



**Shevington & District Community  
Association**



# **HERITAGE TRAIL No. 3**

**To Celebrate Lancashire Day, 2014**

**Shevington & District Community Association**

# HERITAGE TRAIL NO. 3

*Welcome to Shevington & District Heritage Trail No. 3 which covers aspects of our local heritage to be found on both sides of Shevington Lane from its junction with Old Lane through to Almond Brook Road a short distance into Standish.*

*I trust that this latest trail, will stimulate interest in the heritage of our local communities and perhaps encourage residents to explore in more detail the fascinating story of where we live today.*

**John O'Neill**

## **Introduction**

Shevington Lane forms part of the ancient highway to and from the parish on its northern side. In the mid 18th century the population widely spread across its entire area amounted to, at most, 300 persons.

By the time of the first official census in 1801 that total had reached 646 which is similar to the current number of pupils attending Shevington High School. The present population is around 12,000.

The Standish family from their Hall across the Millbrook controlled and extended their manorial lands from the 13th century including holdings within our manor as at Gathurst and Park Brook. When their line came to an end in 1920, their extensive estate was auctioned off including a number of sites on this walk.



TOTAL DISTANCE - 2 MILES.

# SHEVINGTON & DISTRICT HERITAGE TRAIL No. 3

**DISTANCE 2 MILES.**

**From Shevington Lane junction with Old Lane to Almond Brook Road moving north on its eastern side and returning on the western one.**

## **Start**

Junction of Old Lane with Shevington Lane and proceed along the eastern footpath in a northerly direction.

## **Coach House Farm**

Now a private dwelling dating from the 18th century, it was part of the Standish Hall estate held by tenant farmers until sold by auction in 1921. Its large barn stood on the site now occupied by the bungalow No. 38E. The farm's name possibly referred to horse-drawn transport available for hire.

## **Private Properties**

Along this rising stretch of the Lane through to Almond Brook Road, Standish, there are 67 properties built at various dates from the 1920s and 1930s. (The majority were probably rented in those days) and the remainder in the 1950s to 1970s as land became more readily available and ownership more common with affordable mortgages. They are of traditional brick, of varied design and a mixture of houses, dormers and true bungalows.

## **Public Footpath**

You will notice the broad width of the footpath along parts of this stretch (and further up the Lane). This was created when the uniform width of the highway was officially adopted leaving various widths of land, including frontages belonging to adjacent properties. The condition of the earlier footpath was grim for pedestrians until properly surfaced, kerbed and drained in the last century and maintained at public expense.

## **White Houses**

A block of 3 properties, since demolished, built in the late 18th/early 19th century with long plots to the rear, on land belonging to the Standish Hall estate, were sited just below the present-day Willowbrook Drive. They were probably given that name from their appearance or ownership.

## **Willowbrook Drive**

Built between 1959 and 1962, it was named after a willow tree lined brook that flowed along part of the northern side of the adjacent public footpath O12/08B/10 before being piped in the 1970s/80s. An excellent willow tree survivor may be seen a short distance along that path. The track itself was used over the years as a short-cut to Standish via the wood and fields and by miners working at small pits in the vicinity.

## **Park Brook Lane**

Its name was taken from the alternative for the Millbrook which flows through Elnup Wood south of what was "The Park" on the Standish estate. An entrance to this wood may be reached at the bottom of this lane. It was purchased from the Coal Board for a pound by Wigan Groundwork Trust in 1990 and maintained by them as a wood for the local community to the present day.

Close to the wood's entrance the farmhouse to what was once Park Book Farm, was the home of one of a number of millers over the centuries who operated the Standish estate's corn mill powered by the Millbrook.

## **The Corner Shop**

This was a general store converted from a residential dwelling in the 1930s by Mrs. Lizzy Gray. Known then, and even today by elderly residents, as "Gray's Shop". The store seemed to stock almost everything but Mrs. Gray refused, on principle, to sell alcohol. Besides serving the growing community it acted for years as the unofficial tuck-shop for pupils attending the new County Secondary School from 1959. Several owners followed Mrs. Gray and is now owned by Premier Stores and called "Top Shop".

