

# LEIGH

## Town Centre Trail



Two Guided  
Walks in Leigh  
Town Centre



Wigan  
COUNCIL

Director of Planning and Development  
John Sloane BA FRTP

## Preface

By Councillor J.E. Hilton J.P.

Chairman of the Planning and Development Committee



*I am delighted that the Planning and Development Committee is publishing the Leigh Town Centre Trail at this point in Leigh's history. Last year the Leigh Borough Charter centenary was celebrated and now the new Millennium has begun. The trail consists of two introductory sections 'What to Look for in Leigh' and 'Aspects of Leigh's History' followed*

*by two guided walks covering the majority of Leigh Town Centre. In celebrating Leigh's history, architecture and townscape the trail provides ample evidence that Leigh is a fascinating place with an extensive history, of which, "Leythens" can be proud.*

*The incorporation of Leigh as a Municipal Borough under its charter of August 1899 emphatically marked Leigh's progress and arrival as an important Lancashire town and its splendid Town Hall completed a few years later symbolised Leigh's civic and commercial pride. During the century since the charter some facets of the town including buildings, streets and industry have altered radically yet other scenes have changed little and occasionally glimpses are available of Leigh's character in the 18th Century and before. As far as architecture and townscape go Leigh has much to commend it and the trail is the first detailed account of Leigh's built environment to be published.*

*I am particularly pleased that not only the large and grand buildings are covered but also many lesser buildings. I bring readers' attention especially to the role of the Leigh architects J.C. Prestwich and Sons who designed so many of Leigh's distinctive buildings. The success of this practice in architectural competitions beyond Leigh also introduces another notable feature of Leigh's history, namely that it has nurtured or been associated with an extraordinarily large number of people who have enriched our national cultural and technological heritage.*

King Street c.1890



*Leigh's history from the medieval period has been well served by past publications including those by John Lunn, Thomas Boydell and the Leigh Historical Society and the trail is indebted to these authors and sources. Some of the trail information is, however newly published or, in combining architectural, photographic, map and historical evidence, the trail may freshly illuminate some aspects of Leigh's past. As we enter the Millennium it is useful to be reminded of our past.*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be "J.E. Hilton".

March 2000

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# LEIGH

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## Town Trail



comprising

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### Two Guided Walks in Leigh Town Centre

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A directional map of both walks  
appears at the end of the book fol-  
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Before starting the walks it is not essential to read all of the first section "**What to look for in Leigh**". Instead, the headings and main points (in bold type) can be noted. This section and "**Aspects of Leigh's History**" can be read later.

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## INTRODUCTION >

The Leigh Town Centre Trail explores Leigh's townscape, architecture and history which combine to produce much of its strong, individual character as a lively market and industrial town. Despite considerable changes in its economic basis and environment a great deal of that character was established about a century ago and survives reasonably intact. In contrast the 19th Century, especially in its second half, involved the transformation of the village-like Pennington, Bedford and Westleigh townships, with a total population of about 5,000 in 1801 into the thriving industrial and market centre of Leigh with 40,000 people in 1901. The townships had in fact been evolving over several centuries from the medieval period.

It is hoped that these guided walks round historic areas of Leigh will reveal and encourage appreciation of its distinctive architectural character and lengthy history. This trail includes two walks covering the town centre. Another trail will explore Bedford and Pennington south of Twist Lane and north of Lord Street.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN LEIGH >

### SHOP FRONTS

Several examples of Victorian and Edwardian shop fronts occur on Market Street, Railway Road, Twist Lane and Chapel Street. These are characterised by ornamental, architectural details including finely turned and moulded timber frames with either timber pilasters or brick and stone piers at the sides and hand painted signs.



