



**Shevington & District Community  
Association**



# **HERITAGE TRAIL NO. 4**

**To Celebrate Lancashire Day, 2015**

**Shevington & District Community Association**

# HERITAGE TRAIL NO. 4

*Welcome to Shevington & District Heritage Trail No. 4 which covers aspects of our local heritage to be found on both sides of Miles Lane from its junction with Broad o'th' Lane, across the M6 Motorway and up to its Back Lane junction in Shevington Vale.*

*As I have stated in previous trails, I trust this one will also help to stimulate interest in the heritage of our local community and encourage residents to explore it in more detail*

***John O'Neill***

# Introduction

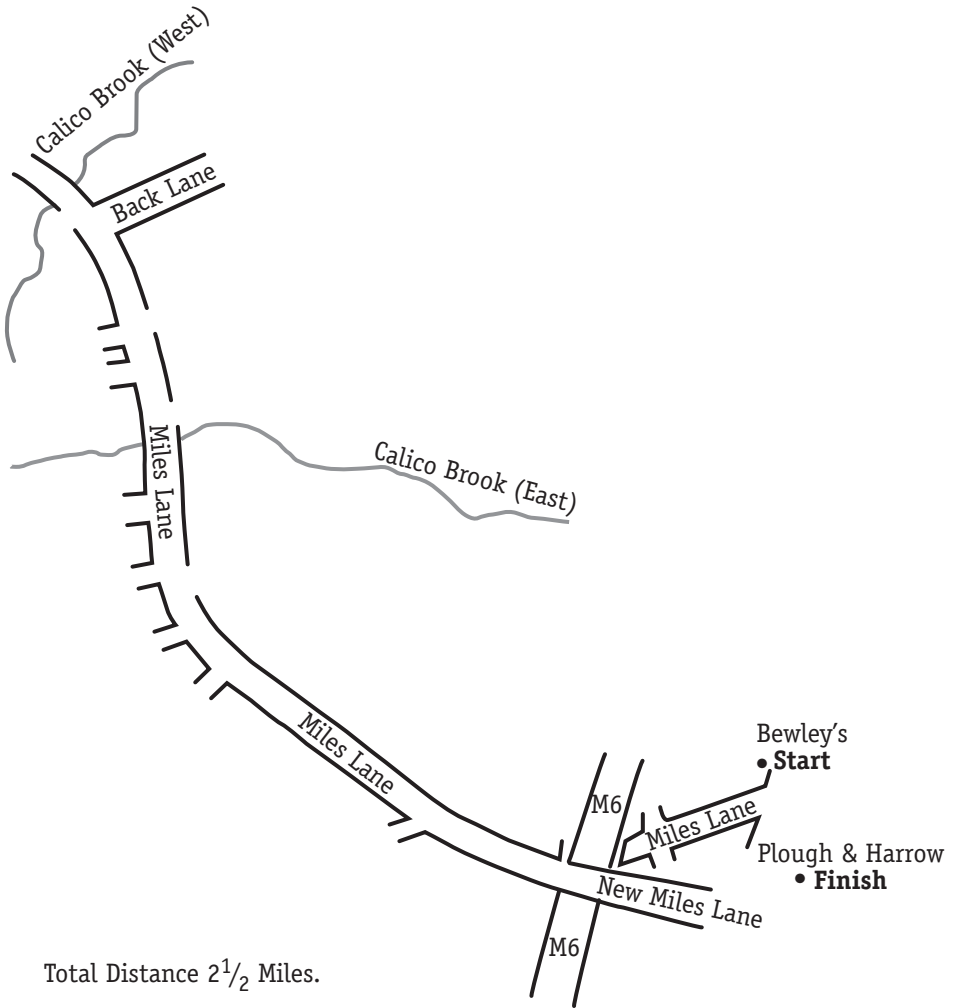
Much of the manor of Shevington from earliest recorded times remained a sparsely populated area whose ownership was largely in the shared possession of prominent landed families.