## **Shevington High School**

The new County Secondary School opened in 1959 to serve an increasing child population as part of Lancashire Country Council's education expansion programme on an extensive and attractive site bordering Stockley Wood. It eventually became a comprehensive school coming under the control of Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council's Education Department following local government reorganisation in 1974. The majority of its intake transfer from local non-denominational primary schools. There are currently 650 pupils on roll.

## **White Hill Cottage**

After passing a row of attractive bungalows fronting this part of the school site/playing fields and an open field, along a very narrow section of footpath, we come to the 18th century cottage built of local stone on that stretch of the Lane referred to for centuries as White Hill. The description 'white' was used in this area referring to the hawthorn which was used to mark field boundaries and provide shelter for livestock and whose attractive bloom in spring created, as it still does today, a magnificent sight for miles around.

The cottage and surrounding land was originally part of the Standish estate and sold at auction in 1921.

## **Almond Brook/Mill Brook**

Just beyond the cottage a stream originating from spreads north of Shevington Moor and referred to as the Almond Book on the western side of the Lane, becomes the Millbrook a short distance after it flows under the Lane to the eastern side and enters Stockley Hill Wood to the rear of the High School.

The Almond Brook was until the mid 17th century called the Kirk Brook and given its current name by the Almond family. They became brewers in Standish of "Almond Ales" occupying what is now a supermarket site on the corner of School Lane/Preston Road. They also owned the Wheatsheaf public house built next to the brewery and now demolished

The stream marks the northern boundary of Shevington.

## **Welcome to Standish with Langtree**

You will observe across the Lane at this point a sign welcoming visitors to Standish with Langtree. That name refers to a separate manor that existed in the middle-ages closely associated with the Standish Manor and adjacent to it.

The sign's image depicts a frightening looking owl, hardly welcoming, with a large rat-like creature in its talons. This sign represents part of the Standish family's crest but, strictly speaking, their bird was the more pleasant looking long-eared owl.

## **Old Shevington Lane and the M6**

Passing over the brook note a grey metal field-gate with a barely visible track of sorts leading into the undergrowth nearby. This was the original route of the Lane leading to Almond Brook Road via Shevington Road to the left and Arbour Lane to the right. But with the development of the M6 motorway, opened in 1962, a new and raised section of Shevington Lane was created from where you are standing, in order to feed the traffic to/from the M6 north/south along a purpose built dual-carriageway named Crow Orchard Road at Junction 27.

The dual-carriageway was eventually meant to by-pass Standish centre taking traffic instead across the fields in the direction of Wigan. You will notice, as you pass across it, "The bridge to nowhere" as that stretch was never constructed. Beyond Junction 27 to the west, is the original Crow Orchard Road a name taken from a part of the land directly attached to Standish Hall.

## **Aspinal Road**

You will notice that the abandoned stretch of the Lane has become completely overgrown and its past existence well-hidden. A short stretch of new road was named after the adjacent farm, now Aspinal House Farm, constructed at this time from off the new section of Shevington Lane down to Arbour Lane. The blocked-off section of the old Lane ends close to a metal barrier.

## **Almond Brook Road**

Continuing towards Almond Brook Road you will pass above Kiwi Nursery with its entrance on Arbour Lane. Across from the nursery is "The Charnley" named after the famous orthopaedic surgeon who pioneered the modern hip-replacement procedure at nearby Wrightington Hospital.

Having reached Almond Brook Road note across the highway the Britannia Hotel which occupies part of what was the site of the Robin Hill drift mine, closed in 1963.

## **Return**

Now return by way of the western side of the Lane with great care as there is no footpath until reaching the White Hill Farm access (see later).

## **Old Craft**

Before reaching that point note the variety of trees occupying the large space between the Crow Orchard Road dual carriageway.