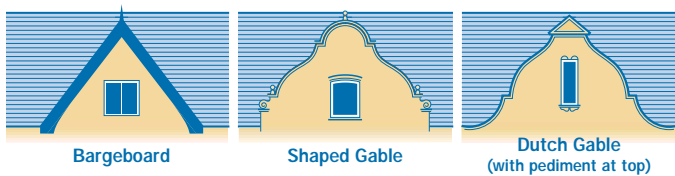
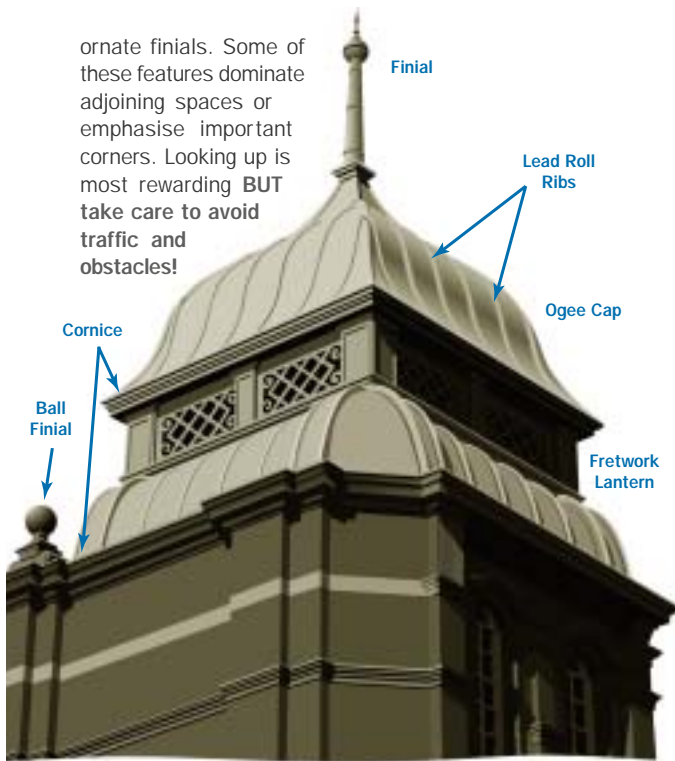
No. 40 Railway Road with its wide sash display windows, typical of fresh food shops, e.g. butchers. (See page 39).

Shop fronts of the 1960s and 70s tended to introduce alien materials, overlarge sheet and box signs, often in plastic, and large sheets of plate glass on which heavy upper storeys appear to float. More recently shop fronts, designed in relation to the materials and vertical features of the upper storeys, to give continuity with ground level, have been encouraged with smaller more sensitive signs.

### Rooflines

Parts of Railway Road, King Street, Bradshawgate, Market Street and Market Place, Leigh Road and St Helens Road have intricate and lively rooflines. Enrichment is provided by either gables - plain triangles or elaborate shapes - or features such as turrets with complexly shaped 'cupola' roofs, lanterns and

ornate finials. Some of these features dominate adjoining spaces or emphasise important corners. Looking up is most rewarding BUT take care to avoid traffic and obstacles!



### Corners

The way in which architects have designed buildings to occupy corner sites varies considerably. In some cases no emphasis is given to the corner but in Leigh devices ranging from splayed and curved walls to shaped gables or other roof features, oriel and bay windows and elaborate surface decoration were often used. The more money that was available the more that could be done.

### Building Materials

Apart from the Parish Church Leigh traditionally had **timber framed buildings with thatched roofs**. Later the timber-framed buildings were either replaced or clad in brick or stone and in the countryside around Leigh a number of these buildings survive. Whilst the built up area retains no early timber framing the occasional use, from the 1890s, of imitation, black and white, timber framing gives vitality.



Stretcher Bond



English Bond

Brick production occurred in the area from at least the mid 17th Century to the early 20th Century. Examples of red hand-made 17th Century bricks can be found at the rear of the George and Dragon, King Street. These are relatively thin and irregular in shape. Hand-made bricks of the Georgian, Regency or early Victorian periods are to be seen on Bradshawgate and Church Street. Though these are thicker and more regular than

17th Century bricks they still contrast with later machine made bricks and the hard, smooth, Accrington and Ruabon type bricks with their fiery red colour seen in the majority of later Victorian and Edwardian buildings in Leigh.



English Garden Wall



Flemish Bond



Header Bond

These brick surfaces are often relieved and enriched by stone or terracotta details and blue or cream bricks are sometimes used as features. Whilst English garden wall and later stretcher are the commonest brick bonds used, Flemish, English, and header bonds can also be found in Leigh. Header bond is particularly rare in the Metropolitan Borough area.

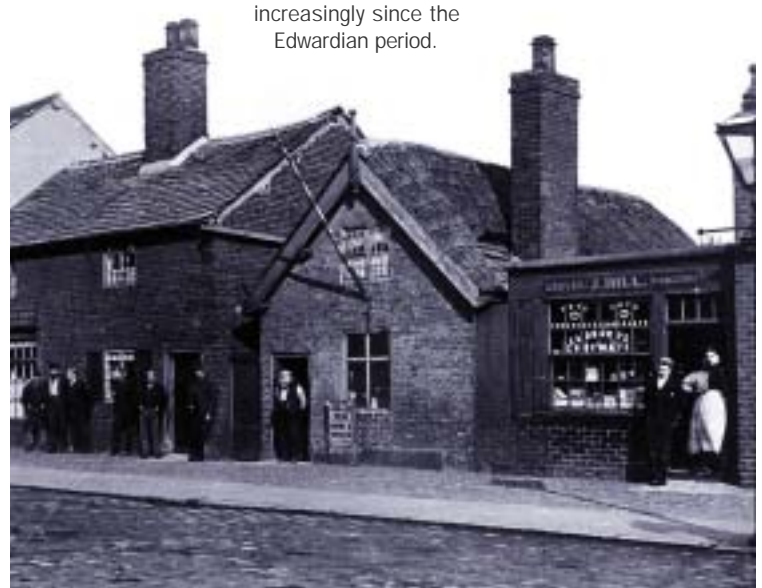
Stone in the form of red permo-triassic sandstones underlie parts of Leigh and has been used occasionally for whole elevations as at St Mary's Church and more frequently for details such as window sills. Such details more commonly used buff coal measures sandstone from beyond Leigh. The bank at the corner of King Street and Railway Road uses this buff stone throughout.

