



TRAFFORD MILL,  
pictured August 1985.

TRAFFORD MILL lies in the valley of the River Gowy, which joins the Mersey at Stanlow. Until the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal in 1894 the river was tidal, and it is conceivable that in the mediaeval period the mill operated as a semi-tidal mill during Spring Tides. Today the Gowy reaches the Mersey via syphonic culvert under the Ship Canal with a one-way sluice permitting land flow but barring the tide.

The Mill was acquired by the Cheshire River Board in 1954 in order to develop a system of river improvement begun by Italian Prisoners of War. The Mill lost its water wheel in 1952 when some of the paddles had to be smashed to release a boy swimmer who was trapped inside it. Until it was sold to the River Authority it served as a store for cattlefood. Ownership of the Mill passed to the North West Water Authority in the implementation of the 1973 Water Act. For a short intervening period during a preliminary series of amalgamations, it was owned by the Mersey and Weaver Authority.

History of the Mill.

Trafford Mill is not specifically mentioned in the Domesday Survey 1085-86, as was the neighbouring mill at Barrow, and as the village was laid waste, it is possible that there was a mill but out of operation. The earliest documentary reference is in 1302-03 in the Cheshire Chamberlain's Accounts, which refers to the Earl leasing the Mill to Richard the Engineer, who operated the Dee Mills and was Military Engineer to Edward I in the Welsh Wars. In 1303-04 the Profits of the Manor and Mill of Trafford were granted to the Valet of the Prince of Wales, John Chandos. In 1464 there is mention of the Mill in the records of the Troutbeck family.

Much more definite evidence is available in the Land Tax Returns 1784-1832, where it can be assumed that the Earl of Shrewsbury leased out his estates in small parcels of land until 1823, when he took direct control of his lands.



LOCAL HISTORY, AND ITEMS OF INTEREST AROUND CHESTER.

The city of Chester is understandably a place very much on the list of places to which one must pay a visit, a city dominated by its cathedral, and so full of history that one is very soon captivated by its magical spell. Here, all manner of books and pamphlets can be purchased, so that its history can be very easily presented to the visitor.

In this album, I have tried to bring to notice some of the not so well-known local history and legends of the villages around Chester, and to give more prominence to some of those buildings, houses and fields etc. that we pass every day and take so much for granted.

Many of the extracts are taken from magazines and pamphlets which appear from time to time, or are issued as one attends various anniversaries etc, and where possible I have obtained present-day photographs to give them support.

I would like to thank those who have suffered in answering my many questions, and have given me much help with advice as to where to find various objects and places to visit.

Naturally I would be pleased to hear from anybody who can give more information about the enclosed photographs, or other little snippets of local history.

Thank you to you all, and I hope you enjoy this album.

DAA Willis,  
Meadow Lea Farm.



### TRAFFORD MILL.

The massive cog-wheel, and chutes to Nos I 2&3 grinding stones, almost as they were when the Mill and its Miller, Albert Tourle, retired in the 1950's.

Picture taken 1985.



Below is a short description of an extract from my diary:  
"Jan 23 1943, Took 25 bags oats to Mill for grinding."

A personal experience of life at Trafford Mill.

The war of 1939-45 gave a new lease of life to country water-driven mills like Trafford. Up till that time they had concentrated on the use of imported feeding-stuffs in the preparation of stock foods, but the lack of valuable shipping together with the results of the Home Front ploughing campaign, brought a great increase in the use of homegrown corn. We at Hall Farm, Guilden Sutton, had ploughed up some sixty acres, mostly for growing oats, and all this corn was to be ground and used to feed stock producing milk and beef.

So it was that on a winter's day in 1943, I, then aged twenty, was ordered by my father to take a load of twenty-five bags of oats to Trafford Mill for grinding, and bring home the twenty-five bags that had been taken there the week before.

This was a job for Old Sam, a good drawing horse who thought nothing of pulling a four-wheel lorry loaded up with twenty-five bags of oats. Having loaded up with the bags dropped down from the granary, we set off on our journey, along Trafford Lane past the two stations and out on to the main road towards Frodsham. A mile down along we came nearly to the Gowy bridge, where we turned into the lane going down to the mill.

As soon as we stopped, a voice hailed me from an upstairs window. It was Albert Tourle, the miller who had been there all his working life, demanding what I had got. I shouted "Twenty-five bags for grinding." To which he called back, "All right, draw him underneath and we'll get 'em off."

No sooner had Old Sam drawn the load under the drifthouse than a chain was dropped from through the floor above, and I climbed up and linked it round the neck of the nearest bag. I watched it as it was hoisted up to the floor above where Albert, with a deft twist pulled it in and trucked it away ready for chuting down to the grinding stones. I suppose it would take about twenty minutes to unload, and when that was done, Albert shouted down to move to another door where I was to load with the ground oats taken the week before. This time the operation was in reverse, the full sacks being lowered down by chain where I took them off and built up my load.

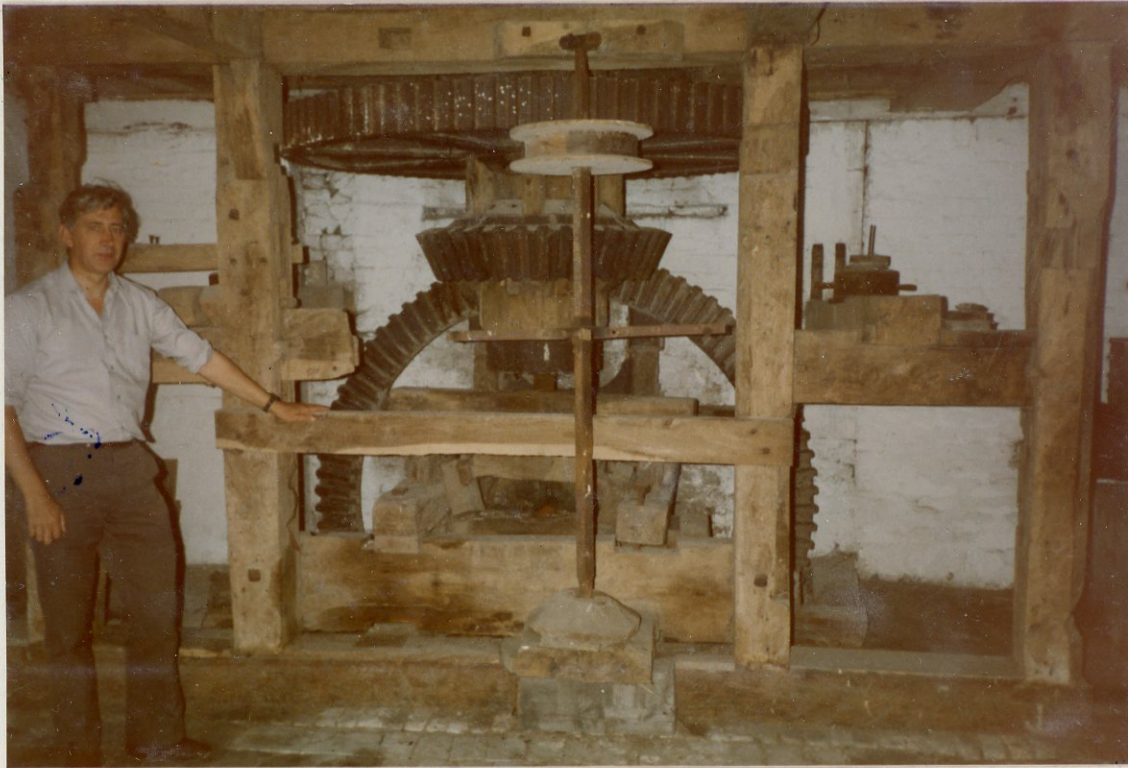
I found all this very enjoyable, a sharp contrast to the daily work on the farm, but more pleasure was to come. "Want to have a look round?" said Albert, as he knew I was interested in the ages old machinery of the mill. Then he took me down to the main water wheel, to see it splashing round on its endless journey, and he showed me the eel trap which usually had one or two occupants.

All too soon it was time to return, so with a command to Old Sam who all this time had stood waiting patiently, we set off for home. I was to go to Trafford Mill many times in a similar way, but with the end of the war came a return to grass farming and the use of imported feeding stuffs.

The end of milling was inevitable, and when Albert Tourle reached retirement age in the 1950's, the mill with its old cogwheels, chutes and beams closed down.



# TRAFFORD MILL.



The mill as it stands today is probably the result of improvements of the estate, (of Earl of Shrewsbury), which were completed about 1830. In 1819 the tenant of the Mill and Farm was Peter Slater, who carried on after the Earl took direct control of his estate. It is interesting to note that the Mill at Great Barrow was rebuilt in 1810 in a similar style. In 1837 the Tithe Commission visited Trafford and confirms Peter Slater in occupation. In the Census Returns for 1851 Rupert Fernyhough is Miller and Farmer, aged fifty two. He was born at Armitage in Staffordshire, possibly on one of the estates of the Earl of Shrewsbury. Rupert Fernyhough's younger son Frederick took over the mill and in the 1871 Census Return he was miller and farmer employing two men and two boys. He died in 1893 and was buried along his father in Plemstall Churchyard. There are carved initials on the flour hoppers relating to the Fernyhough family.

In 1893 Mr James Owen, a Corn Chandler of Brook Street in Chester, became tenant of the Mill and the last Miller, Mr A M Tourle, then aged twenty, began to work there for the rest of his life and for the last tenant of the Shrewsbury Estate Griffiths Bros, Corn Millers of Liverpool and Chester. Griffiths Bros became tenants of the mill in 1897 and Mr Charles Wright of Picton took the tenancy of Trafford Mill Farm, at that time consisting of 35 acres. The Miller occupied the cottage at the end of Mill Lane, now known as Mill Cottage, but originally the Toll-house on the Chester to York Turnpike.

In December 1917 the Mill, was put up for auction and was bought by the tenant, Griffiths Bros. From about the beginning of the century the mill, like many other country mills, concentrated on the preparation of imported maize for animal feed. This in part explains the poor condition of the flour dressing machinery and the North Wheel.

In the picture above, taken August 1985, G R Coppack, of Mickle Trafford, stands by the mechanism operated by the South Wheel. This wheel operates on a system designed by the French engineer J V Poncelot, in 1820, about the time of the major rebuilding of the mill. This system gives an increased efficiency by controlling the angle at which the water hits the paddles of the waterwheel, reducing the shock effect. Similar wheels are found only at Chester and Marford in this area.



## STAMFORD HEATH



The picture (left) shows the junction of Wicker Lane with the main road A51 Chester to Manchester. To the residents of Guilden Sutton this was also known as Sutton Spot, and was a favourite walk on Sundays and Bank Holidays to watch the holiday traffic as it passed on its way to the North Wales coastal resorts.

The main road is also known as Watling Street, being the Roman Road that ran from Chester (Deva) to Northwich (Salinae), and thence on to Manchester and Carlisle.

In 1769 the Chester-Northwich section was considered a turn-pike road, and toll was payable by those

Each length of road had a toll-house where the toll-collector

lived. These toll-bar cottages were sometimes round and sometimes square, and were coloured white so as to be easily seen. There was one such at Boughton, one at Vicar's Cross, and one at the end of Wicker Lane, just behind where the white car is shown in the picture. The one at Wicker Lane end was demolished in the nineteen-thirties.

The small picture (left) shows the old toll-house at Delamere as it is in June 1985, being similar to the ones at Vicar's Cross and Wicker Lane End.

Tolls varied from a halfpenny per head of cattle, to sixpence for carriage horses. The many stage-coaches which used this road were charged 4½d or 6d according to the width of the iron tyres or rims of the wheels.



In olden times, bandits and robbers were numerous around Stamford Heath, the open area between Stamford Bridge and Vicar's Cross. In winter, the Heath and lowland alongside the River Gowy were frequently shrouded in mist, which afforded ample cover to a highwayman waiting to rob the stage coach as it made its last few miles to Chester. So that there could be no hiding places for them, the local landowners were requested to keep all roads clear from small trees and scrub for a width of seventy yards.

On one occasion during the nineteenth century, a waggoner driving his horse and cart to Chester to purchase a load of coal, was attacked by two men. After a lot of noise and shouting, the driver managed to beat off his attackers using a loose plank taken from off his cart.

The buildings of the present Vicar's Cross Golf Club, to which have been added a new clubhouse, were originally known as Stamford Heath Farm, being part of the old Hope Estate that was split up and sold in 1920.

There was no toll payable by local cart traffic using this road, their users being also men who worked on the road doing repairs and cutting back the scrub from the encroaching heathland. Also exempt from toll was traffic to a church or a funeral.



14 (Gp. 5) — THE CHRONICLE, FRIDAY, JAN. 27, 1978.

# Tourist plan for mill



Trafford Mill at Mickie Trafford, which is to be renovated by the Water Board.

THE Trafford Mill on the river Gowy at Mickie Trafford may become a major tourist attraction for visitors to Chester.

It has been proposed by the North West Water Authority that a one-year job creation project should be carried out on restoring and altering the building.

At a recent meeting, a report stated that while a major tourism scheme might eventually be justified, there would be great local education, cultural and recreational benefits from the project.

It states, "There is strong support from the county and district councils for a conservative scheme, as well as support and participation of the Chester Archaeological Society."

Proposed restoration work would provide for a water industry museum, a field study centre and working water basin.

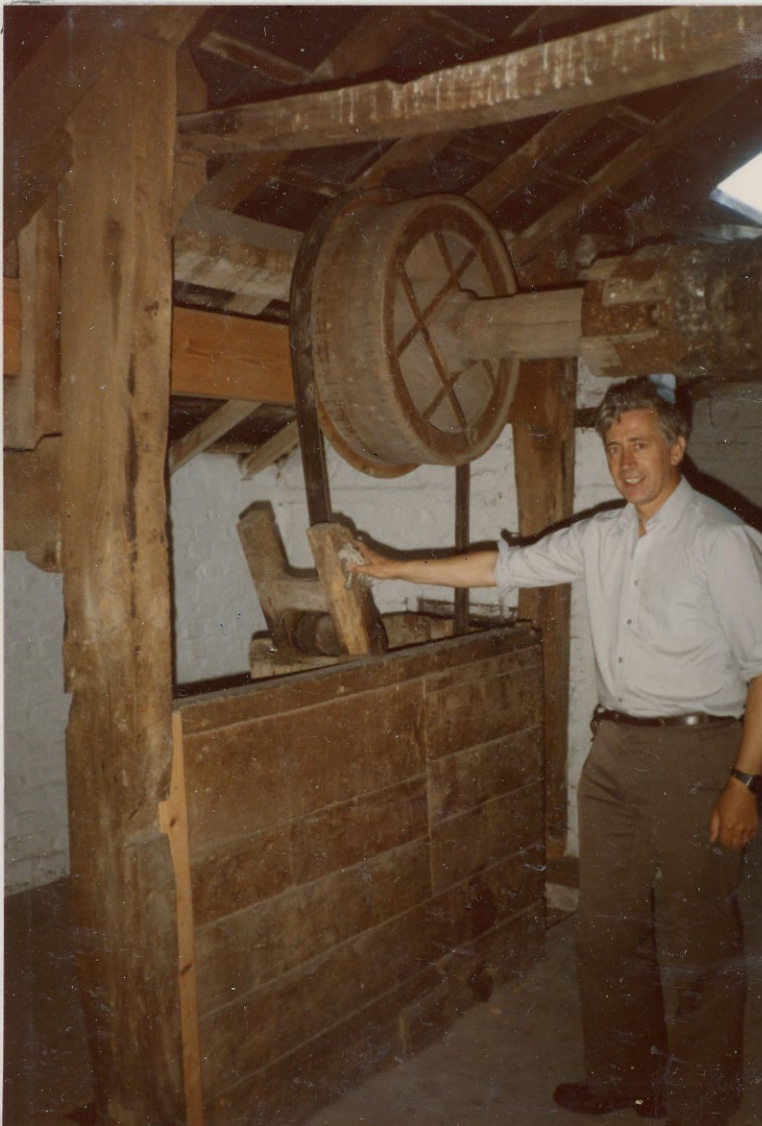
## Interest

The sub-committee is expected to recommend expenditure of £22,000 by the authority and an application to the Manpower Services Commission for £25,000 under the Job Creation programme.

Described in the report as an area of great interest, the Gowy Basin from Chester to Beeston, has been a site of 10 water-powered mills.

The Trafford Mill is the most complete 19th century mill on the Gowy, and it is proposed that one end of the mill should be restored to working conditions for demonstrating corn mill and allied interests. The Archeological Society has offered to assist in the restoration of the machinery, which is in good condition, and only the waterwheel will require major work.

It has also offered to provide a team of guides and voluntary workers to assist in maintenance after the Job Creation scheme ends.



The interior of the mill has been restored to very much as it was at closure in the 1950's. The picture (left), taken in July 1985, shows a small part of the interior, with Mr G R Coppack, of Mickie Trafford, and a member of the Archeological Society.



## BRIDGE TRAFFORD

The picture, taken June 1985, shows the bridge, which gives its name to the village, over the River Gowy, and to the right is seen the Salter's brook which comes in here.



The Domesday Book of 1086 gives the name as Brugetroghford, but long before that a Roman Road crossed the River Gowy at Trafford Bridge.

In 1086 the bounds of Delamere Forest included Bridge Trafford, and there lived two Foresters and a garcon. These officials were also to draw "pannage", a tax taken on the right to feed pigs in the woods.

At the Northwich Session of 1608, there was a petition from the inhabitants of Barrow concerning the repairs of Trafford Bridge over the River Gowy. A report states that:- "Whereas in the late Warres one arch of Trafford Bridge being beaten down by the Cavaliers and the other two stone arches so ruyned for want of reasonable repair that they are ready to fall and must of necessity be taken down to the foundation or sufficiently repaired. The ruins of the arch having stopped the principal course of the water by reason whereof all the low grounds and meadowing for divers miles adjacent have for divers yeeres past binne utterly spoiled by flooding to the great impoverishing of the neighborhoode and also of the City of Chester, having most of their hay from those parts, the highway also (being the greate roade from the North of this Kingdome to Chester) being sometimes by high water soe overflowed that it is impossible without great danger, the cost of the repairs whereof, according to the Judgement of workmen, will amount to one hundred marken at the least.