The planting was designed by a member of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England who lived in Standish, in order to demonstrate the past uses of timber in the local area for the making of domestic and agricultural items from chairs and rakes to barrels and wheels.

## **Public Footpath 012/03/20**

This path crosses the Almond Brook and directs walkers across the fields to the M6 area and other footpaths in that vicinity.

## **Welcome to the Parish of Shevington**

The sign facing you illustrates the Parish Council's coat-of-arms and includes a crow that is a bird still fairly common in the area. The red rose of Lancashire and the wiggan or mountain ash tree represent the Borough of Wigan.

## **White Hill Farm**

Just south of the brook and screened by trees is the Victorian farm and where the footpath may be safely used again.

## **Marrowbone Farm**

A short distance further along and close to the access to Merrybone Farm, was the site of the old Marrowbone Farm removed many years ago and replaced by the modern farmstead Merrybone Farm accessed via a private driveway.

## **Marrowbone Delph**

The owner of Merrybone Farm has, in recent years, filled in this sandstone quarry and attractively landscape the general area. To the front of that quarry a block of 4/5 cottages was built in the early 19th century. Referred to as Marrowbone Houses, they have since been removed. The land, including the quarry and cottages, was in the ownership of the Standish Hall estate and sold by auction in 1921.

## **Public Footpath 012/05/30**

Immediately opposite the High School is a pleasant walk, close to old mine workings, through to a footbridge over the M6 and then, via a wooded area access, across the fields, to Back Lane.

## **Paradise Farm**

On the southern side of the public footpath and fronting the highway, is the attractive 18th/19th century farmhouse of the once thriving Paradise Farm, complete with its barn and associated buildings now part of "The Gables" residence. The site is one of the oldest in Shevington and is said to have once been in the ownership of the monks of Cockersands Abbey, hence its unusual name. The monkey puzzle trees in the front garden were originally brought to England by Victorian plant collectors.

## **Wide Track**

On the bend of the Lane this track opens onto fields across to the M6 and is a private access used by a farming interest in Orrell.

## **Private Property**

From this spot there are 31 private dwellings to the end of this walk and, in addition, the properties recently completed on the new site referred to as "Stockley Mews", named after a local wood to the rear of the High School.

## **Kilburn Drive**

Leads to a large private estate stretching behind the properties on Shevington Lane to Lower Lyndon Avenue. It was built in the 1950s/60s to meet a growing demand after World War II from the local population and, in particular, families moving away from war-torn Merseyside

The estate overlooks Calico Wood, the M6 and Shevington Vale/Appley Bridge and the view southwards from the top of Lyndon Avenue clearly shows the northern slope of our valley down to the River Douglas with views towards Billinge.

## **Copperas Houses**

A small block of houses in the vicinity of present day Nos. 122/126 and known locally as "The Barracks" owing to their austere appearance, were the Copperas Houses, built to accommodate workers and their families engaged in the adjacent copperas works, established from the mid 18th century and lasting until the 1850s for the production of a chemical produced from coal which fixed dyes from running in cloth. The site was linked to existing pit tramways to the canal at Appley Bridge. Later, a number of coal mining families lived there. The block was demolished in the 1950s.

## **Prince Albert Pit**

Across from Coach House Farm and to the rear of Nos. 86/90, was the Prince Albert Pit. Named after Queen Victoria's husband, it formed part of Tayleur's Colliery. It was there on 1st November 1861 that Shevington's worst mining disaster occurred when an explosion of firedamp caused the deaths of 13 miners. A number of them had lived at "The Barracks" and others in Broad o'th' Lane.

A plaque marking the tragedy was placed near the war memorial in the Memorial Park on Lancashire Day 2010.

All Shevington's pits had closed by the 1880s but the chimney of the Prince Albert Pit, a local landmark for years after the disaster, wasn't demolished until 1927.

YOU HAVE REACHED THE END OF LOCAL HERITAGE WALK No. 3

For information on Shevington & District Community Association's activities contact Secretary on 01257-253735/Sheila.milnes@gmail.com