Terracotta is baked in a similar manner to bricks but uses finer, denser clays baked at high temperatures to produce a particularly hard but hollow material ranging in colour from grey and buff to purplish red. It was used extensively at the turn of the 19th Century in plain or ornate forms and is a feature of Railway Road, Market Place, and Bradshawgate.

### Roofs

Victorian photographs show that sometimes **straw thatched roofs** survived on 17th Century brick buildings till late into the 19th Century and **sandstone slates** were also often used in the 17th to early 19th centuries. Such slates only survive occasionally as at Canal Street. In the Victorian period **Welsh blue slates** were on most roofs and sometimes green Westmorland slate.

Tiles have been used increasingly since the Edwardian period.



King Street roofs c.1880 ~ Thatch to the right and sandstone slate to the left. Also note the sett road surface and cobblestone inner pavement and the barber's shop pole sign.

## Architectural Styles

Leigh's buildings exhibit a considerable range of architectural styles. Late medieval 'Gothic' fabric occurs only in parts of St Mary's church tower. Vernacular, or 'local' style brick cottages and farm buildings are more plentiful from the 17th Century as at King Street (George and Dragon) and in the rural areas as at Bedford Hall with its characteristic mullioned windows (see p.16). Georgian elegance based on satisfying proportions and patterns with a minimum of ornamental detail, usually concentrated around the entrance and the junction of roofs and walls (eaves cornices) are represented by houses at Wild's Passage, King Street, Bradshawgate, Higginson Street and Church Street. Elements of the late Georgian style especially the proportions and small paned windows, at least at the rear, survived in new houses until the 1870s as at Church Street

In areas developed or redeveloped after 1875 buildings display a number of the fashionable revival styles of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. These include Gothic Revival with pointed arches, Italianate, Renaissance (whether Flemish, Italian or French) and Baroque with classical details; Queen Anne and Tudor and Jacobean Vernacular Revival. These



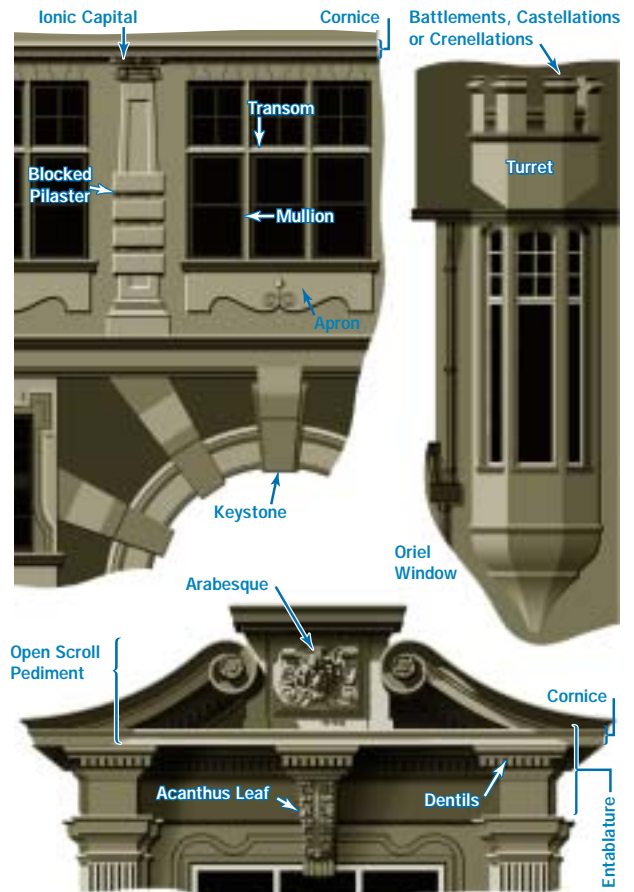
Market Street - Classical Italian Renaissance Palazzo Style with Baroque first floor window pediments.

revivals vary in the degree of scholarly approach and details were sometimes freely mixed. More independent styles included Arts and Crafts (1900-1915), Art Nouveau (1890-1915), with graceful curving lines, and Art Deco (1920s/30s) with clear geometric shapes. Despite a variety of traditional styles, materials and scales in commercial and residential buildings harmony usually prevails in the different areas of the town.