May it please your worshippe that there may bee a ley throughout the whole countie for the repair of the bridge."

The cost of the repair was eventually "Estimated at six score pounds."

Later, in 1649, came a petition from Guilden Sutton, Plemstowe, Thornton and Ince. "Whereas we have five severall times heretofore petitioned your Worships for the repair of Trafford Bridge which was broken down int the tyme of the warres, by reason whereof (besides that it is a great road) wee have for the space of five years past binne indamaged to the value of many thousands of pounds by spoyling all our meadowing, the ruins of the arch having stopped the principall course of the water, by reason whereof all the low grounds and meadowings for miles adjacent spoyled by flooding. The charge of repairing by the view of able workmen will be six score pounds."



## BARROW STATION.

Barrow Station, sited in the West Cheshire meadows, in sight of the Mersey and the Welshhills was a part of the old Cheshire Lines Committee system, and was opened to passengers on 1st May 1875. It was officially entitled as Barrow for Tarvin, as it was also to serve that area. As many as eight trains each way daily stopped at the station, the earliest being the 6.43 am from Chester. The goods yard also handled an extensive amount of traffic.

Eighty years later, 30 May 1953, Barrow station was closed to all traffic, and rumour became fact when a carefully worded notice announced that "British Railways regret that after careful consideration....."

An account of the last of operation reads:..... "Arriving at Barrow, we found that much had already been stripped down and loaded into a covered van, and only the bare essentials remained. Yet a last look around the station revealed that the buildings had been built of the very best materials, although they now had a ghostly air about them.

Zero hour was 8.45 pm, when the last two trains, up and down, practically met in the station, the 7.20(SO) from Manchester (Central) to Chester (Northgate) departing at 8.42 and the very last of all, 8.45 pm, to Manchester.

There were very few people to see the last trains. The local ganger—, Tom the porter-signalman at Barrow, one or two local people, and Station Master Childs.

The Chester train came down the bank from Mouldsworth dead on time headed by ex GCR 4-4-2T No67400, and the solitary passenger to alight was an elderly local lady, who on being pressed to keep her ticket as a souvenir of many years travelling— politely declined.

Then came the very last train, the 8.37 from Chester, appropriately headed by an ex G C R "Director" class No 6266I, "Gerard Powys Dewhurst."

Mr Childs and myself climbed into the rear brake-composite, an ex C L C of Dukinfield build, there was a brief wave of the flag and we were off east-bound up the I in I44 to Mouldsworth. It was all over."

In recent years, branch lines have died with a flourish of trumpets, fog-signals, wreaths on the last train, and "Auld Lang Syne" at the end of a final journey— but stations die quietly.



Thirty years after closure, when this picture was taken in June 1985, This Cheshire County Council signpost still points the way to Barrow Station.



# THE SUNDIAL, BARROW CHURCH.

Tradition has it that the base and shaft of the sun-dial were once part of the Cross that was destroyed in the seventeenth century. These are of red sandstone, with a moulded head of a different stone carrying the dial which is inscribed:

"Robert Hankinson, Richard Robinson, C W 1715."

The Cross, mentioned above, formerly stood in the Churchyard, an ancient cross "erected and made of squared stone with diverse and costly curious works wrought in and upponne the same" which were "by reverent antiquities first erected and sett upp out of good zeale and charitie for diverse good uses and purposes."

About May, 1613, a number of Puritan gentry and their followers "being verie contemptuous and refractorie people" who claimed to be the only true professors of the Gospel, set about the destruction of the Barrow and other crosses. Witnesses stated that the crosses "nowe are and for a long time hath bene usually frequented and extraordinarily preserved, defended and advanced..... and idolatrously worshipped and adored," and that children of the local schools were told by their masters, especially in the "Crosse weeke," to resort to the Cross and recite prayers; that persons travelling by the highways worshipped at the crosses, and had given them ill speeches and blows because they did not do the same; and that burial processions were accustomed to set down the corpses at the crosses, and then to kneel down and recite superstitious prayers."

From the Barrow Church records we read that Thomas Okell's accounts show the following items for the year 1779:

Pd.----- for mending ye sundial .....2.6d  
spent at putting the dial up. .... 9d  
For fetching the dial stone from Kelso..... 1.0d

(Kelso meaning Kelsall, some 3 miles to the east.)







#### RAILWAY OVERBRIDGE AT MICKLE TRAFFORD.

This picture, taken in September, 1985, shows a diesel multiple unit on the exLNWR Chester general to Manchester (Victoria) line, via Warrington. The overbridge, now closed to all traffic since May 1984, formerly carried the ex **C**heshire Lines Commission line from Chester (Northgate) to Manchester (Central) via Nothwich and Knutsford.

Known locally as the "Top Line", this line climbed from the Goway meadows at a gradient of 1 in 73 to its highest point it crossed the LNW line. On this top line, wartime traffic was very heavy, serving the local steel mills at Shotton, and was also notable in that it was used to the last by steam engines until they were replaced by diesel power in 1968.

The overbridge was built in 1874 when the CLC line came to Chester, and after mammoth service spread over a century, had to be supported by steel trusses to carry the trains until the end of all traffic in 1984.

Much speculation hangs over the future of this section, Mickle Trafford to Dee Marsh Junction. Will the line be taken over by some preservation group, or its trackbed be used as a road, or possibly as a footpath for ramblers?

Memories die hard. We remember the old "ten- to-three" which came down every day hauled by a tank engine with LNER painted on its sides, and was a signal to those who worked in the fields to go up and get ready for the "afternoon milking", of long trains of mineral wagons loaded with iron ore for Shotton. Never will we forget the spectacular sight of a double-headed train struggling up the 1 in 73 gradient, assisted by a shunting engine pushing with all its might at the rear, the sparks and glow from the fireboxes of all three engines shooting high into the dark sky.

All is quiet now on the "Top Line." The rails lie covered with rust, and slowly Nature takes over to hide the scars.



### STAMFORD BRIDGE.

Situated three miles of Chester, on the Roman road named Watling Street, over which stage-coaches must have been a common sight, but gradually they were to pass into history as their place was taken by faster and more efficient modes of transport.

The river Gowy is a narrow sluggish stream, but it merits a place because the bridges over it need attention, and thus traffic is disrupted. Barrow parish records refer to bridge repairs even in mediaeval times, and in 1608 it was decided that "no bridges be repaired without consultation with the adjacent parishes." In July 1646 there was a petition by the residents of Christleton and Barrow for the repair of Stamford Bridge over the River Gowy, necessary because of damage sustained during the Civil War.

In 1946, Cheshire was just recovering from the after-effects of very severe gales and heavy rainstorms when, on the evening of the 11th February to add to the devastation, Stamford Bridge, on one of the main roads, collapsed into the river. This was a disaster which was to occupy space in the papers for some years to come.

A lorry-load of German war prisoners had just passed over the bridge when part of the masonry began to crumble, and, just before darkness fell, the whole structure suddenly cracked and part of it plunged into the swollen River Gowy. Half an hour earlier and the consequences for motor traffic would have been serious. The road was immediately closed and vehicles had to make a wide detour. The cause of the collapse was said to be the heavy volume of water in the river which in normal times was only about ten feet wide. A private car, which was following the lorry carrying the prisoners, managed to get over without mishap by swerving, while two other cars pulled up on the brink of the gulf. A further part of the bridge fell during the following night.

After an inspection by the County Bridgmaster, two-way Bailey bridges were quickly constructed by No 6 training battalion of the Royal Engineers under Captain Topley, and, by working through the night with floodlights, these were completed within a few days. Each bridge was capable of carrying up to seventy tons. It was anticipated that the bridges would have to remain in use for about nine months, but as many users of the Chester to Manchester road will remember, such was not the case. By June 1954 one of the bridges was closed for repairs, and thousands of holiday-makers found themselves joining a mile-long queue to cross the remaining bridge.

On the evening when the bridge collapsed, (said to be over two hundred years old), Council roadmen barricaded the road with barrels and planks, and Barrow residents had to be directed through Guilden Sutton and Mickle Trafford. The 70ft long Bailey bridges, with a narrow footpath on the North side carried the traffic for the next thirteen years.

When the present bridge was built in 1959, the bend in the road was straightened by siting the crossing to the South of the old line,



Picture  
taken  
June 1985.





# BARROW CHURCH (St Bartholomew).

This picture, taken in August 1985, is of the Font, which stands in the North Aisle. The basin is lined with lead, wherein are the letters "J J, W N, 1713". These are the initials of the Churchwardens; J Jollicoe and W Newport.

This Charity board is to be found in the North Aisle of Barrow Church (Saint Bartholomew), and reads:

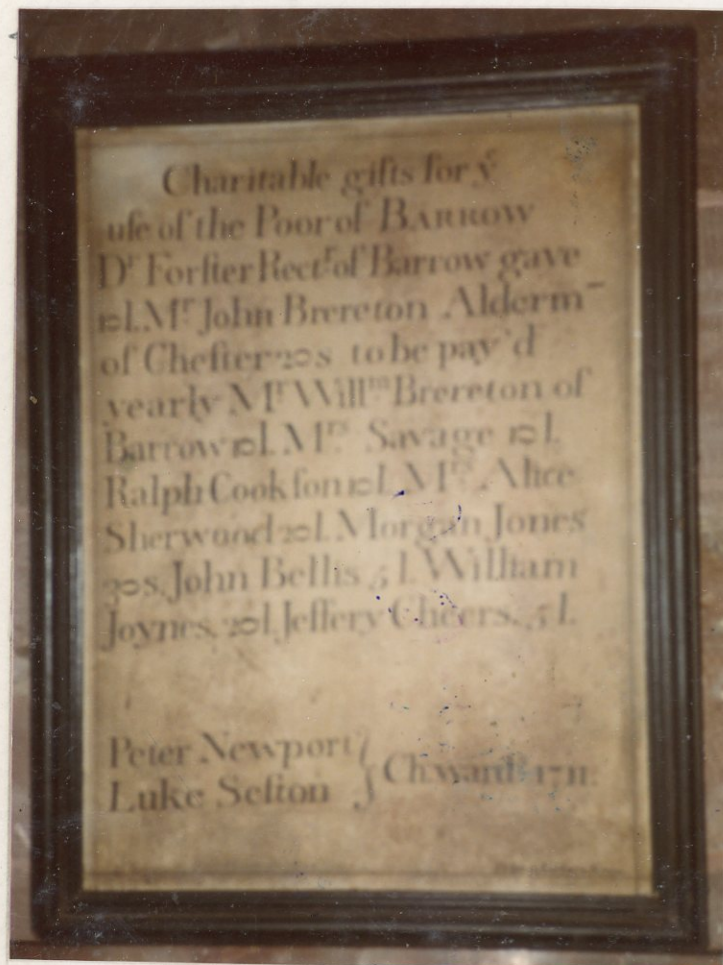
Charitable gifts for y<sup>e</sup>  
use of the Poor of Barrow.

D<sup>r</sup> Foster, Rect<sup>r</sup> of Barrow gave  
10<sup>l</sup>. M<sup>r</sup>. John Brereton Alderm<sup>n</sup>  
of Chester 20s to be pay'd  
yearly. Mr Will<sup>m</sup>. Brereton of  
Barrow £10. Mrs Savage £10  
Ralph Cookson £10. Mrs Alice  
Sherwood £20, M<sup>r</sup> Morgan Jones  
£30, John Bellis £5, William  
Joynes £20, Jeffery Cheers £5

Peter Newport

Luke Sefton

Ch.ward<sup>s</sup>. 1711







ELIZABETH  
wife of CORNELIUS

GREGORY of Beefton died  
June the 22nd 1802 aged  
65 years.

The above named CORNELIUS  
GREGORY died October 19th 1822  
aged 82 years.

After his spouse full twenty years  
He sojourned in this vale of tears  
Still holding forth redeeming love  
Without reward but from above.  
He made the Gospel trumpet sound  
Till a small Church his labour crowned  
Worn out with labour age and pain.  
So let them rest nor stir their dust  
Till CHRIST the Lord shall raise the  
just.

THOMAS ARDEN  
who died January 13th 1911  
in his 76th year

"God sees when the footsteps falter  
When the pathway has grown too steep  
So He touches the drooping eyelids  
And giveth his loved one sleep."

Also of MARY ANN  
wife of the above  
Who entered into rest Jan 11th 1924  
Aged 80 years

"Dear Mother whom we loved so well  
Is now on earth no more  
She's gone with Jesus Christ to dwell  
On yonder peaceful shore."

ALICE WALLEY ARDEN  
daughter of the above  
born June 12th 1873  
died April 17th 1929.

Also CATHERINE ARDEN  
their daughter  
born July 8th 1878  
died Sept 14th 1947.

In Remembrance of  
JOHN BECKETT FARRALL

DIED May 19th 1855 aged 55 years

I know that my Redeemer liveth; and though  
after my skin worms destroy this body yet in  
my flesh shall I see God.

....Also the remains of the above laid

MARY BATE who departed this life  
Dec 3rd 1833 aged 46 years.

"Also a mother, a wife, a friend is gone  
All her work on earth is done,  
Once she mingled with the saints below  
And drank where streams of mercy flow.  
But anxious "to depart" and rest  
With saints above supremely blest.  
Her spirit fled and soar'd away  
To regions, to endless day."





BRASSEY GREEN BAPTIST CHAPEL, pictured July 1985.

Brassey Green Baptist Chapel lies among fields some one hundred and twenty yards south of the quiet country road leading from Tiverton to Huxley. The seclusion of the site and the style of building provide an introduction to the circumstances in which our Baptist forbears worshipped in this area of Cheshire.

The Chapel was built in 1745, following meetings of local baptists held in the house of one Edward Allan, of Brassey Green, from 1691. The first entry in the Register records a meeting of a group of people at the home of Samuel Acton, of "Nantwich," a wealthy salt proprietor who later became Minister of the Nantwich Baptists.

The chapel was built by one Thomas Walley, of Bunbury, and is measured 36 feet long by 20 feet wide. Later a Sunday School was added. The Walley family of Brassey Green were very much involved in the life of the chapel, as can be seen by the number of Walley tombstones in the graveyard.

In 1817, seven men were baptised at Brassey Green, the first baptism by immersion, and "was attended by a large congregation, sympathisers and curious alike." A temporary baptistry was provided in the chapel-yard. Water was at hand from a stream flowing nearby. Later that day the seven friends constituted themselves as the Brassey Green Baptist Church, with The Rev Cornelius Gregory as their Minister.

The Chapel was privately owned by the Walley family for over a century, and gradually fell into disuse and became dilapidated after a new Baptist Church was built in Tarporley in the 1830's.

In recent years the site has been used only occasionally for week-end camping, and an annual camp and Anniversary services. In 1984, using skilled labour provided by the Manpower Services Commission, the building was completely renovated and converted into a camping and day conference centre suitable for a maximum of forty people. Funds for this renovation were provided by members and friends of the Tarporley Baptist Church.

Some few years ago 58 tombstones were recorded of which only two were indecipherable; the majority are recumbent or horizontal slabs of sandstone, the headstones mostly relating to later internments. They span the years 1773-1971, though there are very few which post-date the 1939-45 war. Thomas Walley, strangely perhaps, was buried in the graveyard of St. Helen's Church, Tarporley.



## THE NATIVITY CHAIR.

In the chancel of Ince Parish Church is this carved oak chair; carved in bold relief is a representation of the Nativity, the Virgin Mary with the Holy Child, Joseph, and the crib with ox and ass standing by. Beneath is the date, 1634, cut into the wood and plainly entered at a later date. Below stand out the initials J B, flanked by two shields, one an elaborate crosslet, and the other a Welsh goat.

The initials stand for John Bellis, who was born in 1634, a worthy yeoman who lived at Great Barrow. The name Bellis is Welsh and stands for ap Ellis, hence the two Welsh shields.

John Bellis, besides being a farmer, is recorded as being also a Constable and overseer of the poor there in 1662. In Barrow Church his name may yet be seen painted upon a board, which chronicles the fact that in 1711 he gave a benefaction of £5 to the poor of the parish. Possibly this was a parting gift as he went to spend his declining years with his son, Robert, Minister at Ince. And to Ince he bequeathed the carved oak chair.

Robert Bellis was born at Barrow in 1669. A clever dreamt serious lad, he attracted the notice of his father's landlord, Mr Cholmondely. The boy was sent to school

to a Mr Robinson at Mickle Trafford, and when he reached his sixteenth year he was entered as a sizar at Christ's College. In 1689 he took his B A at the age of twenty, and on the feast of St Thomas, 1690, he was ordained Deacon.

In view of his ordination, Robert Bellis was presented to the living at Ince. In 1692 he married Sarah Holt of Chester. Strange as it may appear, this youth, scarcely out of his 'teens, is in Holy Orders, a married man, and incumbent of a parish.

Robert Bellis died in 1724, aged 55, having "prached about 30 yeres." Fifty-five is not a great age, but we can imagine Mr Bellis to have been an old and broken man. His humble parsonage had seen seven funerals, two marriages pass through its doors during his ministry, and the loss of its kind patron must have been a crowning blow. We spoke of him as adreamy boy, and as such he died.

Coming to more modern times, some fifteen years ago this chair was removed by thieves from its place in Ince Church. Police were informed, but no knowledge of its whereabouts came to light, and it was given up for lost. Years later, the chair was found put up for sale in an antique shop in Southport, and when all formalities were cleared, it was later rightfully restored to its place in Ince Parish Church.

The picture above was taken in October, 1985. Worthy of mention is the carving of the two arms of the chair. Very skilfully carved, each arm is composed of two fishes, each with their tails intertwined. The chair is considered by many to be the oldest and most valuable of the treasure to be found in Ince Church.





### The White Gates, Leeswood, Nr Mold.

These are to be found some three miles along the Mold-Wrexham main road. Their history is:

IN the year 1722 the Manor and estate of Ince (near Chester) was sold to Mr George Wynne of Leeswood, Flintshire, a strong supporter of the reigning Hanoverian family. In the year 1724 Mr Wynne presented a new parson to the parish, and a new chandolier to the church.