As late as Tudor times there were as few as 21 families across the entire area, only 69 by the reign of George III and less than 1,000 inhabitants by the time of Queen Victoria's accession in 1837. It was still under 2,000 at the 1931 census. The most significant rise occurred between 1951 when it reached 3,057 and up to 8,001 by 1971. At the last Census in 2011 the population had risen to 10,247. Even today, just beyond the current building-line, it can clearly be observed from the M6 motorway, Shevington's rural landscape of open countryside, woods, streams and ponds remains to a large extent as it was, prior to the short-term local effects of industrial activity from the mid-18th century to the 1950s/60s together with local farming, although the latter is less evident today with the diminution of grazing flocks and herds, than it once was only fifty years ago.

Apart from past local effects from coal and chemical industries the greatest visible advancements have been created by improvements to the River Douglas navigation in the 1740s, the Leeds to Liverpool canal through to Wigan in the 1770s and construction of the Lancashire & Yorkshire railway in the 1850s and all to the south of our local community.

But the greatest permanent change has been that created by the construction of the M6 Motorway, including the Gathurst Viaduct and junction 27 in the 1960s, which cut a swathe through the centre of our community, from south to north, raising the level of traffic, noise and air pollution not experienced in former times.

However, such changes have aided the creation of easier access for work and pleasure to all parts of the region and beyond.



Total Distance  $2\frac{1}{2}$  Miles.

# SHEVINGTON & DISTRICT HERITAGE TRAIL

## NO. 4

DISTANCE 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> MILES.

### MILES LANE SHEVINGTON

**This walk takes you along the entire length of Miles Lane commencing on its eastern side from Bewley's store to just beyond its junction with Back Lane in Shevington Vale, then returning on its western side to finish at the Plough & Harrow public house.**

### **Residential Development**

Apart from significant buildings to be identified as you reach them on the walk, there was little residential development along much of Miles Lane until the 1920s/30s when plots became available after the First World War. Even today you will notice that significant stretches of open and farmland reach to the edge of the footpaths on both sides of the Lane.

It was from the 1960s that the majority of properties were built, on and off the Lane, for those first-time buyers able to afford mortgages.

**Miles Lane** - Although the route appears on William Yates 1786 survey of the district around Wigan, the name first appears on the 1845/6 edition of the 6" Ordnance Survey Map leading from Broad o' th' Lane between today's Bewley's store and the Plough & Harrow public house.

The origin of the name remains a mystery although several explanations have been suggested including, that it was named after Myles Standish who accompanied the Pilgrim Fathers as Captain of the Guard on the Mayflower to the New World in 1620 or, alternatively, to honour the name of local resident Miles Green who, in the sixteenth century, converted during the Reformation to the new religion.

But perhaps the explanation is less colourful and merely refers to the very approximate distance of a mile to reach Shevington Vale!

**Bewley's Hardware Store** - This family store was purpose-built with a flat on the first floor in 1961 and situated at No. 1 Miles Lane, on the previous site of Mr. Tilotston's clog and boot repairers. The adjacent retail outlets and services, nine in number, have developed from the conversion of residential dwellings in Broad o' th' Lane over many years.

**Calico Livery Stables** - Established in 1974, livery stables are where horses are cared for at a charge to their owners. Such stables may also hire out horses and provide riding tuition. 'Calico' refers to the stream of that name on land a short distance from the rear of the properties on that side of the Lane (see reference later).

**Ambrose House** - Nos. 21 and 23 were, not so long ago, one property of that name and referred to as such on the 1892 25" Ordnance Survey Map and belongs, as can be seen from the upper architecture, to the Victorian period. Stables were established to the rear with access to the side of the adjacent Conservative Club. The name 'Ambrose' might have referred to the original owner or builder.