Unlike many towns of its size since 1945 central Leigh has escaped redevelopment on a massive scale resulting in a reasonably complete Victorian and Edwardian character over extensive areas. Even so small schemes of the 1960s and early 1970s on most main streets and larger scale developments on Market Street and Bradshawgate introduced new and frequently intrusive materials, colours, roof forms, scale, proportions and styles. From the 1980s, in sensitive areas, more traditional materials and forms have been used and rehabilitation of older premises has occurred partly assisted by grant aid from the Council, Coalfield Challenge, and urban housing renewal initiatives.

## Architectural Details

Look up and not only rich rooflines but also a wealth of ornamental details will be seen, especially on Victorian and Edwardian buildings. Cornices, pilasters, capitals, finials, patterning, sculptured panels, pediments, keystones, window frames, door features and, nearer the ground, decorative terracotta ventilators, provide plenty of visual interest, often in three dimensions, to delight the eye. They also play important roles such as breaking up the scale of large buildings or emphasising entrances.



## Leigh's Architects

Amongst nationally significant architects whose works are represented in Leigh are Sir Joseph Hansom who designed the Hansom Cab, Birmingham Town Hall and St Joseph's Church, Leigh; Paley and Austin were leading church architects and St Peter's at Westleigh and St Mary's, Leigh are two of their finest. Bradshaw and Gass of Bolton who designed numerous mills and methodist missions and the Royal Exchange, Manchester, in Leigh, designed four mills as did J H Stott and Sons of Oldham. Within this group of architects with widespread practices was the Leigh firm of J C Prestwich and Sons.

James Caldwell Prestwich was born at Atherton in 1852. After Leigh and Nantwich Grammar Schools, he trained in London and commenced practice in Leigh in 1875, continuing until 1930. He was a Fellow of the Manchester Society of Architects. His works in Leigh include the Central Buildings (Quality House) Bradshawgate, for the Leigh Friendly Co-operative Society; Leigh Technical School and Library, Leigh Town Hall, Leigh Infirmary, Leigh Public Baths, Leigh Union workhouse hospital, numerous



Mr. J C Prestwich

shop and business premises on central streets and houses on St Helens Road and Hand Lane. Beyond Leigh he designed the Public Baths of Stockport and Ashton-in-Makerfield (as well as schemes for baths at Swinton and Gloucester), schools in Southport, Birkdale, Atherton and Hindley; Atherton Town Hall, hotels in Blackpool, Southport, Salford and Atherton and houses in Southport, Wigan and Surbiton.

James' son Harold was a partner in the firm for 40 years from 1907. Major projects with which he was involved included Civic Centres at Tunbridge Wells and Northampton, Leigh Town Hall and Leigh Infirmary. Ernest Prestwich 1889-1977, whilst training at the Liverpool School of Architecture (1906-12), won a competition to plan the completion of W.H.Lever's model industrial village at Port Sunlight. Ernest joined the family firm but for a time worked for Lever Brothers Architects Department on projects at Thornton Hough, Cheshire and Stornoway, Scotland. Amongst architectural competitions which he won are Civic Centres at Portsmouth and Rugby, war memorials at Blackpool, Harrogate, Doncaster and Leigh, public baths at Leeds and Northampton; Northampton Police and Fire Stations and Courts; Swinton Town Hall (with Percy Thomas) and offices in Bolton and Manchester.

It is to the Prestwiches and up to four other local architectural practices indicated in trade directories of the 1900s that Leigh owes much of its attractive character, variety and harmony.

## Houses

The trail walks cover a variety of houses ranging from small cottages to large detached houses of the late 19th Century. The majority of houses to be seen in the older areas of Leigh are, however, terraced houses aimed at workers.



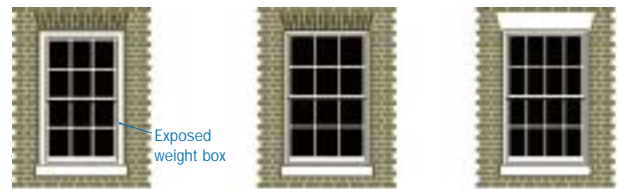
Domestic hand-loom weavers cottages formerly on Twist Lane. Note the 'Yorkshire' sash windows and knocker up.