The family of Wynne had long been settled at Leeswood, near Mold, and could trace their descent from Rhys ap Tudor Mawr, a prince of South Wales, who died in 1089. George Wynne had a strange romantic history. He inherited from his mother a small freehold on Halkyn Mountain, worth £30 a year, Tradition has it that a woman, hurrying across this mountain, slipped and fell, and her heel, as it grazed the surface, laid bare a vein of lead. Anyhow, lead was discovered here, and in the course of twenty years it brought its owner a sum of £360,000. This wealth is dissipated in various extravagancies. At the ripe age of two and twenty- he was born in 1700, George Wynne became High Sheriff of Flintshire, and purchased, as we have seen, the Manor Of Ince. He also built himself a town house at Mold, Ty Mawr, the large house next the Black Lion Inn, and a new fine country residence, Leeswood Hall, which cost him £40,000. The story of "the magnificent gates of Leeswood" is worth repeating. It was stipulated in the contract for them that they should be paid for on the day that they were opened. They have neither been paid for nor opened to this hour.

Defeating Sir John Glynne of Hawarden, George Wynne was elected for the Flint boroughs, and later on became Under Secretary of State for War. About 1730, his father John Wynne claimed that he was the rightful owner of the Halkyn lead mines. A letter to his son begins: "You graceless, rebellious villain." The latter thereupon presented a hundred black oxen to King George II, for which noble deed he was created a baronet in 1731. Such was the royal answer to the father's grievance.

Sir George was not without his kindly feelings, and there is no evidence that he ever interfered with his people at Ince. He died at Blackheath, in Kent, a debtor and intestate, in 1736.



Picture taken May, 1986.



## ST. PETER'S CHURCH, PLEMSTALL.

Named after the patron saint of all fishermen, St. Peter, this much visited church is found at the end of a very quiet lane leaving the main road at Mickle Trafford.

The church is a simplified version of Perpendicular Architecture and almost certainly was rebuilt in the first half of the fifteenth century, although the ground plan is likely to have been established in around 1200 A.D., and took the place of a more simple building constructed in the seventh century. A major restoration took place in 1819, followed by the construction of the tower.

The tower was built in 1826 and replaced a wooden belfry. It contains three bells, which are inscribed:-

- 1) God Save our Church 1635.
  - 2) God Save our King 1663.
  - 3) Gloria in Excelsis Deo 1663.
- (2) and (3) were cast by John Scott of Wigan.

The roof of the church is medieval, constructed in the fifteenth century using double framed arch braced hammer beams.

Just by the gated entrance to the church can be seen a mounting block, i.e., a series of two large sandstone steps, up and down, used by the gentry of the period to mount their horses, or by the ladies alighting from their carriages.

The hamlet Plemstall takes it's name from Plegmund, a hermit who established the church on an island amidst the River Gowy marshes, and later wrote the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles of the tenth century.



Picture taken 1984.





THE SUN-DIAL,  
ST. PETER'S CHURCH,  
PLEMSTALL.

The picture was taken May 1985.

This fine sun-dial at Plemstall Church really provides a perfect study of ornate curves and rounded stone masonry. Note the graceful curves of the pillar, which itself has a square base sitting on the round step. For those standing on

the step and not tall enough to read off the shadow on the dial, a further small stepping stone is provided, perhaps more suitable for children to use.

The dial is inscribed:

"Jos. Mouldsdaie, Th. Chamberlane,  
Churchwardens, 1730.

The legend goes of the fisherman who was shipwrecked as a terrific storm blew up in the then extensive waters of the River Mersey. He eventually made land on an island called the Isle of Chester, on which Plemstall Church was built.

The Church is named after St. Peter. the patron saint of all fishermen.

Not far away from the sun-dial is a quaint old gravestone, now sunk well into the ground, which reads:

Here  
lieth the bo-  
dey of JOHN  
JONES who de-  
parted this life  
June ye 3<sup>rd</sup>. 1740  
Aged 40 years.





THE CHRISTENING FONT,

ST. PETER'S CHURCH,

PLEMSTALL.

Picture taken July 1985.

The Christening Font at St Peter's Church, Plemstall, is of sandstone, with an octagonal base carrying a short round pillar and overhang supporting the octagonal font. On the front, in large capitals, are the initials R. W.

The wooden cover has a delightful carving of the Madonna and Child, the work of the Rev John Hooker Toogood, Vicar at St Peter's from 1907-47.

The magnificent carving suspended over the font is inscribed "In memory of S Johnson, R. Dickson, given by his family to the Glory of God."

The font dates from the late 16th century, and is still in use as it has been through that time.

Extract from *Old Cheshire Churches*, Raymond Richards, FSA.  
Plemstall Church.

There is a Holy Well some 100 yards from the church. It is said to have been a Druidical well before it was put to use for Christian rights by Plegmund who baptized his converts in this well near his cell. Certain it is that in 1301-2 there was a "Saint Plegmunde's well" near if not actually on the site. Probably the well itself or water from it has been used for baptism from the time of Plegmund. The existing churchwarden's accounts show that from the time they commence annual payments were made for cleaning the "Church Well" or the "Christening Well." The payments were made to the clerk and are linked with bread for the other Sacrament. In 1907 the well was protected with a stone curb with a suitable inscription, and on Sunday, August 14th, 1938, the Saints Day, a large body of Roman Catholics made a pilgrimage on foot to the well.



ST PETER'S CHURCH, PLEMSTALL:



This picture, taken in July, 1985, is of the three-tier pulpit, still in use, and complete with its sounding board and hour-glass. The hour-glass can be seen attached to the wall, to the left of the candlestick on the highest tier. Restless small children for over two centuries must have thought that the sand took an unpardonably long time forsooth its way from the top to the lower compartment.

The front is inscribed:

G. D.                      C.W. 1722.  
S. B.  
I. P.    Fecit

---





ST. PETER'S CHURCH, PLEMSTALL.

The door, in the entrance to the church, is 15th century, and is made in two parts, and both hinged. Picture taken July, 1985.

MALPAS CHURCH.

Over the South doorway to the church is a sundial fastened to the wall.





This fine old canopied church-warden's pew at the rear of the Church is very preserved. It is seven feet high, with a panelled back, the canopy being supported by twisted columns. The Pew is inscribed: "Thomas Kelsall: Theophilus Kelsall: Churchwardens Ano Dom 1697. I R: W G: Sidesmen."



Prior to electricity coming in the nineteen-thirties, parishioners worshipped and sung their hymns by the light of candles. To give even a mediocre light it took a hundred candles to light the church. It is of interest that the interior of the church was thoroughly whitewashed every year until well into this century, obviously to give more reflection from the candles. This picture of a box-pew in the Chancel shows the wood-block candle-holders fastened to the upper surfaces. No doubt great care would be taken by the occupants of the pew that their hats or flowing hair should not catch fire from the near-placed candles.





# PLEGMUND,

AAwood carving by the Rector of  
St. PETER'S CHURCH, PLEMSTALL, the  
REV. J. HOOKER TOOGOOD, 1907-47.

To the Isle of Chester came Plegmund, a Mercian by birth, who could always be found at the gates of Chester expounding the scriptures, and he established a hermitage on the spot where Plemstall Church stands to-day. Fellow Mercians and pilgrims seeking spiritual advice and consolation made their way by boat to see him. And here the hermit would baptise at the well which is still to be seen at the roadside near the bridge.

In addition to his religious activities, Plegmund contributed to a work which is possibly the most important document of that period--- The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. It is believed that a great deal of this Chronicle was actually written by Plegmund himself, particularly the years between 849 and 891. The early part of the work could have been written in his hand when he was at Plemstall. The manuscript attributed to him is now in the Corpus Christi College library at Cambridge.

The existence of Plegmund and his scholarly and devotional activities came to the knowledge of King Alfred who, having defeated the Danes, turned his attention to peace. In the year 890 he appointed Plegmund to be Archbishop of Canterbury, and so from his cell on the little of Chester, he ascended to the highest ecclesiastical position in the land which he held for over twenty years.

During this time he helped Alfred to translate into English a treatise written by Pope Gregory as a guide to bishops. Twice he visited Rome, and in his early correspondence with the Vatican was as prolific as in Plantagenet times. Plegmund is credited with consecrating seven bishops in one day. He fired the Church with life and energy such as it had not known during the Danish invasion.

The Primate outlived the king he loved and served, and is said to have crowned Alfred's son Edward at Kingston. He laboured to preserve and extend the Alfred tradition throughout his life, and dying in 914, was buried in his Canterbury Church.



## SAINT PLEGMUND'S WELL, PLEMSTALL.

Saint Plegmund, in his early days, had hermitage in the marshes where Plemstall Church now stands. The well there bears his name, but is locally known as the Christening Well because water for baptisms in the church was taken from it. Springs are often believed to have risen where saints lived or were buried. He may have christened his catechumens there before he became the friend and adult adviser of Alfred the Great, and Archbishop of Canterbury in 890AD.

during the ninth century the Danes were raiding and pillaging Britain to such an extent that King Alfred and some of his supporters were forced to seek refuge in the marshes and woodlands. Among the King's supporters were monks who had been driven from their monasteries which had been looted and burnt down. They in turn joined Alfred's soldiers to harass the Danes, using guerilla tactics. They had an advantage over the Danes: they knew the woodlands and marshes.

Some holy men on the other hand remained at their isolated posts and persued their studies. In Mercia, that of the country which included Chester, there was such a man named Plegmund, a Mercian by birth who stood at the gates of Chester expounding the scriptures. But when the invaders he too had to flee to the marshes.

The area of land between Chester and Helsby was in those days a vast swamp from which arose a small patch of land high above the marshes to be called an island. This was known as the Isle of Chester. To this island came Plegmund and he established a hermitage on the spot where Plemstall Church now stands today. Fellow Mercians and pilgrims seeking spiritual advice and consolation made their way by boat to see him. And here the hermit would baptise at the well which is still to be seen at the roadside near the bridge. Today it consists of a hole in the ground surrounded by slabs of sandstone on which Latin inscriptions have been carved. One of them, ARBOR FLOREAT (may the tree flourish) probably refers to the tree which grows alongside. There's a local tradition which says that should the well dry up. the tree will die.

As a postscript, I was to visit the Christening Well in June 1985, and found that the well had indeed dried up and there was not a spot of water in it. On making enquiries to the Vicar, the Rev John Malbon, M A, he told me that the well first dried up during the severe drought of 1976, and since that time no water had reappeared. Then during the following year the tree had died, leaving the scene shown as in the photograph below.







THE  
HURLESTONE VAULT,  
at  
St. Peter's Church,  
Plemstall.

The two pictures were  
taken in July 1985.



Outside the East wall of the church, occupying the whole of the Chancel, lies a large raised platform covering a vault. On top of this there is an ornate altar or box-tomb, with recumbent skeletons carved on the two sides. The skeletons are male and female, (count the ribs) and show (1) A hand plunging a barbed arrow into the groin, with the other hand holding aloft an hour-glass, (a reference to the sands of time).

(2) The second skeleton holds aloft a similar barbed arrow, and with the other hand holding a three-tailed snake to the body, (for a healing?).

This vault was the burial place of the Hurlestons of Newton.

Inside the church, on the left side of the Chancel, the Hurlestone plaque records:

Underneath lie interr'd JOHN HURLESTONE of  
Pickton, Esqr, and ANNE, his wife, daughter of  
THOMAS WILBRAHAM of Woodley, in this County, Esqr.

Here also lie JOHN HURLESTONE their Son and Heir,  
and MARY, his wife, daughter of THOMAS LEIGH  
of Adlington, in this County, Esqr.

Here also lie CHARLES HURLESTONE, their Son and Heir,  
and ANNE, his wife, daughter of SSr Jeffrey SHAKERLY  
of Hulme in this County, K C.





THE PLAGUE STONE. UPTON PARISH CHURCH.

The Plague Stone, dated 1507, has stood in the Churchyard of the Church of the Holy Ascension since 1938. It can be seen just to the left of the church doorway, where this picture was taken in September 1985.

Everyone has heard of the Black Death that swept through the county in 1348-49, and reduced the population by at least one-third. Reference to this plague is made in many of the registers of our local churches. Later, in the 16th and 17th centuries, the neighbourhood of Chester was many times visited by the Plague and district plague stones were set up so that people from afflicted districts could barter for food. They put money in the bowl of the stone and then went back to a safe distance; food, in exchange, was then placed on the stone.

The original position for the Plague Stone was on the Butter Hill, Upton, then it was moved later to Upton Cross Roads before it's final resting place at Upton Parish Church.





Picture dated May, 1985,  
and the extract July,  
1984.

The Church stands at the centre of the village of Hargrave, in the heart of a beautiful countryside, and is named after Saint Peter, the patron saint of all fishermen. Naturally, it is also the centre of village life. The church, built in 1627, is one of only four built during the seventeenth century. The story of how it came to be built is quite interesting.

In those days the children of Hargrave went to the so-called Grammar School at Tarvin for their education. This was a distance of some four miles and a long way for little legs to walk. The shortest way was over the low lying meadows, crossing the River Gowy by way of the ford. From there the path led up through Hockenhull and so into Tarvin. Thus one night, following a period of heavy rain, the children were returning from school and as they approached the ford they found the river in full flood. There being no other way of crossing, they spent the cold wet night sheltering under a haystack. On waking up the next morning, one of the boys, Thomas Moulson, vowed that if he ever became rich he would build a school at Hargrave and thus save the children the long trek to and from school.

When his schooling was over Thomas Moulson went to London, where he prospered and was made an Alderman of the City. Eventually he became Lord Mayor and was knighted for his services. On one of his return visits to Hargrave, he remembered his pledge, but first he had to build a Church so that it's parson could teach the children with the aid of a schoolmaster. So St. Peter's Church was built and half of it used as a school. The Church was dedicated in 1627, as confirmed by an inscription over the porch door:- "Thomas Moulson, Alderman of the City of London, built this Chappell on his owne cost and charge. Ano. Dom. 1627."

Sir Thomas Moulson also bequeathed land and property, "The Moulson Trust", the income from which paid the stipend for the Incumbent and the Schoolmaster's salary, initially £40., and £20., per annum respectively.

In 1813 a new school was opened for 75 pupils and the partition between the old schoolroom and the chapel removed.

In 1878 a drastic restoration of the church was commenced, the ceiling being removed and the oak roof restored. A contemporary account reports "feathers blowing about the aisle from the nests of barndoor fowls."

The "Chester Courant" of 1890 reports that "the usually quiet little village of Hargrave was quite astir on Thursday last, on the occasion of the dedication of a new organ and vestry, which have lately been added to the quaint and interesting parish church."





GUILDEN SUTTON METHODIST CHURCH, built 1873.

The presence of Methodists in Guilden Sutton was first reported in 1811 and in 1819 the Wesleyan Methodists had a mission here, but later gave it up. Subsequent to this, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Williams came to live at "Mount Farm", and opened their house for the holding of Primitive Methodist services. The cause greatly prospered and in 1873, at a cost of £850., a church was built on a site given by Mr. Robert Cathcart Smith of the Old Hall. His son, also named Robert, later gave more land for enlargement, and with his wife and two daughters took a very lively interest in all branches of the church activities. An old lady, Martha, whose husband Harry Jenkins died at "Mount Farm" in 1943, walked scores of miles collecting for "the new Chapel". Another honoured name is that of William Thomas, to whose memory a tablet is erected in the church.

The Sunday Schoolroom was added in 1910, and in 1983 the premises were again enlarged. To-day they are the most convenient and attractive to be met with in any part of the village.

The first entry in the account book is the foundation stone collection which raised £5. 6s. 0d., and a foundation tea brought in £18. In July 1874 there is an entry "Pew Rents" £7. 8s. 9d. Pew rents, from pews let to families, continued until 1921. Other items include Lamp Oil 10/4d., and Lamp Glasses 5/-. A wartime entry for 1917 reads "Zeppelin Insurance" 10/-. It was later in the 1930's that electricity was installed in the church.

The Marriage Act was adopted in 1936 when the church was granted a licence so that marriages could take place. Children can also be christened here, and in 1983 a new wooden Christening Font was dedicated to the memory of Mrs. Hilda Manley, who served the church for so many years.

It was in 1936 also that a young man was appointed assistant organist to his father Harry. His name was Eric Thomas and, known and beloved by all, he is still playing the organ here in 1985. In 1983 a presentation was made to him as recognition of his also serving for 48 years as Steward of the church.

Whatever the future may hold, the church stands to-day, as ever, to proclaim the good news of the Gospel. The conditions of life to-day would amaze our ancestors of 1873 and no doubt change will go on and be even more rapid, though we can only guess at the nature of the change.





### BACKFORD CHURCH (ST. OSWALD'S).

The church is dedicated to St. Oswald, a King of Northumbria, who was slain in battle in 642 A.D., and became the first Royal Saint.

The earliest documents about the church date from 1291, during the time of Pope Nicholas, in which the rectory of Backford had a taxation assessment valued at £5.6s.8d.

In 1753 the parish received £100., from Queen Anne's Bounty and this was augmented by £200., raised by public subscription. This money was invested in six Cheshire acres of land with a barn in Guilden Sutton built of brick and thatched.

The 16th century tower is square and Perpendicular in style. The gargoyles are weird and ferocious looking and below them the masons have carved representations of the following rural happenings.

- 1) A hen, followed by her chickens.
- 2) A dog chasing a rabbit.
- 3) A goose apparently in flight.
- 4) A fox on the prowl.

Items of interest are -

- 1) Epitaph in the Churchyard:-

Thomas Jones of Backford, died 1769.

Stop here your foot and cast an eye,

As you are now, so once was I:

As I am now so you must be,

Prepare yourself to follow me.

- 2) In the nave is an old chained Bible printed by R. Barker of London in 1617. This volume is preserved in a case and has been in Backford Church from the century in which it was printed.

It was in Backford Church that little Robert Barre was married to Elizabeth Rogerson in 1538 when barely three years old. To induce the child he had to be "lured for an apple bie his uncle to go to the church", when the said uncle held him in his arms during the ceremony.



