

Horwich Heritage Town Centre Trail

A self-guided walk around the historic centre of Horwich



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Information

Starting Point

A map is included with each point of interest numbered to help you learn more about the history and heritage of Horwich. The walk both begins and ends at the Crown Hotel, Horwich, BL6 7QJ which is marked as point one on the map. Start by walking along Lee Lane, then continue until the junction with Winter Hey Lane. Here turn right, walk down Winter Hey Lane to reach the junction with Chorley New Road, then turn right to return to the starting point.

Distance

The walk is approximately one mile long. Allow upto two hours to complete it.

Introduction

Fundamental to any appreciation of Horwich is an understanding of the character of the town centre and how it developed. It has in fact experienced two significant periods of growth; one in the late 18th century with the expansion of the cotton and bleaching industries, and the other at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, with the coming of the Railway Works.

The triangular area between Lee Lane, Winter Hey Lane and Chorley New Road forms the acknowledged town centre of Horwich. Lee Lane is named after Urmstone's Lee (grazing land) and lies on the line of the old Pack Horse road between Bolton and Adlington, which became the Bolton to Nightingale Trust in 1763. Winter Hey Lane is an old agricultural route named after the adjacent "Winter Hey" fields. Chorley New Road is more recent, having been built in 1829 as a more direct turnpike road between Bolton and Horwich. This came into prominence as a tram route when the Railway Works were completed in 1892.

Points of interest

- 1.** The original Crown Hotel was in existence in 1786 and it is believed to have been a staging post on the Turnpike Road. It was rebuilt in 1886 with the arrival of the Railway Works.
- 2.** In Victorian times Crown Meadow Lane ran behind the Crown Hotel towards the former Lee Mill (now Halbrosportswear). Andrew Peak had a Tuyere Works on land here, which produced hollow bricks used in blast furnaces. The chimney was felled in 1886. Opposite his workshop was Aldred's Smithy and Brook's Wheelwright and Undertaker's Shop.
- 3.** The former Lee Lane Post Office (Civic Sign) was Horwich's second post office, succeeding 42 Church Street in 1851. Thomas Fell and his wife were letter receivers.
- 4.** House nos. 245 and 243 Lee Lane were built in 1828 by Thomas Metcalfe. No. 223 was built in 1854 by Robert Hampson; Andrew Peak bought both this and no. 225 in 1875, then he built nos. 227 and 229. Thomas Hope built nos. 207, 205 and 203 in 1855.
- 5.** The original Bay Horse Hotel is known locally as The 'Long Pull'. Beer was once brewed at the rear of the premises. Note the three storeys and the old front door. It was modernised in 1900 and Thomas Hampson believed the building may have been used for textile manufacturing.
- 6.** Between the Crown Hotel and the original Bay Horse, and between Lee Lane and Crown Meadow Lane were several courts of houses, probably dating from the 18th century. Hope Court and Owen's Court were the names of two of these courts.
- 7.** The former Primitive Methodist Chapel (The Miss Mason Memorial) was built about 1900 and closed in 1934.
- 8.** Hampson Street once had three old cottages on the left and two on the right. At the bottom of the street are various businesses occupying the former Moreton Mill or Lee Mill weaving sheds. A fine view of Rivington Pike is seen up Hope Street.

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Scowcroft Cottages, which stood between Hampson Street and no. 186, were two blocks of stone cottages built in 1767 and 1777 by James Scowcroft. They had three storeys but were very low, almost certainly weaver's cottages.

10. The row of buildings, nos. 182, 184 and 186, was erected in 1855 by Andrew Peak.
11. Looking down Julia Street note the business premises on the right. This was originally the Infants Department of the British School, and about 1911 it became the St John's Ambulance Hall.
12. No.183 was built in 1805 by William Longworth, a bleacher, as three one-up and one-down cottages. Later he built nos.185 and 187. Richard Dutton bought the property in 1849 and he then built nos.189 and 191 about 1851 nos.193 and 201 by 1855-1856.
13. Lord Street once had two blocks of stone cottages on the right hand side, probably dating from the 18th century. These connected to two shops fronting Lee Lane. Note the fine view of Crooked Edge Hill behind Sportsman's Cottage; Two Lads on Wildersmoor; the tree covered site of Rockhaven; Adam Hill; Whitebrow and Horwich Moor. Also, Ormston's Farm peeping over the rise was possibly the site of a Forester's house many centuries ago.
14. This was the site of the old Congregational Sunday and Day School, known as the British School that accommodated 250 pupils. It was built in 1880 in front of the original chapel of 1774 which is now Spice Valley Indian Restaurant.
15. The former Lee Lane Congregational Church (United Reform) was built in 1856. The original clock was given by Andrew Peak who is buried in the churchyard. The church is currently being converted into apartments and the grave yard is now a car park.
16. Gregory's Row, nos.154 to 164, was built in 1837 by William Gregory of Westhoughton.
17. Note the view of Ridgmont looking beyond the Parish Church. This is recognised as an ancient site, probably the home of one of the foresters of the Royal Hunting Forest (Norman times).

- 18.** Nos. 146 and 146a, now a bike shop, was built by Nancy Strickland of Blackrod in 1826 as a freestanding house. In 1851 it was a doctor's house known as Lee House. When no.144 was added on a coach house was created. Note the remains of an archway over the left hand shop window.
- 19.** Nos. 139 to 135 were built in 1854 by Ja.S. Walsh on land called The Lee.
- 20.** Note Walsh Street and then look up Jones Street for a fine view of Rivington Pike, Brown Hill and Douglas Flats (or Springs). Jones Street was part of Lee Gate Estate, in 1878 owned by Joseph Jones of Great Lever. Note the Junior School, building in 1911 as the Horwich Council Infants school and Rivington and Blackrod High School Annex, built in 1930 as the Secondary Modern School. The Clinic and the Library were built in the 1930s.