The earliest workers' houses to survive are **domestic hand loom weavers' houses**. The majority involved ground floor, rear, loom shops, two low storeys, with relatively wide windows usually in three sections. Examples of the type occasionally survive off St Helens Road and Chapel Street. The other type involved cellar loom shops with a short flight of steps up to the ground floor. Numbers 1 to 4 Wild's Passage were of this type.

The house **frontages often incorporated architectural embellishments and terraces varied with regard to their:- length, uniform or mixed design, features such as open lobbies, bay windows, front gardens, supports to gutters - simple or elaborate - and use of contrasting coloured brickwork.**

## Windows

**Windows have a distinctive design evolution** and help in dating buildings. Distinguishing features include the exposure or concealment of **sliding sash weight boxes** at the sides of **windows**, the thickness of the meeting rail at the junction of the upper and lower sashes (with moulded 'horns' appearing from about 1875) and the pattern of glazing bars, their thickness and number. Around 1900 wider windows often incorporated two glazing bars producing narrow side panes. For even wider windows a **double**



**Early Georgian**  
Before 1730  
and 1910-1940

**Mid-Late Georgian**  
1730-1875

**Late Georgian**  
1800-1875



**Victorian**  
1875-1905

**Queen Anne Revival**  
1885-1910

**c.1900**

**Horizontal Sliding (Yorkshire) Sashes**  
1730-1875



**Wide Windows**



**Georgian**

**Victorian 1875-1910**



**Canted Bay (plan)**

**Square Bay (plan)**

sash window separated by a substantial mullion in wood, cast iron or stone or a tripartite sash window with two mullions producing narrow side sash windows can sometimes be found. From the early 18th Century to the early 19th Century especially in workers' houses windows of horizontal rectangular or square shape often incorporated a horizontal sliding or 'Yorkshire' sash. These persisted on rear elevations up until about 1860. The increasingly rare survival of original window frames, means that houses with them are special.

### Scale and Building Height

Most 17th Century buildings in Leigh were either one or two low storeys in height (see photo below and p.3, 34, 45, 51, 53). From 1730 to 1850 heights and number of storeys (on main roads) increased and the late 19th Century saw a major increase in scale with three storeys on main streets being the norm and the storey heights increased markedly for commercial buildings and under the Public Health Acts for houses. In addition, large floor areas for public, commercial and industrial buildings became common, from the 1880s.



Increasing building height - 17th to early 20th Centuries.

### Spaces

Leigh has a number of distinctive spaces or open areas clearly defined and contained by buildings.

They vary in terms of their:

- i) size;
- ii) shape - whether long and relatively narrow (linear spaces) or square, circular or triangular (court spaces);
- iii) degree of enclosure - whether fully surrounded i.e. enclosed or partially enclosed, perhaps by a bend or a change in building line;
- iv) atmosphere - whether formal or informal or whether encouraging movement through them, or encouraging rest.

When passing along Leigh's streets try to identify the character of the spaces. Successful townscapes have not only spaces within their street pattern but also sequences of spaces. On some routes through Leigh spaces are interconnected one leading into another sometimes with changes in character, for instance notice the sequence of spaces - Market Street - the Civic Square - St Mary's Churchyard - Church Passage - Church Street - Church Street Gardens.



Bradshawgate - Linear space partially enclosed by change in building line at King Street - Railway Road.

### Leigh's Townscape

The features described above combine so that many street scenes in Leigh display good quality townscape. Townscape consists of the relationship between individual buildings and between buildings and the spaces separating them. In general Leigh has a satisfying combination of simple patterns and enlivening variety and complexity, so avoiding monotony.

### ASPECTS OF LEIGH'S HISTORY

These notes draw attention to some of the more interesting features of Leigh's past.

#### Early History

Little is known of Leigh in the prehistoric period but a Neolithic polished stone axe found in the Beech Walk area and a Middle Bronze Age (c.1500-1000 BC) bronze spearhead found to the south of Gas Street, suggest early activity in the area. To the south-east of Leigh, Bedford and Astley Mosses form the north-west corner of Chat Moss. Despite the attractions of this type of terrain for early settlement elsewhere in England, in the Leigh area there have been only limited finds. These include a late Mesolithic and early Neolithic site (from about the fourth millennium BC) at Nook Farm, near Astley and Mesolithic burnt stone and worked flint at Moss Side, Astley. In Leigh, only one Roman coin (from before 323 BC) has been found at Butts in Bedford. The Roman road from Manchester to Wigan passed 2 miles to the north of Leigh town centre. The place names of Leigh are all of Saxon origin. For instance, 'Leigh' derives from the Saxon 'leah' meaning meadow or pasture.