## HADLOW ROAD STATION.

This station, to be found at Willaston in the Wirral, was the first stop for trains on the railway from Hooton Junction to West Kirby, which followed the estuary of the River Dee for most of it's length.

The single track line was opened in 1866 by the L.N.W.R. - G.W.R. Joint Railway, following requests from the gentry who lived in the area for a line to take them quickly and efficiently to their work. Passing Stations on the line were Hadlow Road (for Willaston), Neston, Parkgate, Gayton, Thurstaston and West Kirby where trains could cross.

This railway nearly reached it's centenary but was closed following the Beeching branch line railway cuts of 1962.

The station has been almost completely restored by the Cheshire County Council, with a short length of track reaching to the level-crossing gates. The interior of the waiting room and ticket office is presented just as it was when the line was at it's hey day.

The picture shows the platform with it's truck and old style 10 gallon milk churns which were a feature seen at every country station.



Picture taken 1985.



THE SMITH FAMILY VAULTS AT BARROW CHURCH.

The inscriptions read:-

1st Vault.

William, son of William and Elizabeth Smith of Barrow, interred 24 July 1737.  
Here lieth the body of William Smith of Barrow, who departed this life on the 24th day of July 1759, aged 48.  
Also Katherine their daughter who died 29th March 1761.  
Also the body of Elizabeth, wife of William Smith of Milton Brook, interred October 5th 1783, aged 72 years.  
Also Elizabeth Smith, wife of William Smith Jun. of Milton Brook, interred June the 22nd 1792, aged 50 years.  
Also the body of the above William Smith, Oct. 12th 1808, aged 60 years.  
Here lieth the remains of Catherine Salina wife of Robert Smith of Bank House Guilden Sutton, who departed this life Feb. 2nd 1887, in her 87th year.  
Also of ROBERT SMITH, husband of the above named Catherine Salina Smith who departed this life June 4th 1892 in his 81st year.

2nd Vault.

Here lieth the remains of William Smith of Milton Brook, who departed this life June 11th 1810, aged 86 years.  
Also Harriet, wife of Robert Smith of Guilden Sutton, who departed this life 12th March 1833, aged 50 years.  
Also Robert Smith, husband of the above Harriet Smith of Guilden Sutton, and late of Milton Brook, who departed this life on 28th of November 1857, in his 81st year.  
Also Elizabeth his daughter, who departed this life on Dec. 21st 1859.  
In loving memory of William Fremantle Smith 2nd Lieut. 5th Cheshire Regiment Son of R. Cathcart Smith of Guilden Sutton. Died of wounds in France, Sept. 28th 1916, in his 21st year.  
Also of Thomas David Le Rougetel, dearly beloved husband of Etta Le Rougetel, died Oct. 20th 1922, aged 44 years.  
Also of Robert Cathcart Smith of the Old Hall, Guilden Sutton, who died April 21st 1933, aged 93 years.



The last-named Robert Cathcart Smith succeeded his father at the Old Hall, Guilden Sutton, and in 1923 was listed as the principal landowner in the parish. He had, with his family, a great interest in the Methodist Church nearby, where several plaques bear the Cathcart Smith name.  
In accordance with his wishes, he was buried in the family vault at Barrow and his body was conveyed there on a flat farm cart pulled by white horses.  
Picture taken October 1985.



A GRAVESTONE IN THE CHURCHYARD AT BARROW (St Bartholomew).

The picture was taken August 1985.

The inscription reads:

IN memory of RICHARD WOODFIN  
of Broomhill, who died January 14th, 1811  
aged 73 Years

Also MARY his wife, who died  
January 15th, 1811, aged 57 Years

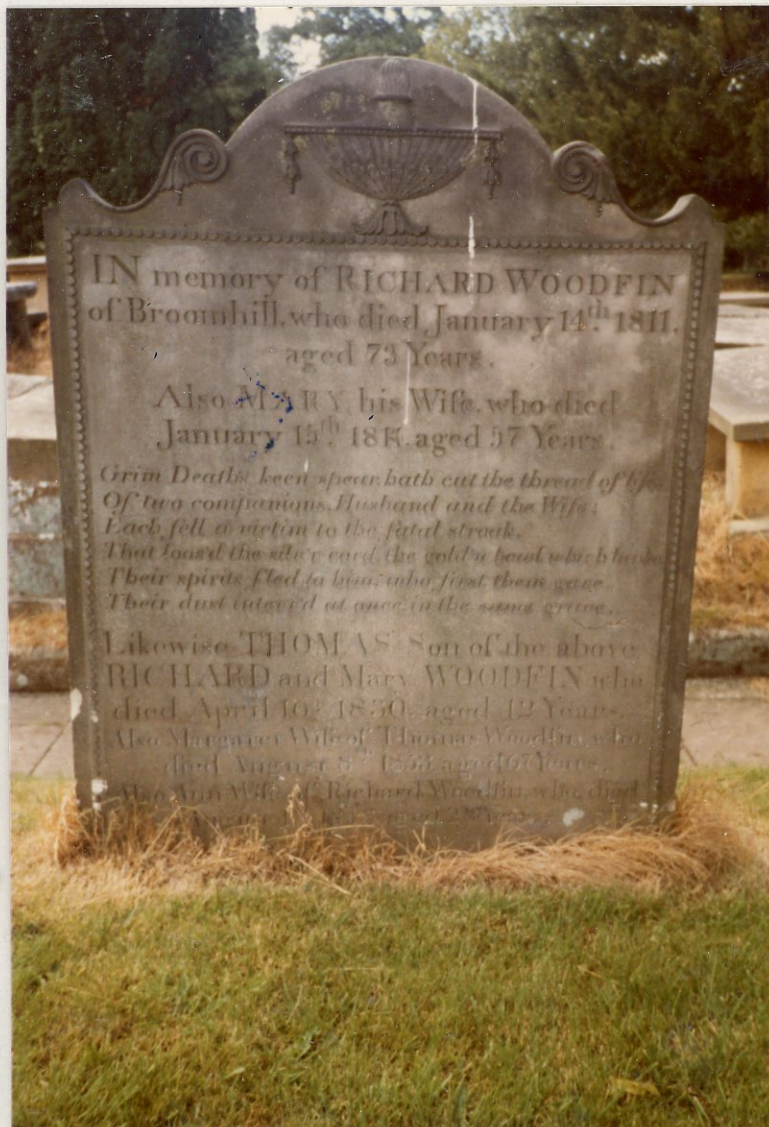
Grim Death's keen spear hath cut the thread of  
Of two companions, Husband and the Wife life  
Each fell a victim to the fatal stroak broke  
That loos'd the silver cord, the gold'n bowl that  
Their spirits fled to Him, who first them gave  
Their dust interr'd at once in the same grave.

Likewise THOMAS, Son of the above

RICHARD and Mary WOODFIN who  
died April 16th 1830, aged 42 Years.

Also Margaret Wife of Thomas Woodfin who

.....





THE PARISH CHURCH OF St. MARY,  
THORNTON le MOORS.

The first clear record of a church at Thornton le Moors is to be found in the Domesday Book which records in 1086 a church and priest at Thornton. It seems very likely that that church stood on the site of the present St Mary's, which itself is largely a fourteenth century building.

There was discovered in the foundations of the chancel a small section of an anglo-saxon cross which has been dated as from the late 9th or early 10th century. Presumably this would have been standing when commissioners of William the Conqueror came to make their record of the village.

The church at Thornton formerly served all the five townships of the ancient parish:- Thornton, Elton, Wimbolds Trafford, Dunham Hill and Hapsford.

The chancel, side aisle and nave are from the early part of the 14th century, and the tower from the later part of that century. The top of the tower was rebuilt in 1909 after a fire in which the bells fell from the tower. After being recast they were rehung.



The gravestone in the foreground of the picture above, (taken in April, 1986), is in memory of one William, a blacksmith, and son of William and Jane Denton, of Halton, who died on July 13th, 1810, aged 23 years. The inscription on the stone reads:-

My sledge and hammer lie declin'd,  
My bellows too have lost their wind,  
My fire's extinct, my forge decayed  
My vice is in the dust now laid.  
My coal is spent, my iron gone  
My nail is drove, my work is done.

Another stone in the same churchyard bears the following inscription:-

Pray cast an eye, as you pass by,  
As you are now so once was I,  
As I am now so you will be,  
So cast on Christ, and follow Me.



## INCE PARISH CHURCH.

An ancient legend has it that the church was originally intended to be built in the northern portion of the parish, on the high ground overlooking the Mersey. For some reason or other the good fairies disapproved of that very inconvenient situation. Night after night they carried away the stones to the opposite side of the valley. The builders gave up the struggle and the church was erected where it stands today. This story, or something like it, is told of many other places near and far.

The monument in the picture, taken Oct. 1985, is a memorial to six of the ten men who were killed in an accident during the construction of the nearby Manchester Ship Canal in 1891. This was the worst accident during the whole construction of the 35 miles long canal.

Here Sir Bosdin Leech tells the sad story:

"To complete the canal to Weston Point men were working day and night near Ince Hall, where there is a deep rock cutting, and here occurred a disaster which will never be forgotten in the neighbourhood, which swept ten men into eternity, and injured as many more. The cutting is perpendicular, and about sixty feet deep. Ballast wagons were continually bringing the rock by a circuitous route from the bottom to the spoil tips at the top. Along the top of the cutting was a siding for empty trucks, where a lad stood, who, by moving a lever, sent the trucks in the direction required. It so happened that on the morning of the 18th July, night gangs were in the cutting, drilling and chipping the rock by the aid of lucigen light, and one gang of twenty men was directly under the truck siding. By accident or through carelessness, the lad at the points (17 years of age) turned a train of twenty-three trucks, drawn by two engines, into the empty truck siding instead of on to the line to the tip at Ellesmere Port. Engines, trucks, stone and men were in one inextricable mass as they fell to the floor of the cutting, lit up by the lucigen light. The scene was appalling and the shrieks of the injured and the dying were awful. Men rushed to the rescue and, by the aid of steam cranes, released those alive, who were promptly conveyed to various hospitals or attended to on the spot by medical men. Many who were not killed were maimed for life. Fortunately the six men on the engines jumped for their lives and escaped with a few bruises. The lad at the points, who caused the disaster, was arrested and charged with manslaughter, but was eventually discharged."

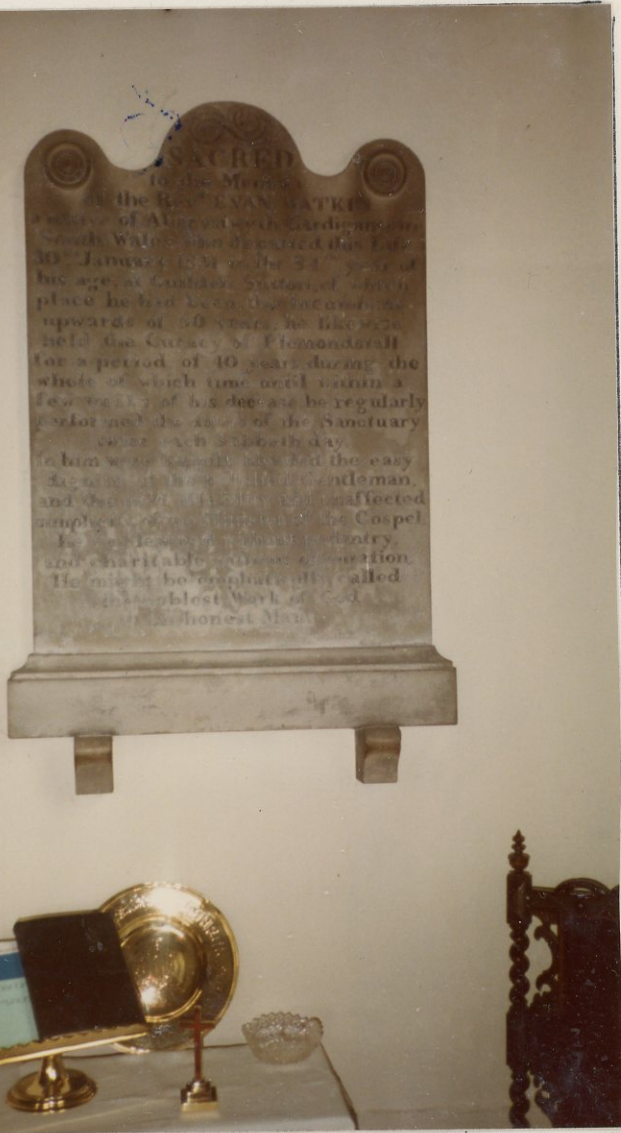
The writer goes on to describe the funeral, when two thousand people witnessed the procession of the six coffins, with their forty-eight bearers, to Ince church. The burial service was read by Mr. Rawson, Vicar of Ince, and Mr. Grimston, Chaplain of the Canal. The flag on the church tower flew at half-mast





ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, GULDEN SUTTON.

This memorial, found on the East Wall of the Church, at St. John's Church, Guilden Sutton, is to the memory of the Rev. Evan Watkin. The inscription reads:-



Sacred to the memory  
of the Rev.d. EVAN WATKIN

a native of Aberystwith, Cardiganshire, South Wales, who departed this life 30th January, 1831, in the 84th year of his age, at Guilden Sutton, of which place he had been the Incumbent upwards of 60 years, he likewise held the Curacy of Plemondstall for a period of 40 years, during the whole of which time until within a few weeks of his decease he regularly performed the duties of the sanctuary twice each Sabbath day.

In him were happily blended the easy dignity of the polished Gentleman, and the mild affability and unaffected simplicity of the Minister of the Gospel; he was learned without pedantry, and charitable without ostentation. He might be emphatically called the noblest Work of God, an Honest Man.

Picture taken January, 1986.

The Rev. Evan Watkin's beautiful copperplate handwriting can be seen in the diocesan register. He was a very great friend of the grandfather of Robert Cathcart Smith of the Old Hall, Guilden Sutton, who tells that Watkin was the last man in these parts to wear the old-fashioned bob wig of the days of King George III. In 1789 he lived at Barrow and was curate there.

He recorded the starting of a Sunday School movement in Guilden Sutton at that date.

In 1811 he records the presence of two Methodists in Guilden Sutton, a man and his wife.



The Font, St John the Baptist Church.  
Guilden Sutton.

Extract from the journal of the Freeman and guilds of the City of Chester.

September 9th 1676. A D. I, Richard George, Carpenter, living in Cow Lane, in the City of Chester, acknowledge that I have given offence and broken the rules of the City of Chester aforesaid in working and making a cover for a font for the Church or Chapel of Guilden Sutton, near this city of Chester and which I acknowledge the Aldermen and Stewards of the Company of Joiners in the said City of Chester have justly seized upon and taken away to the rules of the said Company, and I do further hereby declare that if to-day or at any other time hereafter I shall in like manner offend or in any way transgress against the rules and orders of the said Company of Joiners, Carvers, and Turners by working making or doing anything which does not belong to the said Company, and upon notice thereof given to me by the Stewards of the said Company at the time of such future offence I shall forfeit and pay to the rules of the said Company the sum of forty pounds of lawful money of England to be recovered by action of debt for testimony in proof I have hereto set my hand and seal the day and year above said.

Richard George

Signed and sealed in the presence of  
John Brett. John Rock.

R his mark



Guilden Sutton.

The Christening Font, with its wooden cover, at St John's Church. It is dated 1635, and has a carved rose to the front.

The fruit in the picture was placed there for the Harvest Festival Services. Oct 1984.



A 17th century wooden panel, with skull and cross-bones, and two heraldry shields marked in the surround, is to be found just behind the choir-stalls in St John's Church, Guilden Sutton. The picture was taken in June, 1985.

This panel was painted by the Holme family of Chester, of which the four Randle Holmes were busy arms-painters, constantly employed in various kinds of heraldic work by the local gentry. All four generations belonged to the "Company of Painters, glaziers, Embroiderers, and Stationers" of Chester,

Randle Holme the first (1571-1655) was Deputy to the College of Arms, and was Mayor of Chester in 1633.

His son, Randle Holme the second, (1601-1659) was Mayor of Chester in 1643.

His son, Randle Holme the third, (1627-1704). was the author of a large and very scarce heraldic work, "An Academie of Armoury and Blazon," printed in Chester. He was Sewer of the Chamber in Extraordinary to Charles II, and Deputy to The College of Arms for Cheshire, Lancashire and North Wales.

He was followed by his son, Randle Holme the fourth, (1659-1707).

THE inscription reads:

Near this place lieth interred the Body of Rob<sup>t</sup>. Whitehead, of Guilden Sutton, Gen<sup>r</sup> who died March 20th 1692. He married Ann Jones of Kilkin by whom he had issue 2 sons & 2 daughters, viz, Hannah baptizd April 28th 1663, died an infant May 24th 1663, Ann born April 15th 1664, married to Rich<sup>d</sup>. Robinson of Boughton & died Jan<sup>y</sup> 30th, 1690, Thos born May 9th 1666 died unmarried Dec<sup>r</sup> 20th, 1705, George born Jan 14th 1668, died Aug<sup>t</sup> 1672, all which are interred near this place, as also Hannah the surviving issue of the said Rich<sup>d</sup>. Robinson and Ann his wife, who being married to Tho<sup>s</sup>. Brescie of Teverton, Gen<sup>r</sup> died without issue March 11th, 1709.

Above the vestry door in the church, is a frame, probably part of the old churchwarden's pew, which is inscribed: "Ralph Cotgrave and Thomas Whitehead, Churchwardens, 1698."

The coat of arms marked on the Whitehead memorial was "granted to Robert Whitehead of Guilden Sutton in 1613."



"Platts" is the old Cheshire word for a small bridge or bridges, such as can be found over the River Gow, between Cotton Edmunds and Hockenhull, some four miles from Chester.

In the 14th century the main road from London to Chester passed over the "Roman Bridges" at Hockenhull Platts. The Black Prince's Register has an entry which refers to the repairs of the "bridge at Hockenhull", on which an amount of 20s had been paid by the "Prince's Personal Order", dated 10 Sept, 1353, during the visit of the Black Prince to the city of Chester.