**Conservative & Unionist Club** - This building constructed with local sandstone blocks is primarily a late Georgian to early Victorian dwelling that was converted to a beer house, with bowling green, and named 'The Victoria Bowling Green Inn' licensed to sell beer but not spirits. The beer would probably have been brewed on site. In the 1920s it reverted to a residence and was eventually purchased by the Conservatives & Unionists in the 1930s to serve as their local club for social gatherings including a bowling green to the rear. The building appears on early Ordnance Survey Maps but not by name.

**Shevington Old Hall** - Built in 1653 it was situated on a large site to the rear of the present Conservative Club and accessed via a wide track adjacent to Highfield House. The track also led to Calico Wood Farm, Calico Wood Cottage and the wood itself.

It was one of several halls across the manor of Shevington as there were, over the centuries, a number of notable families owning parts of the manor. This hall was, for example, held in the seventeenth century by the Woodward's of the Rigby's Lords of Leyland. The hall was demolished in 1961.

It was said to have contained a Catholic chapel and in 1750 when occupied by the Holt family this hall was reckoned to be the most valuable property in Shevington.

**Calico Wood Avenue** - This cul-de-sac was developed in the 1960s/70s partly on land once belonging to the old hall. The word 'Calico' refers to a type of plain cotton cloth. The fibres were spun and woven as part of a cottage industry in Lancashire from the mid-eighteenth century prior to full mechanisation in

the mills. The waters of the brook would have been used in the process. Calico Wood Farm, Woods, Brook and Cottage, derived their name from association with that industry undertaken to provide a supplementary income to farms and local residents. Agents would deliver the raw material and return by a given date to collect and pay for the finished cloth.

**Highfield House** - An imposing property now restored, appears by name on the 6" Ordnance Survey map from 1845/6 and though subject to alterations was probably built no later than the early nineteenth century. Was it linked to Highfield Farm which was situated in the vicinity of today's shops on Gathurst Lane?. The house could have received its name from the upward slope of the land to the rear of the property. Two of its occupants over the years were well-known local characters Albert Martland and Margaret Ball whom he married in 1900. They moved to Calico Wood Farm, then to Naylor's Farm, now part of the Golf Club, before returning to Highfield House.

**M6 Motorway** - In a short distance you reach a dead-end to Miles Lane's traditional route due to the construction of the motorway which replaced the A49, one of the worst sections of trunk road in the country. The project led to an agreed route through Shevington, including the construction of the Gathurst viaduct, making it necessary to create a minor change to the route of Miles Lane, the creation of New Miles Lane and the construction of Bridge No. 5160. That bridge forms part of New Miles Lane itself which then allowed the continuation of 'old' Miles Lane on its traditional route. It was opened to traffic in March 1962. Pedestrian access has been created via a short length of footpath adjacent to no. 42 Miles Lane and 37 New Miles Lane.

From the bridge you will notice that the motorway lies below the surrounding ground level. It was constructed in that way to reduce traffic noise, pollution levels and any detrimental visual impact.

**Houghton Lane** -Named after the owners of Calico Wood Farm, it forms part of their access and that to Calico Wood Cottage. It was realigned following construction of the M6 which cut across part of their traditional track close to No. 33 Miles Lane. This access now forms part of footpath 012/06/10 leading through Calico Wood and over the brook to Shevington Vale and beyond.

**Surgery** - Accessed off Houghton Lane, the building was purpose-built in the early 1990s following a long campaign largely led by Dr. J. S. Surman to replace the unsuitable surgery he and other G.P.s had worked from for years and now the site of "Day Lewis Pharmacy" on Gathurst Lane. Today's practice, together with its community pharmacy, serves a large patient population with modern facilities. Sadly, Dr. Surman did not live to see the fruits of his labour.

**Clinic** - Also accessed off Houghton Lane and to the rear of the Surgery. Although still housed in 1950s accommodation, the clinic offers a wide range of services from health visitors, district nurses, podiatry and counselling to phlebotomy.