#### The Medieval Period till 1500

The Parish of Leigh with the Church of St Peter (later St Mary the Virgin) is known to have existed by about 1189. The medieval parish was extremely large and was divided into six areas - the townships of Astley, Tyldesley, Atherton, Bedford, Pennington and Westleigh. It was mainly the last three together with part of Atherton which made up the area of modern Leigh. The first stone church, probably built in the late 14th or early 15th Century, and its tower of 1516 survived until 1870. As the centre of this large parish, Leigh will have developed other important functions.

A market located near a church is often characteristic of an early date. No charter for Leigh's market is known but a customary market lacking an official charter but complete with market





Leigh's medieval parish church prior to demolition in 1870.

cross, is likely to have existed **prior to 1500** at least. The distance to official markets at Wigan, Bolton, Warrington and Manchester left a gap to be filled at Leigh. The church and nearby buildings were situated adjoining the important pack-horse trading route between St Helens and Bolton. Another major influence over medieval life was that of the lord of the manor. **The Leigh area lay within the chief manor of Warrington** both before and after the Norman Conquest of 1066. The chief manor included **34 smaller dependent manors with Pennington, Bedford, Westleigh and Atherton** amongst them.

Each of the manors had a **manor house and a watermill** (2 in Westleigh and Bedford) compulsorily used by the tenants, a **dovecote, a manorial court** and a range of tenants in houses and cottages and a number of freemen. The area was largely agricultural and the large number of fields mentioned in documents suggests relatively early enclosed fields with **considerable areas of meadow and pasture**. In addition to farmers and their labourers each township supported **craftsmen such as smiths**. Whilst a limited number of buildings clustered around the market and parish church, the manor houses were outlying (Map 1). **The 1379 Poll Tax**, which was a direct tax payable by all adults except paupers, **lists 63 people in Pennington, 48 in Westleigh and 33 in Bedford**. Westleigh was divided between Higher Hall ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) Westleigh Old Hall ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ) and Kirk Hall ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ) and Bedford between Bedford Hall ( $\frac{7}{16}$ ), Hope Carr ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ), Brick House ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ) and Sandypool ( $\frac{1}{16}$ ).

In the medieval period at least five houses in Leigh were moated including Hope Carr Hall and Brick House in Bedford, Urmston l'th Meadows in Pennington and Westleigh Old Hall and Parsonage Farm in Westleigh.

### 1500 to 1830 Agriculture and Domestic Industry

This period saw a **steady increase in population and wealth, considerable rebuilding** (not only of the manor houses but also of **farms and town property**), the formation of an identifiable town around the market and the development of small scale **local industries** including coal mining, **nailmaking** and **textiles** of various types. **Leigh also became renowned for cheese** amongst its agricultural products.

At Pennington, in 1652 the manor comprised 40 dwellings with land, 40 cottages, the watermill, a horse mill (for malt), a dovecote, 80 gardens, 200 acres of land (arable), 200 of pasture, 50 of meadow, 20 of moor, a rent of 9 shillings and 6d with market rights in Pennington and Hindley. **In 1726 Pennington**

**was sold to Richard Vernon Atherton** of Atherton Hall. The Athertons and subsequently Powys's (Barons Lilford) thus became lords of the Manor at both Pennington and Atherton as well as a quarter of Westleigh. Pennington Hall was sold to James Hilton in 1726, a cloth merchant of Pennington and in 1748 his son rebuilt the hall as a **grand Georgian mansion**.

In Bedford, the manorial estate in 1589 included the manor of Bedford, 40 houses, 20 cottages, 20 tofts or houses with land and outbuildings, 2 mills, 2 dovecotes, 40 gardens, 40 orchards, 500 acres of land, 200 of meadow, 500 of pasture, 60 of wood, 200 of furze and heath, 300 of moor, 1,000 of moss and 100 of turbarry (rights to dig peat). **Bedford Hall** became the property of the Lathoms and their hall **survives as a typical mid-17th Century yeoman farmhouse or small manor-house** in dark red hand-made brick with wide mullioned windows and two gabled, cross wings (see p.16).

Westleigh Old Hall was sold to the Parr family in 1688 and passed by marriage to the Ranicars who, shortly after 1756, built an imposing Georgian mansion. Higher Hall passed from the Urmstons at the end of the 17th Century through a sequence of owners until rebuilt in 1832 in the late Georgian style by J H Kearsley, the MP for Wigan.

**The grandest of the Georgian manor houses was, however, Atherton Hall** with its entrance in Leigh at The Avenue. Atherton Hall was built between 1723 and 1742 by Richard Vernon Atherton and his son-in-law Robert Gwilym to designs by William Wakefield at a cost of £63,000.