Though known locally as the "Roman Bridges", there is no evidence of Roman origin; they were used by pack horses and were probably built in the 16th century. They are clearly shown on early maps, including Ogilby's Britannia Road Book, published in 1675, as part of the route from London to Holyhead. On Ogilby's map, besides the main route passing over the three stone bridges, a cart road, leading to "Namptwich via Stapleford", is shown. This runs to the south but parallel with main route. It would seem to indicate that the road over the "Roman Bridges" was suitable only for travellers on foot or horseback.

These bridges were very much used by salt merchants who brought their salt from the mines at Middlewich and Winsford, by packhorse to distribute it in the cheese-making area around Chester. It is said by some that the bridges were actually constructed for that purpose.

The ancient packhorse route has survived thanks to the intervention of the Duke of Westminster in 1824. In that year, a scheme was proposed whereby the ancient trackway would be widened to take 4-wheeled vehicles, and the bridges demolished for a more modern structure to be built. Fortunately the Duke was emphatic that he did not wish to see the old bridges destroyed, and have a journey of

The course of the meander through the

The National Trust as well as flies and Butterflies yellow, h population the area.

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HOCKENHULL PLATTS, OR ROMAN BRIDGES.

1985





The Porter's Hill is the name given to that part of School Lane rising from the village of Guilden Sutton. Records of 1712 show it to be called the "Portway Hill, a hill on the road to the market town." This could well be taken from the Anglo-Saxon "port-weg." Earlier sources of information give the name of this area as "Portersheath," and this is quite feasible, being on the edge of the village, which would be very small and just a collection of a few houses.

Coming to the present day, as one goes up the hill, the field alongside to the right is still called the "Porter's Field," and recently described in a catalogue "beside the road west out of the village."

Of interest is the picture above taken of a "gun-pit", a large concrete slab resting on four brick pillars, which was erected by the War Department on the outbreak of war in 1939. There was one such in this Porter's Field, just below the house named Boothroyden, to be used by soldiers who could engage and destroy enemy tanks coming along the lane.

In the early years of the War, this gun-pit was manned by the local Home Guard, who fortunately never had to use it for its intended purpose. The firing pit beneath the twelve inch thick slab of reinforced concrete was reached by descending steps, but owing to the nature of the ground was often knee-deep in water, which had to be baled out before occupation.

The gunpit was removed round about 1953, because of danger to the children from the newly-built Council Estate, who played in and around it. It was not moved far away, being so heavy and unmanageable, and was buried under the hump of high ground just behind the road hedge. Here was formerly a pit, in which the concrete slab was placed, and the whole filled in, but owing to its size the soil which covers it is higher than the rest of the field.





SHOTWICK CHURCH.

Picture taken Sept. 1985.

Many of the old churches of Cheshire are to be found in secluded and romantic situations, but few can claim to be of greater interest than St. Michael's of Shotwick. The church and the group of old homes forming the little village stand on the low banks and were washed by the waters of the Dee.

Throughout the year this little village sees a constant flow of visitors, many of them attracted by the feeling of being somehow apart from the rush and bustle of modern life, a quiet backwater. For many centuries there was constant coming and going as travellers of all kinds came to cross the Dee at Shotwick Ferry and so pass into Wales or later to take ship to Ireland.

The sundial stands on a shaft, round the bulge of which is inscribed "J.D. R.M. C. Wdns. 1720", the initials being those of John Davies and Richard Massey. The shaft was originally painted and one shilling was paid for "carving ye letters". The present dial replaces an older one and bears the inscription "George Healing, Isaac Newell, Churchwardens 1767. Lewis Thomas fecit".

The south entrance to the Church, via the porch seen in the picture, through a Norman archway, is probably the oldest part of the Church. The Norman Church supplanted the Saxon one about the beginning of the 12th century and consisted simply of a nave and chancel without aisles.





THE FONT & BELL. SHOTWICK CHURCH.

Picture taken September 1985.

The Font dates from the 15th century and conforms to a severely plain, though fairly common, octagonal design. It and the base form an hourglass shape with a narrow waist encircled by a fillet, the lower half spreading out to the step. The shape is good and rather fascinating.

#### The Bell.

The present peal of six bells consists of 4 new bells, bequeathed by the Rev. F.R. Wansburgh, and two old ones dated 1616 and 1621, both being recast.

These were inscribed W.G. 1616 Jesus be our Speed.

1621 Gloria in Excelsis Deo.

When the new bells were hung in 1935, an old bell dated 1664 was found to be untunable, and now stands by the North door of the Church.

This bell, pictured above, bears the inscription "1664 Gloria in Excelsis Deo. C.W. W.D. I.B. I.S. W".

The tower, with it's belfry is dated 1500 and replaced an ancient bellcot.

Interesting extracts from the Church Register are briefly:-

1722 To 3 poor Sealors with a Pass.

1733 To 2 poor persons come out of slavery.

1730 Paid 1 shilling for ye clock hammer after ye great bell fell.

1750 Paid to Thomas Hesketh for a bich fox.





SHOTWICK CHURCH. (St. Michaels.)

The origins of the church itself are as obscure as those of the village. The Saxon church, which was most likely a wooden structure, would have either perished or disappeared in the general rebuilding of the churches that followed the Norman Conquest. It is certain that when the Domesday Book was compiled in 1086 a church existed at "Soto-wicke", belonging to the secular canons of St. Werburgh. This church had probably been established about 100 years before.

The box pews in the Church are the oldest in Wirral, fine square seats enclosed with doors and once fitted with lock and key. They were probably installed in around 1706. This is confirmed by an inscription cut into the inside of one of the pew doors - "John Basnitt, December 4th, 1710".

An interesting local story concerns a grave in the chancel. Tradition has it that there lies Squire Hockenhull who died when his horse stepped into a rabbit hole, fell and rolled on his master. The dying man is supposed to have charged his eldest son that there should be no inscription on his gravestone, but instead a bridle bit and two stirrups cut in the stone above the date, to show that he died, as he had lived, a true sportsman.

Picture taken 1985.





The inscription reads

1914-19.

Sacred to the memory of

William Evans.

John Mansley.

Ralph Thomas.

John Weston.

Herbert Wilcoxson.

of this parish who fell in action  
in the Great War 1914-19.

---

1939-45.

Frederic Walter Hopwood.  
Killed in action at Arnhem.  
18 Sep. 1944.

### LOCAL HISTORY.

A sad story of uncertain date tells of the daughter of one of the Lords of Shotwick who had fallen in love with one of his squires. Her father, wishing her to marry a Welsh Knight, took her on board ship, and when they were near the Point of Air, told her that her lover was dead, whereupon she threw herself into the sea. Her distraught father cried out that it was not true and that she might marry her squire, but all attempts at rescue failed. She was finally washed up on to Hilbre Island where, dying, she was found by a monk to whom she told her tale. The spot where she was found is called "Lady's Shelf" after this incident.



SUN DIAL, BRUERA CHURCH, (St. Mary).

Picture June 1986.

The earliest reference to the church is in 1140, when "Robert the Seneshal, (Dapifer) rendered to God and Saint Werburgh, the church of Saint Mary of Bruera."

The Chancel arch is the original 12th century, and the average thickness of the church walls is four feet.

The old churchyard has some ancient yew trees, and the remains of a stone cross dated 1693 which was converted into a sundial in 1736.

The inscription reads:

T M J H  
C W 1736  
H N  
W A R  
D E N S



Ancient Stocks at Aldford  
There is no record of when they were last used. They can be seen just opposite the Grosvenor Arms Hotel.

Pictured April 1986.





# BRIDGE TRAFFORD.

This picture is interesting in that it shows a Cheshire County Council mile post which reads:

Dunham Hill	2 miles
Helsby	4
Frodsham	7
Warrington	16

There must be hundreds of these cast-iron mile posts dotted around our country roads, and they are all dated 1898.

The white cottage, centre above, was the tollbar house where tolls were collected, as this road was in Roman times the main Chester To York road.

This tollbar cottage played a vital part in the capture of the thieves who attempted to rob the Royal Mail post-boy riding from Warrington to Chester. in 1796.

The other building, (far left) is the Shrewsbury Arms Inn, named after Lord Shrewsbury who at one time, (about 1784) owned Trafford Mill and a large estate. locally.

Pictured 1986.



This rosy-red sandstone marker stone is to be found along the quiet lane leading to Plemstall Church. It is inscribed:

MICKLE TRAFFORD  
CART ROAD  
ONLY

Pictured May 1986.



The story of the robbery makes interesting reading.:-

PETER YOXALL, aged 15, received at Warrington Post Office at 6-20 pm on the 19th January, 1796, two bags of Warrington and Manchester letters to take to Chester. He reached Frodsham and received a third bag, there continuing his journey he got about three quarters of a mile on the Chester side of Dunham Hill when he saw in the moonlight two men on horseback riding before him.

On catching up to them, they turned their horse's heads upon him, and one of them seized him and said, "Stop, or I will blow your brains out."

They then opened a gate and led the horse into a field, their faces covered in crepe. They took him off his horse, tied his hands behind him, pulled his hat over his face, and tied his legs together.

Having robbed the bags, a task which took about a quarter of an hour, they departed, telling Yoxall that if he tried to move before morning there would be two men watching and would cut off his arm.

This threat did not deter the boy, who managed to free himself after about one and a half hours. He went at once to the nearest turnpike which was at Mickle Trafford, (now known as Mill Cottage) and called out the man in charge. He also called out the Constable at Mickle Trafford, before setting out for Chester, where he arrived about 12-30 midnight. Steps were taken to discover the robbers.

They were apprehended at a public House on Costa Green, Birmingham, on Friday, 22nd January, and were eventually brought to trial before Justice Burton at Chester. At the trial on 6th April, the jury found them guilty, and the judge sentenced them to death, both men having confessed their guilt to the Rev Peploe Ward. Brown was 26 years old, and Price about the same age.

While in confinement in Chester, Brown drew on the wall of his cell a coffin, and under neath wrote:

Behold the corpse within this coffin lies  
With stretched out limbs and closed eyes  
But, Ah, poor Brown, no coffin shalt thou have  
Nor yet a shroud, nor yet a peaceful grave.  
Prisoners all, a warning by me take,  
Repent in time, before it is too late.  
Repent in time, leave off your theiving ways,  
Then you shall all see happier days.

The twommen wre executed on Saturday, 30th April, 1796; both acknowledged the justice of their punishment, and hoped the spectators would take a warning from

their end. Later their bodies were taken to Mickle Trafford, and hung by chains on Trafford Green, now known as the Gibbit Field.

Tradition says that the bodies hung by chains from two trees, and hung there all summer. When the remains were removed, it was found that a pair of robins had made their nest in one of the skulls.

Our picture shows the turnpike house today, now known as Mill Cottage, April 1986.







Barnhill Farm at Broxton was once the half-way stop on the old Chester to Whitchurch main road. Here the stage horses were changed, and the travellers took refreshment. A milestone stands opposite the farm, with the following words cut into the stone:

The Half-Way House  
from Chester  
to Whitchurch  
10 miles each Way.

Pictured May 1986



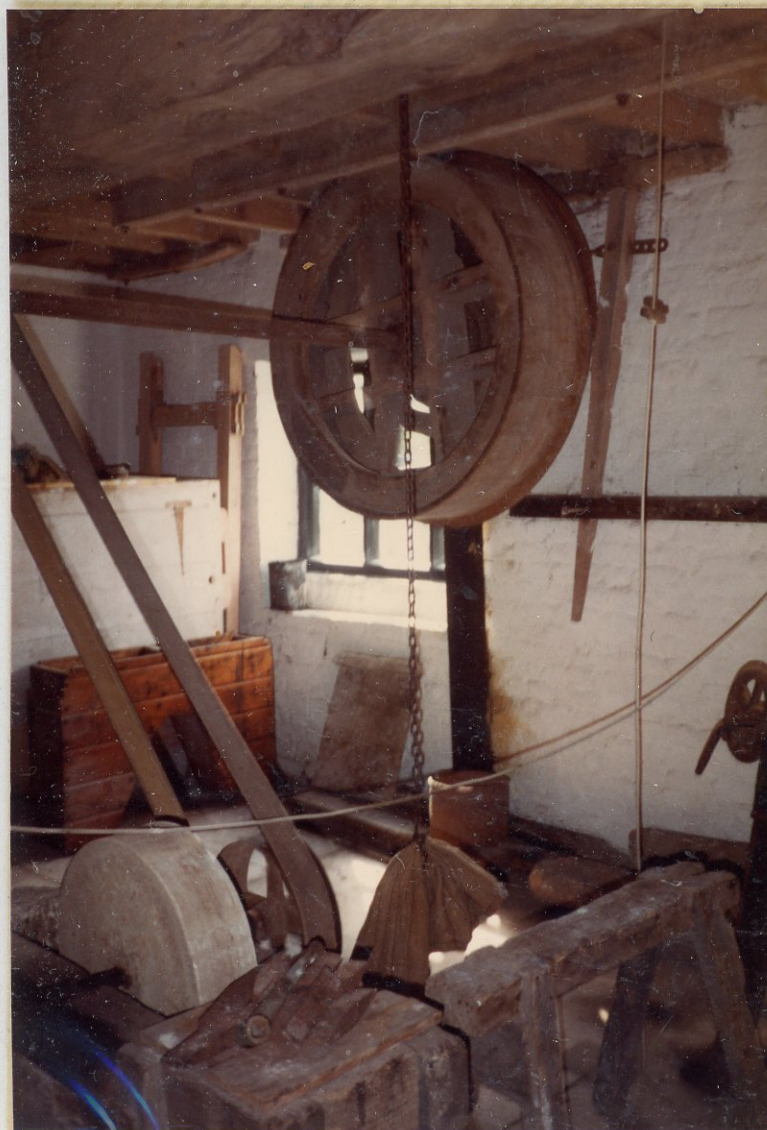
#### THORNTON-le-MOORS, (St MARY), CHURCH.

The parish chest, dating from 1732, has three locks, the 18th century security system requiring the presence of three keyholders before it could be opened. In it were kept the parish registers, which begin in 1574, and other important items. On the chest is carved I B H K CW, W H Minister 1732. The initials W H are those of William Handley, churchwarden and schoolmaster of Thornton. The picture was taken in May 1986, when the church was decorated for a Flower Festival.





BUNBURY WATER MILL.  
Pictures taken  
June 1986.



Bunbury Mill is one of eleven water-mills which use power provided by the waters of the River Gowy, as it flows from the Peckforton Hills down to the Mersey at Ince.

The first mention of a mill at Bunbury is in 1290, when John St Pierre, Lord of the Manor, "held in Bunnebury a moiety (a half) of one mill in demesne."

In 1649, the mill passed to the Mostyn estate, until 1841 when it was added to the Peckforton Estate.

In 1890, Thomas Parker became Miller, and his family continued milling until closure in 1960, when a heavy storm caused severe damage after the mill-pool bank gave way.

The present building dates from 1844, and has three floors, and on the east end, the wheel house. The wheel is overshot, ie turns with the flow of water. The mill pool held enough water to power two pairs of stones a full day's grinding.

The top floor is the loading bay, from where the grain dropped to the middle floor where were the grinding stones. Here also is a clear view of the water wheel where the miller could keep his eye on the flow of water, and adjust if required. The ground floor is the "control room" where the stones are set in gear. Nearly all the drive machinery gear wheels are seen here, converting vertical movement to the horizontal to drive the stones.

The pictures show (1) the loading bay, and the wheel house, (2) the sack-hoisting mechanism which lifts back the ground corn to the loading bay.

The Northwest Water Authority took over the mill in 1974, and restored to its present working condition.



# MICKLE TRAFFORD METHODIST CHURCH.

Some three miles from Chester, stands the Methodist Church in Mickle Trafford, a tablet on which proclaims the building of the then Primitive Methodist Chapel in 1885.

Methodism came to Chester, when John Wesley paid his first visit as far back as 1752. Mickle Trafford was first missioned in 1837, resulting in services which were held in the buildings of J H Bentley's farm on Hoole Road. Some years later, a small building nearby was used, and became known locally as "the Chapel."

The present Church was built in 1885, at a cost of £258.0.0. on a piece of land leased from the Earl of Shrewsbury. The little old chapel, which had served so well, closed and was later used as a smithy. It was not until the 1950's that its end came, together the farm buildings, when they were demolished, and to this day they lie quiet and almost unknown under the M53 roundabout on Hoole Road.

In 1918 the freehold was obtained, a trust was formed, and an adjoining piece of land was purchased for £120.0.0. One story told of those early days is the Harvest Festival when the chapel was filled to capacity, with many standing outside wanting to join in the thanksgiving. The problem was solved when a popular preacher took those waiting to the nearby field where stood a large granite stone. This preacher stood on the stone (which was about six feet high), and delivered his address from there, and the congregation sang their well known hymns.

A schoolroom was added the 1950's, and this has proved to have been a worthwhile investment, and a benefit to all in the village. And now in 1985 the Chapel has achieved its Centenary, after a hundred years of steady progress.

The picture was taken in June 1986.





## STRETTON MILL.

There has been a mill at Stretton since at least the 14th century when the first records appear. The mill passed into the Leche family in 1596 when a 60 year lease was made out to Ursula Leche with an annual rent of £5. It remained in the Leche family as part of the Carden Estate until the 1970's when it was taken over by Cheshire County Council and restored as a working museum. In the 16th century the mill was timber framed with a thatched roof. During the 18th century the roof was raised and the thatch replaced by slates. The timber framing was covered by weatherboarding and stone casing. An external overshot wheel was installed on the west side in 1777. The breast-shot wheel was enclosed by a stone extension in 1819. This wheel was extensively replaced by W H Smith's of Whitchurch in 1852. The mill continued to operate in this condition until 1959 when it became derelict.

The Romans introduced water wheels into Britain, and at the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086 there were 5,624 mills in operation, of which 18 were located in Cheshire. The main function of water mills was to grind corn, but later ages saw water power put to other uses.

