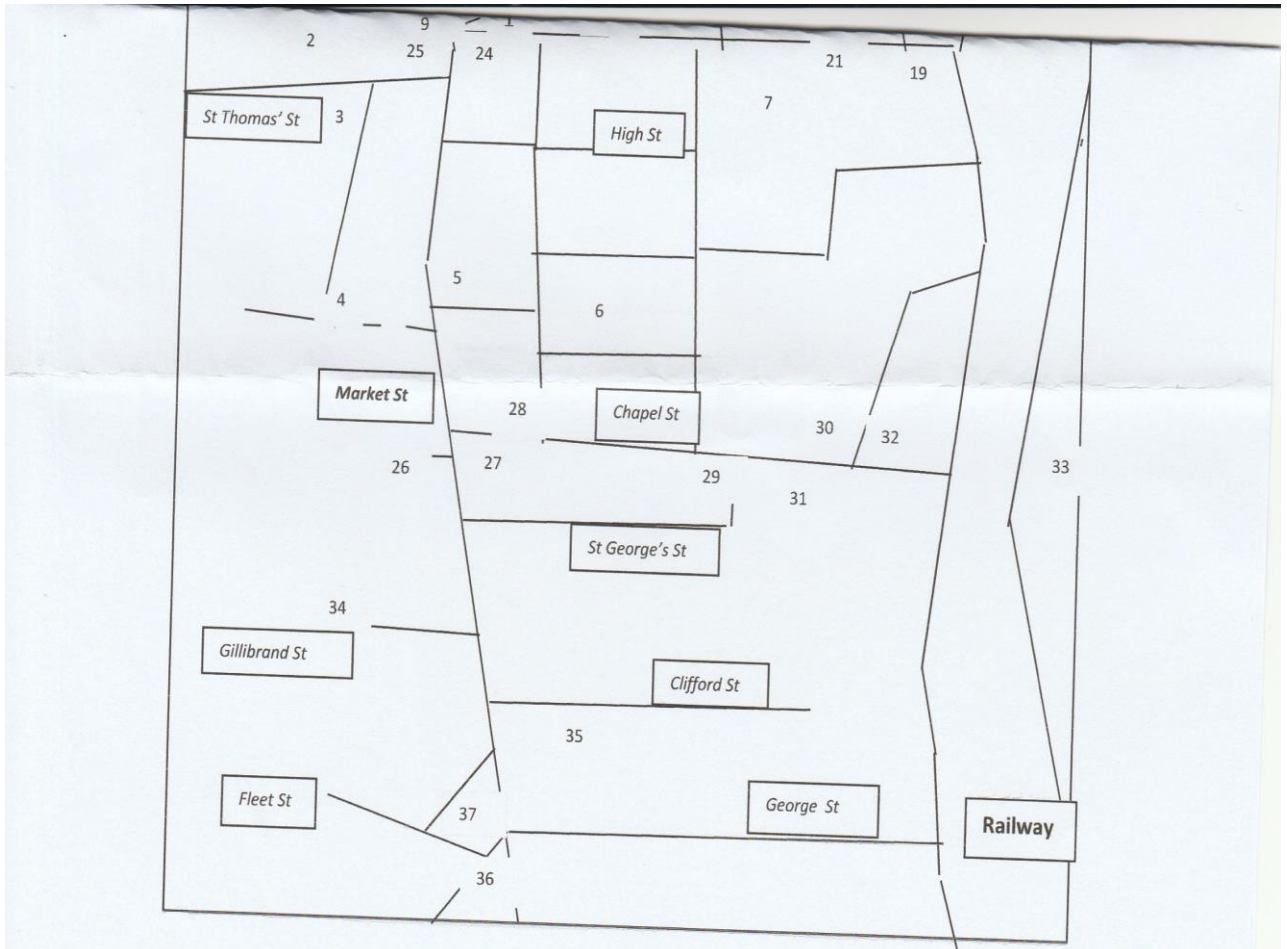
Base of the Weeping Cross



Site of the old township land



Later edition of the Big Lamp



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