**Broad o' th' Lane School** - Founded by the rector of Standish Richard Perryn and opened in 1814, "for pious and useful learning". It was built with sandstone blocks, quarried locally. It included the head master's living quarters. The building was paid for by public subscription and referred to as "Broad o' th' Lane School", though it was some distance from that part of the village (perhaps the road name "Miles Lane" hadn't been given to that stretch in the early nineteenth century!)

The school went through various phases over the years including serving as a place of worship and for christenings from 1845, as the nearest Anglican Church was St. Wilfrid's the parish church in Standish, until the building and consecration of St. Anne's as a parish church in 1887.

The school building was also used as a social centre for the village community. Over the years the school's intake grew, new buildings added and led to its becoming an all-age school until 1959 when the older children were transferred to the newly opened Shevington County Secondary School on Shevington Lane. Today the school works in close association with Shevington Vale and Millbrook Primary Schools.

**Sure-Start Children's Centre** - Has separate facilities adjoining the primary school and was established to provide services for young mothers and their babies and toddlers. The well-used baby clinic known to countless past Shevington parents is also now held here.

**Hair Salons** - Recently established in the redundant and now refurbished red-brick block of the school.

**119 Miles Lane** - Acted for some years as the unofficial tuck-shop for passing primary school pupils!

**Hawthorn Cottages** - This attractive group of red-brick Edwardian properties built between 1906/8 was the first to be constructed on the stretch of the Lane between the school and White Hall. The central one of the group is named "Hawthorn Villa". Hawthorn hedges are still used to separate the adjoining fields with their attractive spring blossom and unique aroma.

**White Hall** - This building is probably that referred to in a deed of 1350 as "Le Quitehall". This part of the manor of Shevington between the Calico brook, referred to as 'Quitebrok' and the River Douglas, called 'Doggles', was held by Henry Wytte in the fourteenth century and passed to other families over the



centuries including the Fairclough's and Hesketh's. Evidence from later maps indicated a more prominent building than exists today. A well-respected occupier of the attached farm, Edward Ball (died 1914) held a number of important public offices including Magistrate, Guardian of the Poor Law and Chairman of Wigan Rural District Council. As his funeral cortege passed, Broad o' th' Lane School closed as a mark of respect.

**White Hall Terrace** - now numbered 185-191, the four properties were amongst the very few to have been built on Miles Lane in the 1880s/90s, and even today **are in an isolated position with farmland and woods to the rear.**

**Public Footpaths 012/04/20** - This path takes you west of Hullet Hole Farm ('Hullet' is a alternative name for 'Owlet') across Calico Brook (east) and skirting to your left the area known locally as Shevington Nook, to join other footpaths.

**N.B.** Shevington Collieries were situated just north of the farm together with pits throughout that area across to Shevington Lane and others towards Shevington Moor. Many of them were linked by tram-roads conveying coal to the Leeds to Liverpool canal at Appley Bridge.

**Note** - Close to this point on the Lane, caution is required in crossing the highway as there is no footpath shortly after Whitehall Terrace together with a blind bend from oncoming traffic. Proceed along the western footpath passing the access to Chisacre Drive, Abbeydale, Ash Close and Ferndale Drive. (See note on **return journey**).

**Calico Brook (east)** - The brook rises in the Calico Wood area and serves as a boundary between Shevington and Shevington Vale. Note that the drop to it is protected by a metal fence.

**The Nook** - The immediate area is referred to as 'Shevington Nook'. The word 'Nook' means corner and ends in a track leading to Fir Tree Farm and adjacent fish pond facility. There are a number of interesting old properties towards the top end of 'The Nook'.

In the general vicinity a Checkingweight House recorded the weight of coal in tubs on their way to the canal for conveyance by barge to markets.

**Park Hey Drive** - Gives access to a large residential development stretching north to Wood's Farm off Back Lane. Some of the roads off it have been given names associated with local landmarks.

**Finch Mill Farm** - Was a working farm from the Victorian period until the 1960s. From 1905 to 1966 the tenancy was held by the Booth family. The attractive farmhouse, as can be seen, still exists.