- 21.** The Public Hall (civic sign) was built in 1878 by Peter Martin, of the 'Street', Heath Charnock, for public use as a social centre. Unfortunately he died shortly after its completion, but his widow gave the building to the people of Horwich. With the opening of the Mechanics Institute in 1888 its popularity began to decline and in 1895 it became the seat of local government when the Horwich Urban District Council was formed. Note the lawn at the side of the Public Hall facing Lee Lane on which stood three cottages that had front gardens and backyards. In 1851 one of these was the Horwich Police Station.



- 22.** No. 130 was built in 1826 by Jeremiah Porter and no. 126, immediately to the left of a ginnel, was the first shop of the Industrial Co-operative Movement in Horwich in 1862. The row consisted of three one-up and one-down dwellings with the ginnel leading to Beadows Court, which had three similar dwellings at the back.
- 23.** The original Co-op central premises stood between the Albert Arms pub (now the Victoria and Albert) and a cottage no. 122. Built in 1864 they were the Co-op grocers, bakers and entertainment rooms.

- 24.** The new Co-op central premises were built here in 1902, surmounted by the elephant logo that still survives. Several retail businesses and restaurants now occupy the site.
- 25.** The former Independent Methodist Chapel, now a care home, was built in 1867 and a day school was opened on the site in 1887. W. Crumblehulme was one of its founders. This was replaced by a new, larger, Independent Church in 1906, which can be seen a short distance along Lee Lane.
- 26.** Originally known as Union Street (now the shortest street in Horwich), this row of cottages began at the site of the present estate agents and continued to the bottom of Brownlow Road. The present row of shops was built in front of the old cottages in 1886. The gable of these old cottages can still be seen with the inscription 1824 on a corner stone. In 1851 the Pearl Brook Area of Horwich stretched from the bottom of the present Brownlow Road to Winter Hey Lane. Silverwell Street was part of this area, being formally known as Nail Street. There was a major flood here 1850.
- 27.** Sainsbury's supermarket now stands on the site of the former Arcade and Prince's Theatre that was known locally as "Johnny's" named after its owner Jonny Holland.

- 28.** The attractive stone-built pub, known as the Saddle was built in the 19th Century and has a substantial barn / stables at the rear. Don't forget to visit the Horwich Heritage Centre as you pass the entrance to Longworth Road.



- 29.** Gaskell's Cotton Mill, also known as Pearl Brook Mill, once stood at the corner of Lee Lane and Winter Hey Lane but it was burnt down in 1882. The Market buildings (incorporating the Liberal Reform Club) were built on part of the site in 1886.

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Now occupied by various shops, a café and a bar, the former Craven Heifer was a tavern and later a hotel, which was renovated in 1886. The publican in 1851 was Thomas Harrison, a stone mason, who probably built the houses in nearby Harrison Street. At the rear stood the Co-operative Society

Bakehouse and Slaughter house. Continuing on the left side of Winter Hey Lane the following streets were all built during the railway era of the town: St John's Street, New Brunswick Street, Canada Street, Emmett Street and Taylor Street, which was parallel to Winter Hey Lane.

- 31.** Winter Hey Lane was named from a field that was situated on the eastern side in 1620. Known as Horrock's Winter Hey, it was part of ancient Gorton Fold Farm.
- 32.** Nos. 19, 21 and 23 were built in 1854 by Jas Heyes together with three adjoining houses in Wright Street, built in 1877.
- 33.** Around the side of no. 30 you can still see the entrance to the former Makinson's Timber Yard. This was known as a Steam Saw Mill in the 1850s.
- 34.** Sixty years ago Horwich had 17 butchers shops, now it has only one (Greeleys). This was one of the oldest (Marklands) and had its own slaughter house at the rear of the premises.
- 35.** In the 1920s the Old Market stood on the site of the present Barclays Bank.
- 36.** Facing Emmett Street, on Winter Hey Lane is Winter Hey House, now occupied by F.H. Sherbourne, Plumbers. This was formerly the home of Dr Emmett and later Dr Sewell, the medical officers of the town.
- 37.** On the corner of Winter Hey Lane and Chorley New Road is an apartment block that has been converted from a former pub. In 1847 this was The Greyhouse Inn then later it became The Black Dog Hotel.
- 38.** The former Picture House on the left, which was one of three cinemas in the town, is now known as Funky Monkeys, a children's play centre.

- 39.** The large three storey terrace on the right nos.143 to 169 has shops on the ground floor with accommodation above which used to house families who came to work at the Horwich Loco Works.
- 40.** In 1847 the present Chorley New Road up to the Crown Hotel was named Crown Street. At this time there were only two terraces of stone built houses on the left side. The road frontage developed rapidly with the coming of the Railway Works in 1884 and a tram route ran to the Crown.
- 41.** This was formerly a corner shop, then later the Labour Club and is now an Indian Restaurant.
- 42.** Horwich Market stood here for many years from 1926 to 2010. It is now set to become a housing site.
- 43.** The original Tram or Car Shed now houses ASL Motor Factors. It was built in 1900 and remained in use until 1946 when the tram service from Bolton ended.

44.



St Mary's RC Church was opened in 1906. Prior to this the former school erected in 1885, was also used as a church. Around the corner on land now covered by modern houses was the former Yates' Brickyard.

- 45.** The Toll Bar Inn gained its name from the Toll Bar across Crown Lane, formerly known as Bar Lane, this being the entrance to the turnpike road. The Toll House and Gates lay across the present traffic roundabout that once boasted a fine Victorian horse trough and lamp post donated by Andrew Peak. This was melted down for scrap during the Second World War.

Tom Leech – 1989
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