Robert Vernon Atherton Gwilym, Lord of the Manors of Pennington, Atherton and part of Westleigh, his wife Elizabeth and their family in front of Atherton Hall 1745-6 by A Devis. (Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection).

**Building and rebuilding on a smaller scale** had been occurring especially from the **17th Century in the rural area and in the town**. Indeed in 1606 Thomas Ireland as lord of the manor of Pennington, was in dispute with Thomas Radcliffe who had erected buildings along the streets of Leigh without permission and was now required to pay a fine and rents. **From the 17th Century, bricks were produced** in the Leigh area, as indicated in 1641 when amongst the fields allocated to Francis Sherrington was "Brickfields" and many Victorian photographs show 17th and 18th Century brick buildings (pages 3, 6, 16, 36, 44). **Up until 1870 most of Leigh's streets had a strong Georgian character** as the Georgian style persisted long into the 19th Century.

As a result of this building activity, Map 2 shows that **by 1825 King Street, Market Street, most of the south side and a small**

part of the north side of Bradshawgate, Bridge Street and around the Market Place and church had been built up. The map indicates that many of the houses were associated with sizeable gardens but some backland infilling had also occurred especially off King Street and around the market.

Map 3 of 1762 shows Leigh town centre with features such as the toll house opposite Bradshawgate with gates closing off Market Street and King Street, the ornate wrought iron gates to the Avenue, the Smithy at the corner of Bradshawgate and Market Street, the relatively small and tightly enclosed Market Place with a cross near its centre and on the north-west side backing onto the church yard the thin, curved shambles building housing the butchers. The town centre in Pennington contained a number of shops and records show a considerable range of goods stocked. Bedford also had a shop at Butts and its stock included hops, soap and gunpowder, cheese, ribbon and stockings in 1641. In 1660 ten innkeepers are listed in Pennington. By the 18th Century with its market, shops, inns and coaches, Leigh was a local centre for the surrounding gentry and prosperous professionals and traders resulting in a theatre in 1770, assembly rooms at the George and Dragon and the Leigh Musical Society formed in 1768.

The Civil War did not have a major impact on Leigh apart from skirmishes with both sides having brief control from November to December 1642. Under the Royalists no further action took place at Leigh, though it was associated with two later events.



Sir Thomas Tyldesley was buried in Leigh after the Battle of Wigan Lane.

The Royalist General, Sir Thomas Tyldesley of Myerscough and Morley's Hall near Leigh was killed in the Battle of Wigan Lane on 25th August 1651 and buried in Leigh Parish Church. Subsequently the Earl of Derby, the commander of the Royalist forces in Lancashire, after being tried and sentenced to death at Chester was sent to be executed in Bolton and spent his last night at the King's Arms in Leigh Market Place on the 14th October 1651.

Leigh benefited from trade and transport on the Bolton to St Helens Road, especially after the turnpike trust was established in 1762 to improve and maintain the road, and the coaching trade. A boost to trade and industry was also provided by completion of the Bridgewater Canal to Leigh Bridge in 1795 and its continuation as the Leeds and Liverpool Leigh Branch Canal to Wigan in 1820.

The wealth which stimulated these developments included agriculture, mining and textiles with farmers and their families often combining economic activities in the rural area and sizeable communities of domestic hand loom weavers in the built up area. The latter occupied terraces shown on the 1825 map (Map 2) at locations such as Windmill Street (St Helens Road), Back Salford, and part of Bradshawgate. Leigh's soils include rich but stiff loams and clay and as described by John Holt in his 'General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lancaster' of 1795 "chiefly barren, being ebb of soil and clay under, which makes it cold and wet." Combined with its rainfall, low and relatively flat, often poorly drained landscape the soils produced rich grass suited to cattle pasture and dairying. Crops of hay, oats, barley and some beans, rye and wheat are recorded. Holt warned however that "a few years since some of the farmers,

*encouraged by the high price of corn, marled and ploughed their farms, which had been grazed time immemorial; the consequence was the plough soon wore them out, and left them poorer than ever".*



A Lancashire cow - the source of Leigh's famous toasting cheese.

Added to the natural advantage for dairying in the area was the increasing value of dairy products - milk, butter and cheese - for the growing town markets at Wigan, Bolton, Manchester and Liverpool reached by canal. In the case of Leigh's cheese, for which its toasting qualities were nationally known, Holt reported that "a great deal of it at this age (5-6 months) is sent to London, by persons who are commissioned to purchase it from the farmers". In fact Holt devoted a whole section of his report to Leigh cheese and its production. It is therefore not surprising that cows, and cheese-making figure prominently in probate inventories in the Leigh area. The goods of Henry Travece of Lightoaks Hall in 1626 for instance included: 20 milk cows (value £73), cheeses to the value of £22 10s, cheeseboards, milkhouses (2) a cheese chamber, churns and a cheese press. Byrom Hall south-west of Leigh still has an attic room with a door labelled "cheese room". At a lower social scale Janet Darwell, a widow of Bedford, had three daughters and three cows and of the £42 given to the daughters in 1660, £6. 8s was in cheese.