**Noel Booth & Sons** - Part of the farmland on its northern side was converted to a coal merchant's yard from the 1920s and from 1972 the family firm has been supplying lubricants and fuel oil from this site to customers over a wide area.

**Woodnook Road** - As with Park Hey Drive this road serves a number of side-roads, leading to Shevington Vale Primary School, a small retail area and forms part of the Wigan bus route.

**Beech Hill** - This is a large house with the date 1924 clearly indicated though its appearance overall suggests an earlier date for parts of its construction. Today it serves as a therapy clinic.

**The W heatsheaf** - This is a mid to late Victorian red-brick structure. Originally it was a beer house limited to the sale of beer and its possible production on the premises. Its name aptly describes a once key local occupation.

Note the very attractive sandstone cottages built in the previous century against which the public house was tightly built. Was there a close association between them? One of the many local quarries would have supplied the sandstone.

**N.B.** Cross the highway with care just before the Back Lane junction as there is no footpath for some distance, and walk to the Vale Methodist Church to begin your return on this heritage walk.

**Back Lane** - Is referred to as Shevington Lane on the 1845/6 6" Ordnance Survey map and later as "Back Lane", meaning, "back of" Shevington.

**The Vale Methodist Church** - Built in 1859, just beyond the Calico Brook on Skull House Lane, by the Primitive Methodist of the area having occupied, at earlier dates, two previous temporary sites for their worship. (See later).

**Calico Brook (west)** - Note the attractive stone bridge to the side of no. 113 Skull House Lane and the stream itself well-below road level. It has made its way from water issues including Wrightington pond, and then in a westerly direction flows through a narrow wooded area, including Big Wood, to an area now known as "The Glen" before passing under the highway to where you now see it. It then continues through "The Slacks", meaning a 'shallow valley', to Mill Lane before merging with Calico Brook (east) in The Dell area and eventually flowing under the Leeds to Liverpool canal into the River Douglas. The brook is visible from the canal toting-path at that point.

This brook acts as the Constituency and Metropolitan Borough of Wigan boundary including that of the Civil Parish of Shevington. When crossing it you pass into that of West Lancashire District Council which includes the village of Appley Bridge and the Civil Parish of Wrightington.

The two separate brooks, east and west, prior to merging at 'The Dell' off Miles Lane, encompass the general area known as 'The Vale' or 'Shevington Vale'.

**Public Footpath 012/10/10** - Leads to Mill Lane via "The Slacks" with the East Quarry (in Appley Bridge) to your right, though it is not visible from footpath level.

**Ruecroft Close** - An attractive residential development once the site of a builder's yard and several late 18th and early 19th century properties. It was here that the Methodists around 1840, rented rooms for worship prior to building the present chapel. The name Ruecroft might be associated with "Rue", an evergreen shrub growing in a field there which was attached to the earlier properties and known as a 'croft".

**N.B.** - Drop in land level off the footpath to frontages of dwellings along here. This is due to the gradual slope of the land on this northern side of the Douglas Valley down to the river itself. It creates picturesque views across to Parbold and beyond.

**Finch Mill Avenue** - Leads to further residential development and named after the old corn mill, now removed.

**Mill Lane** - Named after the water-driven corn mill that had existed for centuries a short distance down this Lane and to the rear of present-day properties on the left-hand side. It was removed in the 1880s. Sadly no traces of it now exist. It took its name from the Finch family who were the local millers and landowners.

To the rear of the mill once also stood "Finch House" belonging to the Dicconson's of Wrightington Hall. A tunnel was said to have been dug in the late 16th/early 17th century from the hall to the house in order to assist the escape from capture of the resident Catholic priest during the Reformation period.

Today Mill Lane leads to a pedestrian route to Appley Bridge Railway Station and 'park and ride' facility off Appley Lane North.

**Retail Area** - Today, although the Post Office survives within the 'Costcutter' convenience store, petrol sales from a forecourt are no longer available. Currently, there is an empty shop premises and dwelling making up the once busy site.