There are five different types of water wheel to be seen in Britain, and they are operated on two basic principles. The Norse and undershot wheels ~~and~~ rely on the force of the water to drive them, whereas the breast-shot, pitchback and overshot wheels are driven by the weight of the water. The wheels at Stretton, being breast-shot and overshot, are operated on the latter principle. The breast-shot wheel is probably unique in that it has a sluice mechanism which permits the entry of water at three different levels. Together with the overshot wheel this enables the mill machinery to be operated at all levels of the pond.

The drive is transmitted from the water wheel to the internal machinery via a horizontal shaft to the pit wheel. The machinery associated with the overshot wheel is unusual in that it has all ~~the~~ wooden gearing. The teeth of the pitwheel connect with those of the wallower on the vertical shaft which drives the great spur wheel above it. The drive is then transferred to the stone nuts on the stone spindle which powers the mill-stones on the floor above. Grain is fed into the eye of the upper millstone via a chute from the hopper. The sacks of grain are raised from the ground to the granary floor above the hoppers by a sack hoist. The crown wheel powers a slack short chain drive to the hoist drum around which a rope is wound. By releasing the rope which runs next to the trandoors the drive can be disengaged and the sack lowered to the floor.







Barley-stick chimneys are a feature of the architecture of The Duke of Westminster's Estate, Cheshire, as ~~was~~<sup>are</sup> also the blue W's picked out in the brickwork. This example was pictured at Waverton, Nr Chester, Sep 1986.

At Aldersey. Picture taken Aug 1986

On the front of this shelter is inscribed:-

"In Memory of two gallant Gentlemen who gave their lives for King and Country in the Great War, 1914-18."

Inside is written:-

Mark Aldersey, 2nd Lt, Ches Regt  
Killed in Action in France  
On Nov 1st 1917, aged 20 years.

Hugh Aldersey, Capt, Ches Yeomanry  
Killed in Action in Palestine  
On Mar 10th 1918, aged 29 years.

"O God to us may grace be given to follow in their <sup>†</sup>train."





The Old Quay and Dee Marshes, Neston, Wirral

W.4802



Crewe-by-Farndon Methodist Chapel.

Pictured August 1986.

In 1858, Trustees purchased land from Mr John Morrey for the sum of £4.10.0. in order to build a chapel at Crewe. But although the building was erected in 1858, it was not registered as a place of worship until 1861.

As the numbers of the congregation increased, an extension became necessary and, for the sum of £3.7.6d more land was purchased from Mr Morrey. It was not until 1942, however, that permission was granted for marriages to take place. The little Chapel still stands simple yet solid in both structure and doctrine, and continually gathers a devout congregation. John Wedgwood, "the gentleman from the Potteries", is reputed to be one of the pioneer missionaries who preached within the circuit.





Coddington Mill.  
Pictured Aug.  
1986.



Two views of Coddington Mill, now disused. A plaque on the wall reads:-

George and William Lowe  
Rebuilt this mill in 1775 A D.

A feature of this mill is the large capacity for storing the water needed to power the grinding wheels. The water-wheel is housed in the main building of the top picture. The water flows here via the Stretton Brook, and has previously powered the Mill there, to be used again at Coddington, going from here to join the River Dee at Aldford.



## BRUEN STAPLEFORD HALL.

The Hall is situated about one mile from Tarvin, and takes its name from Bruen, Lord of the Manor, and staple, the piles or tiles used to make the ford where the River Gowy is crossed. Stapleford is mentioned in the Domesday Book, when one Wulfsi held it from Earl Hugh. There is also the mill mentioned, one of few recorded.

The name Bruen is first mentioned in a 12th century deed, with William le Bruen married into a Norman family who came over with William, Duke of Normandy when he invaded England. in 1066.

In 1333, Robert Bruen commanded a company of archers in France, made mainly of Stapleford men. Perhaps the most notable of the Bruens was John Bruen, 1560-1625. With his wife Elizabeth, he lived in the lavish style of the period, playing host to all the notable families of the County. He hunted in elamere Forest, and is said to have kept fourteen pairs of great-mouthed dogs. On the death of his father in 1587, he inherited the responsibility of bringing up twelve brothers and sisters, no easy task, and from then on he and his family life underwent a drastic change.

Every Sunday morning, his family and a full compliment of servants attended Tarvin Church and stayed, without a meal, for evening service, when they returned to the Hall and supper. From a life of hunting and high living, they devoted themselves to strict religious fervour and hard work. Although they had their own Bruen chapel in the local church where they worshipped on Sundays, John Bruen had constructed in a farm building a small chapel where they could hold services without going off the premises. Here he maintained a preacher, Master Clark, of his own choice. The common people flocked to his gate for food and clothing, and every winter he sent to Chester for clothes for this purpose. "In the time of the great dearth", he opened his storehouse and distributed corn. Far from shunning him as an eccentric, Bruen's great neighbours sought to guide their own conduct by his example. He had a servant, a faithful old Robert Pasfield who was illiterate, but by means of a leather girdle of his own contrivance, divided into thongs, points and knots, he was able to get by heart a comprehensive knowledge of the Scriptures, and the texts of the sermons which he was constantly hearing.

Stapleford Hall was to stay in the Bruen family until it changed hands in 1752. Of the Hall of John Bruen's time nothing remains save the extensive farmlands. On the site of the Elizabethan manor which succeeded the ancestral home of the Anglo-Norman family le Brun stands today a handsome late Georgian house bearing the date 1789. It has a double front divided by a central gable, with an arched pillared doorway. A tall sundial occupies the middle of the spacious lawn. In 1797 a window Tax was introduced, and to cut down on the Hall's liability thirty-six windows on the East and Western sides were blocked out.

The 1831 Census records at the Hall, John and Alice Lea, their nine children, a governess, four housemaids and five farm servants in residence. John Lea was a progressive farmer, and noted for his successful methods. Many books have been written of his numerous ideas.

The Hall and Farm are now in the capable hands of Mrs Margaret Winward. Pictured 1986.







#### Tushingham, (Old Chad).

Standing alone in a field, the little chapel of St Chad, Tushingham-cum-Grindley is reached only by traversing a long narrow lane. The Chapel today is used only for occasional burials, and special services on Ascension Day and Rushbearing Day, usually the second Sunday in August. Rebuilt in 1689-91, it is a small building of brick, which took the place of an early timber-framed eififice. The remodelling of 1689-91 remains largely intact, together with the quaint fittings.

The furniture of the chapel is original and made of good Cheshire oak. The 17th century holy table has turned legs at the front, and carved top rails. On either side are two high-backed square family box pews. The plainly panelled pulpit stands on the stump of a tree, and immediately in front is the low chancel screen dividing the little chapel. This interesting screen has a panelled base surmounted by a terrace of good shaped slats.

The West end is occupied by a gallery reached by an exterior stone staircase without parapet or rails, built against the north wall (left).

The Chapel bell is inscribed "G Mears, Founder, 1861.

Extracts from Old Cheshire Churches by Raymond Richards.





The Blue Bell Inn at Tushingham once had a pet duck. Doubtless it started out as a cute, fluffy little thing adored by all and sundry, but it grew up to be distinctly misanthropic. Of course, this is understandable enough, no self-respecting duck would relish a life of being accidentally kicked in a crowded bar, having ale splashed all over it, and probably being half-choked by clouds of tobacco smoke into the bargain. In the end it rebelled and turned to pecking at so many intruding ankles that it was at last reluctantly killed by the landlord. However, he was apparently sufficiently soft-hearted not to eat an erstwhile family pet; instead the duck was interred ~~at~~ underneath the bottom step of the stairs going down to the cellar.

That should have been the end of the story, but the duck clearly hadn't yet had all the revenge it wanted. Regularly thereafter, the step would come loose, no matter how firmly down it was nailed, and the duck would emerge, to reappear upstairs, pecking away to its heart's content.

In the end, the landlord turned to the church, and the local parson arranged a praying-down ceremony. As we have already seen, seven parsons are the minimum required for a praying-down, but this parson was nothing if not thorough and, with an enthusiasm that can only be described as overkill for ~~a duck~~ one little duck, rounded no fewer than twelve. Things didn't go quite according to plan, though, for instead of returning to its grave under the stairs, the duck remained where it was. But gradually it started to shrink. With a sudden flash of genius, the local parson waited until the wretched bird was small enough, and then shoved it into an empty bottle, hastily jamming the cork tightly in. The bottle was bricked up in a wall, and peace returned once again to the Blue Bell.

More recently, when the pub was undergoing repairs, the bottle was carefully removed from its hole, and later sealed back into the new wall. Clearly even today no-one was taking any chances.



The Blue Bell Inn, Tushingham.  
Picture taken Aug 1986.





#### SHOCKLACH.

The 12th century Church of St Edith at Shocklach occupies a very isolated position midway between two mounds which mark the sites of a border stronghold and the village, about a mile away. The building is dedicated to St Edith of Polesworth, who is thought to have been a sister of Edward the Elder.

The fine south doorway, circa 1150, is one of the best Norman examples in the county, and is of three courses. The outer design is of chevron, terminating in carved heads, the middle course is cable-shaped, and the inner order also chevron. The wooden doors are ancient and studded with iron.

The double bellcot has chains for the bells hanging partially outside, and the tolling of bygone ages has worn grooves in the sandstone wall. A former vicar relates the story of the wag who tied some bundles of hay to the outside bell chains, and driving cattle into the churchyard, set the bells ringing at midnight, as the cows browsed in the hay.

The registers date from 1538, and contain many extraordinary Plague entries.

In the quiet little graveyard are the remains of an ancient Cross with a shaft rising from the basestones.

As an indication of the isolation of Shocklach, there is a testimony scatched on the East window:- "I, Robt. Aldersey, was here on 31st oct 1756 along with John Massie and Mr Derbyshire. N B. The roads were so bad we were in danger of our lives."

Today, (Aug 1986), the vicar administers to the churches of both Shocklach and Tilston. I attended the Rushbearing service (when the photos were taken), and because of illness the Tilston organist, a Mrs Price, had been asked to play the organ. We all sang heartily, and for the last hymn the Vicar announced hymn 527, but Mrs Price wasn't having that. "Rector," she said, rising to her feet, "Shocklach folk dunna know that one very well. Can't we have 528, they can sing better when it's one they all know." And hymn 528 we sang.



Tiverton Mill, or sometimes known as Bate's Mill, of that family who for many generations farmed at Iddenshall Hall, near Tarporley. The picture shows bridge No 109, and be prepared for some sharp bends as at this point the Shrops-Union Canal runs some fifteen feet higher than the River Gowy to the right. The two views show the mill-pool using the waters of the River Gowy. The mill is seen on the left, with its ever-running water wheel and the Shady Oak Inn is to the right. The swans nest on the small island, and nearby the heights of Beeston Castle rule over all.

May 1987.



Outsize family  
grave at St Edith's  
Church Shallow.





The Cock o' Barton,

At Barton, a hamlet on the main road between Farndon and Broxton, is found this fine inn, known to all locally as the Cock o' Barton. Built of local sandstone, it has also intricate lattice work chimney stacks, and sandstone well-worn steps leading up to the entrance. "The Cock" is an old coaching inn, and the stables, which still stand, could accommodate up to 16 horses. With the coming of the railway, the stage traffic ceased, but the landlord operated a horse-drawn taxi service to Broxton station two miles away. The original coach-house and timberframed groom's cottages are enclosed within the yard of the inn. The place-name Barton generally refers to be ar-baiting, but there is no proof that it ever occurred there. Cockfighting, however, took place for the amusement of travellers whilst their horses were being changed.

Just down the hill from the inn are found these restored stocks (below), on the original site, but no doubt due to lack of use, they are barely discernible amidst the undergrowth.

June 1987.







#### The Peckforton Estate.

These two properties are to be found at Peckforton, and show the architecture typical of the estate owned by Lord Tollemache of nearby Peckforton Castle. Note the chimney stacks, and the small diamond-shaped glass forming the windows. Doesn't it make one think of that dream-house in the country, with roses climbing up the walls, and just the place where one can get away from it all? May 1987.







Remnants of Anglo-Saxon cross at  
Shorthall Church,  
one like this stood  
at Vicar Cross hence name



Water Pump at Willey Moor  
One like this formerly at  
Meadow Lee Farm,  
Value still ~~there~~ there.



It was with horror that the parish learned of the brutal murder of Isaac Newport, of Rose Cottage, Long Green in the month of February 1866. He was 65 years old, kept a small holding, and was member of one of Barrow's oldest and most respected families.

It was about twenty minutes to six on the evening of Feb 26th that a Samuel Joinson, who was working in "the third field from the Manley Road" found Isaac Newport's body in a ditch. He was "dead but warm". There appears to have been no doubt about the identity of the killer, and the local constable (P C Marsh) went promptly to the Railway Inn at Dunham (now known as the Dunham Arms). After a scuffle he arrested a man named Samuel Griffiths who was found to have substantial sum of 15 pounds in his pocket, unusual for a man of his character. Griffiths was known to be a "terror on account of his pilfering and rowdy habits." He was 26, and had lived in Dunham since he was 13 years old.

It would seem that at 9am Newport had met a Letitia Lightfoot from Overton at the Railway Inn to be paid for some pigs she had bought from him. After paying him the agreed £14 they stayed on drinking until Newport left at about 2 o'clock and took the footpath across the Manley Road and on to his home in Long Green.

Details of the crime were described in Griffiths's confession to a Methodist minister, Rev H Rowe, on the morning of the trial.

He said simply that he was in the Railway Inn and, when he saw the money handed over to Newport he "determined to have it". He followed and caught him "at the bottom of Woodward's field", where he knocked him down and took the money. The old man got up and asked him for £5 back, but he refused. For a while they walked on together and crossed the stile into the Christian field where he decided to kill Newport so that he "would not ~~report~~ report on him". Three or four times he hit him in the face with his fist and pushed him into the ditch. He was, however, still alive so he held his head under the water and within a minute he was dead.

The trial was held before Mr Justice Blackburn in Chester on April 5th. where Griffiths was sentenced to death. After his conviction, Griffiths became very religious and expressed a wish that as many as possible should see him executed; "that they might take warning from his example". He attributed his downfall to drink. He was brought from the County Gaol to the site where is now the Royal Infirmary. He attended divine service twice on the Sunday and called out from his cell asking the nurses at the windows to pray for him. It is also recorded that he was prayed for in most of the churches in the city, while crowds gathered all day to watch the scaffold being erected.

It was Race Week, and at a very early hour on Monday morning there were crowds outside the gaol where the execution was to take place in the presence of the High Sheriff, Mr Robert Barbour of Bollesworth Castle. Just before 7 o'clock a grey-headed man in a white smock, quickly recognised as Smith the Hangman, appeared and arranged a black cloth in front of the drop. The orderly crowd of two thousand included Isaac Newport's five sons who had walked from Long Green. The gallows had been erected over the gateway, and Samuel Griffiths was still praying as with a white cap over his head, he walked with a firm step on to the scaffold. The bolt was drawn. The body was left hanging for one hour, cut down and buried in the gaol. This was the last public hanging in Chester..... April 23rd, 1866.

Extract from 'The History of Barrow.

1986.  
The picture, taken in September, shows John Whitlow in his field along the Manley Road. This is the Christian's Field and John is standing on the footpath which crosses the ditch by the tree into the next field.





### Beeston Castle

Beeston Castle stands upon a high sandstone outcrop commanding the Tarporley Gap. The site was fortified by the Bronze Age, and has seen intermittent periods of occupation ever since.

In 1225 the 6th Earl of Cheshire, Ranulf de Blundeville ordered the building of the castle, and to pay for the work levied a tax on all who passed through his lands.

The castle is now in ruins but the gatehouse has been restored (above) and is pictured Nov 1986.



Worthy of note is that Guilden Sutton had its own pinfold, near to the Church. An entry in the register reads:·

1729. To repairing ye  
pinfold 0.0.6  
Pd for two rails  
for ye pinfold 0.2.0

The village constable was  
Thomas Norcott.

### The Cattle Pound, or Pinfold.

Usually a square sandstone enclosure, often divided and with heavy iron-bound wooden doors, the pinfold was for penning cattle that had strayed or caused damage to crops, etc. Animals were impounded for debts and kept at the owner's expense until redeemed. They were cared for by the Constable, and the owner had the right to rescue when the cattle were driven to the pound by the aggrieved person. The custom dates before the Norman Conquest. The one picture is at Hoole Bank.





Near the site of the old Gresford Colliery is found this pit winding-wheel, erected in 1982 to commemorate the disastrous pit explosion of 1936.

The inscription reads: "In Memory of the 266 miners who lost their lives in the Gresford Colliery, 22nd September 1936."

Unveiled by H R H The Prince of Wales 26 November 1982.

Of interest to the people of Guilden Sutton is that one of the men lost was one Tom Archibald, who lived at The Square, Guilden Sutton. He was employed at Hall Farm, Guilden Sutton for many years before moving to Gresford to work at the colliery.



FARNDON BRIDGE  
1987

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arches.

Two fairy forms, all clothed in white,  
Still hovering o'er the Dee.  
At midnight oft, by pale moonlight  
The ghost-struck rustics see.





#### Saighton Grange

This imposing building, constructed of local red sandstone, was the home of the Duchess of Westminster. It is now used by teachers and pupils of Abbeygate College. The picture was taken in July 1987.



#### Christleton, July 1887

Known locally as "Christleton Duckpond", this attractive pool plays host to waterhens and all types of small duck. There is usually a pair of nesting swans, or swans with baby cygnets. Across the pool are the Dixon's Almshouses, 1866, and behind those can be found the site of an old stronghold.



#### 4-Sided Sundial, Christleton

In the garden of The Manor House, an Elizabethan house adjoining the churchyard is a beautiful sandstone pillar with four faces for sundials, thus ensuring the time from all points of the compass. Pictured July 87.



#### Frodsham.

Situated along the Market Street, this building is the Drill Hall of the Earl of Chester's 2nd Volunteer Battalion, Cheshire Rifles. Over the archway can be seen the Prince of Wales's feather and ICH DIEN, and between the slit windows is the Cheshire Sheaf.

Above shows the Drill Hall on an Open Day put on by The Cheshire A.C. 36 (Frodsham) Detachment March 1982.

The lower snap is 19







Waverton Station, Ex INWR.

The two pictures show the now closed Waverton Station booking office and waiting room, on the Chester-Crewe main railway line opened in 1837. As a concession to the Duke of Westminster letting the railway run through the estate, the station buildings were built in keeping with the farms and houses in the area. Note the Typical "barley stick" chimneys, and the "W" (for Westminster) over the booking-office doorway. A further concession was that trains should stop at his request should he need to travel by rail from Waverton.

Although trains still run through, they do not stop, and the station area is used by a road haulage business.

May 1987.





Tilstone church stands isolated from the village. Beside the road, the church is entered through heavy iron gates hinged to tall stone gateposts. These posts are each topped with a large stone ball, and the face decorated by a carved skull and cross-bones. The left-hand post is inscribed I P

and the right-hand I L  
87.

Attached to the iron gate is a metal plate on which is moulded J Boot Church  
T Barker, Wardens  
1826.

The records of Tilstone church give a very vivid description of the Great Plague.

Picture July 1987



#### The Barnston Memorial, Farndon.

For 650 years the Barnstons have been prominent landowners in Farndon and district. This memorial was erected by tenants and friends in memory of Lt-Col Roger Barnston, 90th Light Infantry, who died of wounds at Lucknow, 1857.

Of interest is that one John Barnston 1630-61, married Alice, sole heiress of Thomas de Trafford, of Bridge Trafford, and who was killed at the Battle of Naseby, 1661. Through this union is named the Barnston Chapel in our St Peter's church, Plemstall.

In 1946, the estate passed to Major Philip Trevor Barnston, who with his wife Mrs Olwen lives at Crewe Hill, Farndon. The estate runs to a number of houses and about 2,000 acres in Bridge Trafford, Hapsford and Farndon.

The memorial stands 55 feet high, and each of the lions is 6 feet long. Erection cost were £400.

A jingle of 1914 was.

"Vote, Vote, Vote for Harry Barnston  
Who's that knocking at his door?  
It's the Kaiser and his wife  
And we'll kill them with a knife,  
And there won't be a Kaiser any more."







### Lymm Market Cross and Stocks

Lymm Cross is built on the top of a rock outcrop in the old market place at the bottom of Eagle Brow. There is a plate to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, 1897.

The stocks were placed here so that all who passed by this busy spot would see the offender as he sat exposed for his sins. The crime was matched by the punishment which varied from one to six hours. These times were decided by the Parish Constable, who also had powers of arrest and frequently used them. He was appointed annually.

Most villages had their own Cross, but many were destroyed during the Civil War, and by the Puritans who disapproved of public worship.

Vicar's Cross, Nr Chester was so named because of its cross, recorded as being 24 feet high.

The picture above was taken in July 1988.



### Rushbearing.

The old custom of rushbearing is still upheld locally, and this picture taken Aug 1988 shows newly cut rushes placed on graves at St Edith's, Shochlach. In early days, country churches had earth floors, and to keep away the cold and damp these were covered with rushes cut from the nearby meadows. Now that churches are heated and the floors carpeted, the custom has died out. Other churches in this area which hold rushbearing services are Farndon, Coddington and Tushingham.







This window, to be found in the cloisters of Chester Cathedral shows (left) King Alfred, and (right) Plegmund, the "Hermit of Plemstall". The name Plemstall comes from Plegmundstall, "the habitation of Plegmund", the dwelling-place of the scholar-hermit who later became Archbishop of Canterbury, and King Alfred's counsellor. During the 9th century, when native Britons were struggling against the invading Danes, many religious houses were destroyed. Plegmund, a notable scholar who worked on the translation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, took refuge on the Isle of Chester (now Plemstall) where he ministered to the people. Plegmund was certainly no ordinary man. In recognition of his talents, he was called from the simple way of life to become Alfred's tutor and assist him in the consolidation of his kingdom.

After holding various high offices, this great scholar was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 890. When Alfred died in 900, Plegmund crowned the king's son, known as Edward the Elder, whom he continued to serve until his own death in 914. Plegmund was buried in Canterbury Cathedral.



The Pillar of Eliseg. Prince Eliseg fought a great battle against the Saxons in 603 to reclaim his inheritance of Powys. Concenn, his grandson, had the 12ft-high pillar cross erected on the hillside in Valle Crucis, Llangollen centuries later to mark the victory, and its history was inscribed on the stone. This is one of the oldest surviving records of pre-Norman Britain. In the Civil War, Cromwell's soldiers threw the cross down and broke it. The remaining portion was re-erected in the 18th century.





#### Farmhouse Cheese.

Cheshire is traditionally noted for its farmhouse cheese made in every village up to the 1930's. The top picture, taken at Burton Hall, Nr Tarporley shows an old stone weight used for pressing out whey from newly-made cheese. note the slide groove at the end. obviously rescued from some old dairy, this weight stands by the roadside, almost too heavy to move.

The lower picture shows a prewar 2-cheese mechanical press, controlled by the spoked hand wheel to squeeze out the whey. This press was in daily use at Cotton Farm, Nr Christleton. Today in the 1980's cheese is mostly factory made, and hydraulic presses are used.

Of interest is that two old stone presses used at Church Farm, Guilden Sutton, have been used to form the bases of the brick gateposts of the present hurch Farm complex. May 1990



Before the coming of the combustion engine, horses provided the most common means of transport, and cattle were driven along the roads to farms and markets, often for long distances. Cabs and delivery vans were all horse-drawn, and every farm and village had its water trough where they could drink. Larger towns and cities provided drinking troughs in accessible places, at coaching inns and market-squares. This trough, now used for plants, is in the town centre car park, Llangollen.

July 1989.



#### Rushbearing.

The earthen floors of the earliest churches were covered with rushes, which kept the feet of the worshippers warm and dry. They were better for kneeling as many hours were spent in prayer. These rushes were readily obtainable from the wet meadow land around the villages, and were cut in August with much celebration. A register of 1595 reads: "Gave wine for ye Rushbearers, ye sum of Three shillings."

An early account describes how it was the custom where a large quantity of rushes is collected and bound evenly, and on a Saturday evening three or four men sit on a cartload of rushes, holding garlands of flowers. The cart drawn round the parish by two horses decked in gay ribbons, and their collars adorned with small bells. The cart is attended by men dancers in gay clothes and their faces blackened. Each man has a bell attached to his waist, and carried a ladle to collect money from the spectators. The party stopped to dance outside the inn, and then went on to <sup>the</sup> church where the rushes were put out on the floors. The garlands were hung behind the altar, there to remain till the next year, and a last garland placed in the Rector's chancel. Finally a peal is rung on the bells, and the rushbearing is now complete until another year."

With the coming of the 1750's, the custom started to die out, no doubt due to better seating and coke-heated churches with co-matting on the floor.

There still a few parishes where rushbearing continues, though without the dancers and the horse and cart. The picture shows rushes in the church of Old Chad, Tushingham cum Grindley.

August 1989.



Rushbearing at Old Chad, Tushingham.  
Aug 1989



Time' Places  
 When as a child, I laughed and wept  
 Time Crept  
 When as a youth I waxed more bold  
 Time strolled  
 When I became a full-grown man  
 Time Ran  
 When older still, I daily grew  
 Time flew  
 Soon I shall find in passing  
 Time Gone  
 Oh Christ, wilt Thou have saved me then?  
 Amen  
 By Henry Twells.  
 (To be seen in Chester  
 Cathedral, 1988)



### Churton Hall

Churton Hall, Pump Lane was the ancient home of the Barnston's, the local landowners. Today a farm, Ormrod described it: "an ancient timber mansion, environed by stately trees and retains its respectable appearance." Dated 1569 over the door." The date is now removed, and only two coats of arms remain. The porch with studded door is particularly good. Reputed to being haunted by a ghost of "the White Lady." There <sup>are</sup> wells both inside and out, and in front is the village pump which gives the lane its name. Pictured May 1990





### John Wesley, 1703-91

In the south cloister of Chester Cathedral is this stained glass window commemorating John Wesley, one of the greatest crusaders of that time. Wesley's father was a clergyman who with his wife raised nineteen children, so of course there were no luxuries. Graduating to Oxford, John Wesley had £30 a year, and by living carefully, managed on £28 and gave £2 to the needy. Next year he had £60, lived on £28, and gave £32 away. For his last year there, he lived on his £28 and gave the rest away.

Having become "filled with the Spirit of God" Wesley went out to preach, in the fields, in the streets, to anyone who would listen. Sometimes he was roughly treated but never gave up hope. Altogether he rode 250,000 miles, mostly on horseback, often dozing in the saddle, and preached some 40,000 sermons. Although he never came to Guilden Sutton, he did come to Alpraham, in 1749, and often came through Cheshire to the port of Parkgate, from where he crossed to Ireland. He first came to Chester in 1752, where he preached "just outside the city gate", before going into the town.



Parkgate, from where sailing ships went out with the tide across to Ireland. John Wesley crossed from here forty times to spread the Gospel. The picture shows high tide at Parkgate, 1984.





The Cholmondeley Arms, Frodsham

The picture, taken in June 1987, gives a reminder of the days when the Cholmondeley Estate held lands in the Frodsham area. The name Cholmondeley goes back to Norman times, and the present Lord lives at Cholmondeley Castle and runs the estate from there.



Frodsham Ex LNWR Railway Station

The pre-grouping railway companies identified themselves by their architecture, sparing no expense in their buildings. Frodsham Station in the lavish 1930's would have a resident station-master, two porters and signalmen, besides other staff working in the goods yard and sidings, giving an 18 hour daily service.





The Stocks at Tilston.

In the year 1376 King Edward III decreed that stocks should be established in every village, no doubt due to their success in keeping down local crime. These stocks were located at vantage points where all could see the offenders, such as: by the church gate, opposite the village inn, by the market Cross, on the village green. The offender sat on a bench, secured by his feet placed between two padlocked boards. He sat there, exposed for his sins, for a period varying from one to two hours.

The picture shows the stocks at Tilston, with an "offender" who kindly volunteered to pose for the camera.

June 1988.



The Joseph Groom Towers

Joseph Groom was the son of Henry and Margaret Groom who lived at the Chapel Cottage, where they kept a village shop. Joe was taught at Guilden Sutton School, and later served in the Great War as a Sgt-Major. On his return he set up as a greengrocer in Ellesmere Port, where he soon became involved in local government being on the Town Council for some 35 years. He was also secretary of Ellesmere Port Town Football Club. For 50 years he was a Methodist preacher and often came to Guilden Sutton. As a memorial, these massive blocks of flats which stand high over Ellesmere Port have been named the Joseph Groom Towers. Picture 1986.





### Huxley.

The new continental-style signpost gives out its directions and mileage most efficiently to the traveller, but the wrought-iron sign with its Huxley motif really welcomes and tells where you are. Somebody somewhere must surely be proud of his handiwork. Aug 19



### Christleton

The village centre of Christleton is a real wealth of the old and new. Note the friendly red "King's" telephone kiosk, now fast disappearing from our villages, the pre-war CCC "finger-post", the handpump and cistern which once supplied the village with its water, and the public shelter with the attractive lady. July 1987.



## H.M.S. CHESTER.

THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND.  
MAY 31<sup>st</sup> 1916.

CYRIL A. WALTON, M.A. CHAPLAIN, R.N.  
GEORGE H.W. WILLIAMSON, LIEUT. R.N.R.  
GEORGE SMILLET, POL.  
EDWARD G. ARTER, M.A.  
JOHN W. FLEMING, M.A.  
JOHN H. FLEMING, M.A.  
SIDNEY WISE, M.A.  
JOHN N. KIRKPATRICK, M.A.  
JAMES D. WAGHORN, M.A.  
WILLIAM H. ROY, CH. YEO. SIGS.  
JAMES V. OLDERSHAW, YEO. SIGS.  
GEORGE LISTER, YEO. SIGS.  
GEORGE E. DINN, LDC. SIG.  
FREDERICK G. MCKENZIE, SIGN.  
HENRY FOSKER, SAILMAKERS MATE.  
WILLIAM H. COOPER, ST. CORP.  
PERCY F. BLAKE, OFF. STD.  
ALFRED L. HOWLING, OFF. STD.  
RAYMOND W. THORP, BUGLER, R.M.L.I.  
ALBERT H. TUCKER, PTE. R.M.L.I.  
THOMAS PRESTON, PTE. R.M.L.I.  
JOHN P. GIBBS, PTE. R.M.L.I.  
WILLIAM SMITH, PTE. R.M.L.I.

EDWARD FASSNIDGE, PTE. R.M.L.I.  
JAMES M. W. GRIMLEY, PTE. R.M.L.I.  
WILLIAM J. PATTERSON, PTE. R.M.L.I.  
ALBERT E. CHOWNS, BOY.  
ROBERT J. ASHTON, BOY.  
JOHN TRAVERS CORNWELL, V.C. BOY.  
REGINALD A. RAVEN, BOY.  
JAMES F. LACY, BOY.  
EDWARD T. PEARCE, BOY.  
PERCY LAWLESS, A.B. R.F.R.  
JOHN EUNTON, A.B. R.N.V.R.



Jack Travers, of H M S Chester  
John Travers Cornwell was 1st class boy on the H M S Chester, one of the battleships which fought in the Battle of Jutland, 1916. In the official dispatches of the battle, many names are mentioned of those who performed brave deeds, one name being that of Cornwell, J. His admiral singled him out for mention:-  
"Boy (1st Class) J T Cornwell, of HMS Chester, was mortally wounded early in the action, but he remained standing alone at a most exposed post until the end of the action, with the gun's crew dead and wounded all around him. He was under 16½ years old."

Jack was sightsetter for the gun. This meant his being in an unprotected position. In less than 5 minutes his gun was put out of action by an enemy shell, and 10 of the gun crew were put out of action. This same shell wounded Cornwell, but he stayed there under heavy fire until the action ended.

They bore him back to Grimsby hospital, and there a nurse asked him about the fight, "Oh," he said, "we carried on alright."

He said nothing of his own immortal deed, and died twenty four hours later.

This picture, taken Aug 1988, shows the tribute to those of HMS Chester who died, and is in Chester Cathedral.



Belgrave Avenue  
or the western approach and long drive to Eaton Hall, home of the Duke and Duchess of Westminster. The gateway has two heavy stone gate-posts, with on each one a gun-dog in a begging position.

The picture was taken Apr 87



### Rowton.

This sandstone building, now roofless, was used as a hospital for wounded soldiers at the Battle of Rowton Moor, when King Charles saw his troops defeated during the Civil War, 1645. The picture was taken Oct 1989.



### The Sandbach Crosses

The two crosses pictured in August 1987 in this quiet corner of Sandbach are of Saxon origin. They were completed in the 9th century to commemorate the advent of Christianity in the Kingdom of Mercia, about 653 A.D. in the reign of Saxon King Penda.





The Welsh Tower, Ewloe Castle.  
Ewloe Castle or rather its ruins, is tucked away among trees across a field on the A55 road just beyond Hawarden.  
Legend has it that in the 8th century the Anwyl family lived here, and they had a daughter Angharad, a beautiful singer with a lovely soprano voice. Most days she sat by her spinning wheel, and as she worked sang her favourite ballads. One stormy afternoon there was thunder and lightening and torrential rain, when someone crept up behind her, and plunged a dagger in her back and murdered her.

Since then the years have passed by, but many times, particularly after a thunderstorm the sound of beautiful singing has been heard coming from the Welsh Tower.

The castle custodian has reported seeing an apparition coming from the tower and moving across the sloping ground that dips down to the iron gate, where it went out of sight.

True or not, he is "looking forward to the next thunderstorm when he hopes to hear the mistress Angharad's beautiful voice again". The picture shows the entrance to the Welsh Tower, Jan 1990.



### Churton Chapel

This Methodist Chapel was built in 1832 by voluntary labour, and is still in use. On the wall is inscribed, over the door, "Mine House shall be called a House of Prayer for all people". The picture, taken June 1988, shows Mrs Chadwick of Churton, outside the Chapel.



Known locally as "The Dry Arch" this attractive bridge at Aldford carries the carriage drive from Eaton Hall to its exit on the Chester-Whitchurch main road at Hatton.

May 1990



Bolesworth Castle

Situated off the Chester-Whitchurch main road is this ancestral home of the Barbour Family, main landowners in and around Harthill. Harthill All Saints Church contains many references to the Barbours. This picture was taken June 1989 on an "Open Day" the occasion being a Flower Festival at Harthill Church, depicting the church story.





### Stoak Church

The church of St Lawrence, built of red sandstone, is noted for its very old hatchment boards inside; And on the outside for its clock on the tower, just above the main door, which has just a single finger to show the time. In the churchyard is a memorial to the men who lost their lives in a shunting accident during the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal in 1905.

Picture taken 1987..



In the graveyard of the Church of St Lawrence at Stoak (above) is the gravestone of Nelson Burt, aged nine years, whose story is told on the next page. On this stone, made of Cheshire Red sandstone, is the inscription:

"Nelson Burt, aged nine years, whose body was found drowned in the River Mersey during the Great Hurricane of 3-6th of December, 1822."

Picture taken  
May 1995



### Arden Close

In the lower part of the old Tarvin is this attractive little spot. Named after the Arden Family who lived here. Tom Arden married Polly Capper and they had a daughter Nina who ran a needle work shop from here. Tom died aged 93 and worked until his very last day. This picture was taken May90



At the Chester end of the water-front at Parkgate is this cottage, and pathway with the name NELSON boldly picked out in Black cobbles. Should you enquire, you will probably be told that Admiral Nelson stayed at the house when he came to visit Lady Hamilton. There is no evidence that Nelson ever visited Parkgate, and the explanation given by Hilda Gamlin in her "Twixt Mersey and Dee" is more acceptable. In the early years of the 19th century, Mr R Burt, a Chester painter, used to stay the summer months in that cottage. One night in December 1822, during a great storm, he and his son Nelson, a promising lad of nine years of age and called after the great Admiral, were on the Ellesmere boat "Prince Regent", on the Mersey, when the vessel was run into by a flat. The boy was drowned; the body was later found where the vessel went down and was buried at Stoak. Mr Burt's life was saved by his being thrown against the flat and carried away on it as it cleared the sunken packet. The bereaved father collected the black pebbles as he strolled along the shore in an evening and embedded them in the pathway fronting his cottage.