**Randall's Corner** - The general area between The Nook and Mill Lane junction, but not identified on any signs or maps, has been referred to for years as "Randall's Corner" in remembrance of Robert Inward Randall who began his working life as a cobbler in the early 20th century, later joining the Liverpool Constabulary for a time. He acted as clerk to the parish council for twenty two years and for twenty represented the parish council on Wigan Rural District Council into the 1950s.

**Old Mill House** - It is uncertain if this dwelling was linked to the mill itself, possibly as the Miller's residence and stretching back to the 18th century, but it is known that it served as a place of worship to the First Primitive Methodists in Shevington from 1830 until they removed to the Builder's Yard further up the Lane.

**Calico Brook (east)** - Appears here after flowing under the highway (see earlier) and the fall to brook level is protected by metal railings. The brook supplied water, probably via a mill pond, to power the corn mill's wheel.

**Ferndale Drive** - Small cul-de-sac of private dwellings, the last to be built off Miles Lane in the 1990s.

**Abbeyle and Chisacre Drive** - Are access roads with their names probably randomly added with no definite attachment to the locality. They link the various areas of separate and attractive residential development built through to the railway line over several phases from the 1980s and generally well landscaped with large open grassed areas and trees, especially off Chisacre Drive.

From the bench situated close to the Chisacre junction with Miles Lane a spectacular view across the Douglas Valley may be had.

Many years ago you would have noticed between the railway line and canal, sites of industrial activity including "Appley Bridge Brick & Tile Works" and "The Crown Glue & Manure Works", the later a source of obnoxious odours especially if the wind was blowing in your direction!

**Broadriding Road** - Leads beyond the residential development to Broadriding Farm established in the Georgian period and part of the Standish Estate and sold by auction in 1924. Part of the 51 acres sold included land on the western side of the canal. Access to it is by a swing-bridge and, later, a track was added under the railway line. Centuries ago Broadriding, as the name might suggest, was a wide area used by the gentry for horse-riding.

The Standish deeds suggest that a possible tenant of the farm in 1766 was Roger Ranicars and that part of the land was taken to create a section of the new Leeds to Liverpool canal.

**Forest Fold Farm** - Previously known as Holt's Farm and one of the oldest in Shevington stretching back to the late middle ages, has a grade II listed granary. That farm is accessed off a track from Broadriding Farm or public footpath off Miles Lane. (See later).

**Forest Fold** - Gives access to the 1st Shevington Scout group building established on this site in 1983 and upgraded since. And just beyond are the Parish Council's

allotments including raised beds for the disabled, bowling green and car parking facilities.

**Public Footpath 012/09A/10** - This broad footpath almost opposite the primary school, takes walkers in the direction of the two previously mentioned farms, linking north to Broadriding Road and eventually parallel to the railway line or in a westerly direction joining another footpath taking you across Gathurst golf course and the M6 motorway onto Gathurst Lane.

**Gathurst Golf Club** - Established in 1913 on previously farmed land, provides attractive views over the Douglas Valley. Facilities includes a club house, golf shop and lodge. The latter being the white building fronting the site which was originally Naylor's Farmhouse which appears on William Yates map of 1786, although not by name

**N.B.** Cross over the bridge, which is all part of New Miles Lane and return to Miles Lane via the short footpath.

**Manor Road** - Residential development built in the 1920s/30s, the road is named after Shevington Old Hall, the manor house in whose direction it led until demolished in 1961. Much of the foundations of Manor Road came from the original Plough & Harrow public house when demolished.

**Plough & Harrow public house** - You have now reached the end of this heritage walk. The old building was built of stone and established as an inn in the early years of the 19th century. Its name underlines the prominence of agriculture in the area in those days. The present building is considerably larger than the original and opened in 1905. Note the unusual angle of the side walls from the front which slant in the direction of Gathurst Lane on the left and Miles Lane on the right.