Picture taken 1989.



Aldford, Near Chester.

The parish church of St John the Baptist, with its unusual tower, was rebuilt in by Richard, 3rd Duke of Westminster in 1866..It is an edifice of red sandstone in the Early Decorated style from plans prepared by John Douglas, the noted Chester architect. The western tower with spire contains a clock and six bells. All the church windows are stained, and there are 390 sittings. The church register dates from the year 1639. Picture taken May 1990.



Tattenhall railway station was one of two which served the village, eight miles from Chester, and was on the Chester to Whitchurch branch line. The line was opened in the 1860's and served the area until its closure in the Beeching era, 1964. The picture, taken in June 1991 shows the station building restored to modern standards, fitted with every convenience. What was the trackbed is now a lawn, and the platform edges are still in situ.



June 1990



Elm Tree  
Farm  
Clotton  
May 1991







The side-chapel at All Saints, Daresbury contains the Lewis Carroll memorial window. Carroll was born at the Vicarage in 1832. To mark the centenary of his birth, enthusiasts subscribed to this striking glass window. It depicts a Nativity scene over which are panels of his life. The lower panels show the Dormouse, Mad Hatter etc from the "Alice in Wonderland" books. There is a verse below from Lewis Carroll's poem "Christmas Greetings."

Picture Sep 1991

The Hawarden Gladstone Monument  
inscribed: "This fountain was  
erected by the parishioners of Hawarden to  
commemorate the Golden Wedding of  
William Ewart Gladstone  
and  
Catherine Gladstone  
July 25th 1889  
as a slight token of the admiration and  
affections inspired by a residence  
of fifty years."

The Rt Hon William Ewart Gladstone 1809-98  
was a great Liberal Statesman, and popularly  
Known as "The Grand Old Man." He entered into  
Parliament as a Tory, later served as the  
Chancellor of the Exchequer, and became the  
Liberal Prime Minister four times between  
1868 and 1894.

Hawarden is situated some ten miles from  
Chester on the old A55 into North Wales, and,  
besides its castle, is very proud of its  
association with the Gladstone family.

July 1992





At Brown Knoll, near Broxton, is this elaborate monument to the memory of John Wedgwood, son of the famous Josiah Wedgwood, the most famous of English potters. His classical designs of 1759 became the fashion, and led to a great extension of the **S**taffordshire china industry.

John Wedgwood was more noted for his evangelical work in the Crewe area, and for fifty years after his Cheshire mission could be found around the local villages drawing the crowds to hear him speak.

An account of his funeral at Brown Knoll in 1860 recalls his singing "in the very hills which now surround him. Audible sobs from many hearts found utterance, and big tears stood in the eyes of some, and fell fast down the cheeks of many others."

Picture. July 96.



This wartime (1939-45) regulation notice, now nearly overgrown by creeper is to be seen at Bickerton, by a lane which takes you up to the old Iron Age fort of Maiden Castle. It reads

Culston Park Estates  
Under the Wartime Regulations Act, This Lane is out of Bounds to all Troops and Military Department Vehicles.

Picture taken  
September  
1992.





Abergele. 1993.

1868.

210 The Abergele Railway Accident.—One of the most awful catastrophes which ever occurred in connection with railway traffic happened about two miles to the west of Abergele (just below Tanrago Caves) on the 20th of August, 1868. Shunting operations with a goods train were being carried on at Llanddulas station, when five or six trucks laden with petroleum became detached, rushing down a gradient of 1 in 90 at a terrific speed, and colliding with the Irish Mail rushing up the bank from Abergele. The concussion smashed the oil barrels, the trucks were pitched over the engine, tender, and carriages, which were at the instant enveloped in black and suffocating smoke, and fearful flames, which spread with great rapidity, and in a few awful seconds all those who occupied the front carriages had been burnt to cinders, wholly unrecognisable. The 33 lie buried in Abergele Churchyard in one large trench.

The following is a copy of the

Inscription on the Monument in Abergele Churchyard.—"In the midst of life we are in death."—Sacred to the memory of the Thirty-Three Persons whose names are inscribed on this monument. They perished in the Railway Accident near Abergele on the 20th of August, 1868, and their remains are deposited within this enclosure.—The Right Hon. Henry, Lord Farnham; The Lady Farnham; The Rev. Sir Nicholas Chinnery, Bart.; Lady Chinnery; The Hon. Judge Berwick; Elizabeth Mary Berwick; John Harrison Aylmer; Rosanna Louisa Aylmer; Arthur Fitzgerald Aylmer; Rosalie Franks; Kate Sophia Askin; Fanny Sophia Thornburgh Askin; Charles Cripps; Capt. J. Priestley Edwards; E. Lovell Farrell; Joseph Holmes; Jane Ingram; Mary Ann Kellest; Caroline Simcox Lee; Augusta Simcox Lee; William Townshend Lund; W. Henry Owen; Edward Outen; W. Bradley Purkinson; Christopher Late Purkinson; Mary Anne Roe; Whitmore Scovell; Kathleen Scovell; William Smith; Caroline Stearns; Elizabeth Strafford; Louisa Symes.—"I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and who-ever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die. Believeest thou this."—John xi., 25, 26.

R JONES, PRINTER, ABERGELE.



The Cheshire Cat,  
Nantwich.

For centuries a wellknown hostelry, it was built in the early 17th century, and in 1736 was converted into six almshouses by Mr Roger Wilbraham, bereaved by the death of his wife and son. Renamed the Cheshire Cat it was for years the "eating-place" of Nantwich. Now in Feb 1993 it is used by musically minded young people as a "discoteque."



Horn's Mill

1920's



Horn's Farm.  
immediately opposite  
The Helsby Horns formerly  
the Brownes  
farmed by 3 generations  
of Whites.

Beer Wagon used to come  
pulling down the incline of which  
is now the A & B. to the well at the  
farm to fill up their water tanks;  
and the well is still ~~see~~ to be seen  
carefully fenced off and in  
perfect working order. Sentinels &  
17-oxen's wagons were regular  
visitors to this well

Horn's Mill. Feb 1999  
Helsby







Christleton A picture taken in March 1993, showing the heart of the village green, just now covered with many colours of crocus. Behind is the Church of St James, once much damaged in 1645 by the Royalist garrison of Chester, but now restored to its former glory. The old Manor House has a four-sided sundial in the garden (rear right), and to the front is the attractive shelter with the village pump and cestern. See also the old-style Cheshire County finger post.



Christleton The old and the new, the "old" being the well-supported Methodist Church, built in 1888 and still going strong. The "new" is the "Duck sign", warning motorists to drive carefully, as round the corner is the "Christleton Duckpond" noted locally for its swans, cignets and water-fowl. This pond was restored in the 1970's by the then Mayor of Chester, a popular local farmer, giving it a new life to its waters and wild-life. Picture taken Feb 1993









### Church House, Tarvin

The Elizabethan Church House is adjacent to St Andrew's church, and survived the Great Village Fire of April 30th, 1752. It is of "cruck" construction, and was formerly thatched. The interior walls are of wattle and daub, and there is a fine fire-place with a coat of arms. Church was the Vicarage until 1790

with a coat of arms above. Church house was The Vicarage until 1790, when the present Vicarage came into use. The property was restored in 1990 by the Chester Historic Buildings Preservation Trust. The picture (above) was taken in March 1994



### One-handed Clock. Seen in Bunbury Church.

From about 1710 until the 1800's, this blacksmith-made mechanism turned the tower clock. When only the wealthiest people owned watches, the church clock measured the village day. Such early clocks had just one hand—the hour hand.

Note: A good working example of a one-handed church clock is to be seen at Stoak, about two miles beyond Mickle Trafford. Jan 1995.





Bunbury The Church of Saint Boniface contains the Tomb of Sir Hugh De Calveley, 1315-94, who "was a giant of a man nearly seven feet tall, and spent much of his time fighting abroad. On returning to his native Cheshire, he founded Bunbury's Collegiate Church, much of what you can see today. It also contains an aged bible, with books of the Old and New testaments, and a section called Books of the Apocrypha with I and II Macabbees, and a story of Susanna. Feb 1995



Bunbury Church of St Boniface. Pinnacles galore (above) on the main building, while below on the ground are two of the weathered pinnacles removed during the restoration of 1950-51.





The Buried Statue, Bunbury Church.

tucked away in a corner of the church, this statue commemorates Jane Johnson the young wife of a dancing master of Nantwich, and once stood by the main altar of the church. But in 1760 the Vicar was "so disturbed by the bulging udders of Jane" and had the statue secretly buried. It was rediscovered by chance only in 1882 and placed here. Photo Feb 95.

Four Chimneys, Three Cottages at Bunbury  
Feb 1995







The Image House, Bunbury. This cottage, which can be found on the Whitchurch road near Bunbury Heath, achieved notoriety in 1931 when it became the subject of *The Shiny Night*, a novel by Beatrice Tunstall. In the book, a poacher who was transported to Australia because of his misdeeds, returned to the village and built the house, including the effigies of his enemies which can be seen on the upper walls. Another story records that the house was built in a day when according to tradition, if it could be proved that a squatter could erect a home and have smoke coming from the chimney within one day, the property became his. The images could also have been intended to ward off evil spirits or "buggins". The building certainly dates from the early 1800, and was part of the Peckforton Estate.

Photo Feb 1995





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Well at Rushton by Tarporley

This spring-fed well is to be seen alongside Culton Park wall, adjacent to the Knickerbrook Cottage. Until mains water came in 1931 it was the water supply for the whole village. Photo Feb 1995





Burwardsley is a small village set in the Peckforton range of hills some three miles south-east of Tattenhall. This picture shows the Methodist Church there, built in 1843, following the introduction of Methodism into the rural areas of Cheshire by John Wesley. After 150 years the Church is still going strong, but like many rural churches, its future is uncertain. Pictured Dec 1994.

### Shadrach, Meshach and Abedigo

The Bible records that because of their belief in God they were deported to the land of Babylon by the King Nebuchadnezzar, there to serve and worship the golden idols made and set up on the King's orders. The King was furious when they refused, and ordered furnaces to be lit and heated up to seven times hotter than usual. Then he ordered some of his best soldiers to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednigo and throw them into the blazing furnace. This they did, but the flames were so hot that the soldiers were overcome and they fell into the furnace. King Nebuchadnezzar saw this and leapt to his feet, and said to his advisers "Weren't those three men tied up and thrown into the Fire?". "Certainly, O King," they replied, "Well," said the King, "I can see them walking in the fire, unbound and unharmed." So he approached the furnace and called out, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abedigo, servants of the Most High, I recognise and respect your God, so come out of the flames and come to me." They did so, and all around saw that they weren't harmed, nor was their hair singed, and there was no smell of fire on them.

The King saw this and said "Praise be to the God of these Men, who, because of their faith in Him, has rescued them from death in the fire. Because of his admiration of their faith, the King later promoted the three men to a high position in Babylon.

This shortened extract from Daniel



"Shadrach"







Following the building of the Methodist Church in Burwardsley, and the surge of enthusiasm which accompanied it there was nearby built three houses of local sandstone. These were aptly named Shadrach, Meshach and Abedigno after the three Biblical characters in the Old Testament. Sadly in 1994 only Shadrach and Meshach survive, as Abedigno was demolished some years ago. The pictures show the two surviving properties.

Pictures taken Dec 94.





The main entrance to Peckforton Castle is by this gatehouse with its tower and gatekeeper's lodge. Owned by Lord Tollemache, the lands of the estate run out to Tiverton, Tattenhall and Bunbury. May 1987.

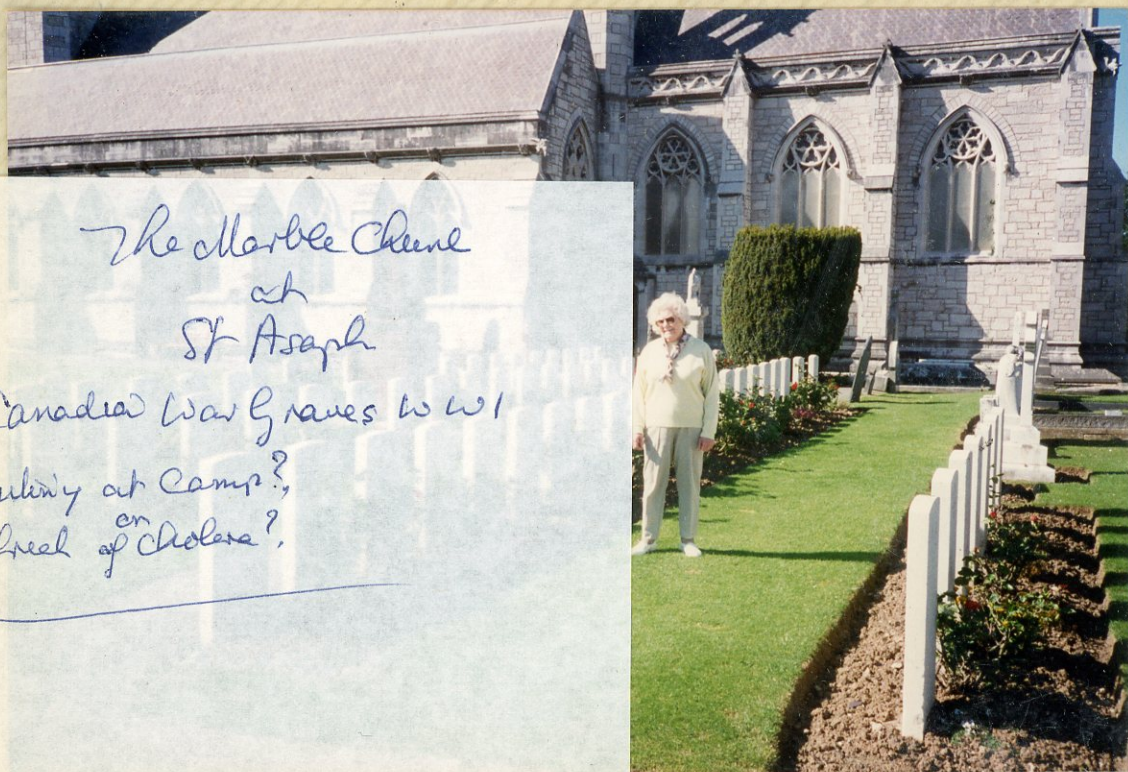


The Headless Woman Inn stands by the old coach-road where it passes through Duddon on its way to Nantwich. In the early 1900's, the inn sign was painted on slate which broke into pieces when it was taken down. Later a wooden figure was put in the garden and stood there for everyone to see. This was a ship's figurehead which a Captain obtained and had the head sawn off. The figure was brightly painted, and had the head carefully placed on its right arm, with brightly coloured blood running down from the severed head. For years it stood there, and many travellers of the 1930's paused to look at the gruesome figure, then hastened on their way. Then in the 2nd World War it either disappeared or was stolen. Local legend has it that there exists a tunnel between the inn and the historic Hockenhull Hall, over a mile away, used in Civil War. Extract from the book "Tarvin, its history"



The Marble Chene  
at  
St Asaph  
Canadian War Graves WW1  
Malaria at Camp?  
Outbreak <sup>on</sup> of Cholera?

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Old Cottage at  
Minshull Vernon  
Ches. August 1995



## PETER COTGREAVE ON THIS DAY

ON OCTOBER 6 1912, the people of Guilden Sutton were preparing for a special service of remembrance in the Methodist Chapel.

A crowded congregation assembled to witness the unveiling of a tablet which had been placed inside the chapel to the memory of William Thomas who had passed away the previous January.

Mr Thomas had been associated with the work of the village for 46 years, having been a lay preacher, Sunday school superintendent and class leader.

The Rev F S Henshall conducted the service and the address was given by the Rev S Parlow who said Mr Thomas had the finest and noblest Christian character he had ever been privileged to meet.

Mr R Cathcart Smith unveiled the tablet, having known William Thomas all his life. He said the large congregation spoke volumes as to the esteem and honour in which Mr Thomas had been held.



HADLOW ROAD STATION. Built 1966

closed. 1952.

restored by Cheshire County Council

WIRRAL COUNTRY PARK

RAILWAYS AND THE COUNTRYSIDE

"I will build a motor car for the great multitude ..... so low in price that no man ..... will be unable to own one - and enjoy with his family the blessing of hours of pleasure in God's great open spaces." Henry Ford was obviously a man who kept his promises. In 1950 only a quarter of Britain's holidaymakers travelled by road; in 1970 nearly three quarters did so. In the same twenty years the proportion of holidaymakers using the railway dropped from a half to less than a quarter.

Although we now regret the death of small branch lines, the birth of railways in its time brought anguish and upheaval. A railway must have wide curves and gentle slopes, and so brings drastic alterations to the landscape. This line between Hooton and West Kirby in fact had some of the tightest curves and steepest gradients of any branch line in England. Between 1830 and 1850 the railway-building boom changed the face of the countryside more violently than any other event in history. A look at the maps on the wall of the booking office here at Hadlow Road will show just how much of Britain came under the influence of "the conquering engines". At the height of the boom, navvies and their horses together each shifted an average of twenty tons of earth a day.

The effect of the railways on people's lives was even greater. When the Duke of Wellington saw the first train, he said, "Progress be damned. All this will do will be to allow the lower classes to move around unnecessarily." No doubt he would have had even more to say about Henry Ford's production lines!

The first section of this branch line, opened in 1866 between Hooton Junction on the main line and Parkgate on the Wirral coast, meant more to the area than simply making travel easier for ordinary people.

The Wirral's good rail services to Liverpool and Chester helped change its quiet villages into residential areas for city commuters. The railway helped increase the prosperity of farms, factories and traders by providing a cheap and efficient way of moving goods. In fact the prime reason for its construction was to serve the Stanley's colliery at Neston.

Today, in its new role as the backbone of the Wirral Country Park the railway still plays an important and beneficial part in the life of the region. It is difficult to imagine as you look around that it was once considered a blight on the landscape.