A further crop grown by many farmers was flax which was used to provide linseed oil and for linen yarn. By the late 16th Century, in place of woollen cloth Leigh had a major linen spinning and weaving industry with domestic loomshops in rural and urban cottages, farmhouses and the manor houses. The weaving industry was especially concentrated in Pennington but also had a strong presence in Bedford and Westleigh. Inventories indicate that weavers slept in the loomshop for example in April 1669 Robert Arderton of Westleigh had a ground floor loomshop with a loom, two beds, bedding, a churn and tub. They also show that many farmers and linen weavers combined economic activities - usually farming and weaving, but John Brown of Pennington d.1722 was a farmer and carrier, William Heaton was a farmer in Bedford and a nailor in Atherton in 1627 and at Hindley's Smithy in Bedford, the smithy was combined with weaving in 1683.

Fustian cloth consisted of a linen warp, running the length of the cloth and a cotton weft, across the cloth. From 1600 fustians replaced linen as the main cloth produced in Leigh and up to 1853 fustian manufacturers appear in Leigh trade directories. e.g. five in 1834.

By the late 18th Century fustians were increasingly being replaced by pure cotton cloth production and in Leigh muslin, made from very fine cotton thread, became the most important cloth. By 1825 there were 18 muslin manufacturers, declining to 15 in 1828. In 1825 there were also five cotton spinners

operating small mills. A further shift in textile production occurred in Leigh in 1827 when silk weaving arrived in Leigh as a result of a wage dispute in the Middleton silk trade and the availability of spare capacity amongst Leigh's domestic muslin weavers who were used to fine thread and cloth and were therefore quick to adapt to silk weaving. By 1835, with 10,000 silk weavers (mainly domestic) employed in Leigh and its surrounding area and 20 manufacturers based in the town, Leigh had become one of the principal production centres for the Lancashire silk industry.



Silk hand-loom weaver operating a winding machine prior to weaving on the loom to left.

Like the earlier linen, fustian and muslin trades whilst there were some local masters or manufacturers the silk industry was mainly organised from the central warehouses of Manchester merchant-manufacturers who employed agents in Leigh to put out work, receive finished pieces or cuts of cloth from the domestic, hand-loom weavers and to pay them. In Leigh Bickham and Pownall (from 1833) and le Mare's (from 1851) were locally based manufacturers. The silk and indeed muslin agents and local manufacturers occupied receiving houses of three types dependent partly upon the size of business. The building had to provide a secure area for money, a waiting space for weavers and an area for one or more warping mills (which ensured that the warp threads extending the full length of the cloth were evenly tensioned and wound onto loom beams) and winding machines (which wound thread onto bobbins held in the shuttle which travelled across the cloth) as well as space for storing beams and finished cloth. In the simplest case a cottage could be converted and two of these survive as pubs at the Musketeer, Lord Street, and The Britannia Inn, St Helens Road. Other cases involved the top floor of a substantial three storey agent's house having a taking in door, a hoist and a large space as found at 5 Wild's Passage off King Street and the rear section of Monks Travel, Bradshawgate. Lastly some purpose-built warehouses were erected as formerly at Duke Street.

In addition to the main activities, the textile industry produced a range of associated businesses including, in Baines directory of 1825, two fustian cutters and dyers, six reed makers (reeds being a comb-like loom part through which the warp threads pass), three sizers and two shuttle makers. The Leigh reed-maker Thomas Highs invented early versions of the Spinning Jenny and the Water-frame, in the 1760s, prior to the generally accepted inventors, James Hargreaves and Richard Arkwright



Reed making at Leather's reed works in Mansley's Passage off King Street c.1920.

respectively. The Leigh and District Postal Directory of 1885 emphatically stated *"It is to Highs' ingenuity we may trace the leading position Lancashire now occupies in the cotton trade."*

From the late 18th Century Sutton or terras lime was obtained from the local limestone in Bedford and Astley and a number of lime kilns operated in these areas. The lime sets hard under water and was used extensively in lining the Bridgewater Canal completed in 1795. More significant was the presence of coal underlying Leigh. On a small scale, mining had occurred in Westleigh from the medieval period and in north Bedford from the late 16th Century and there are many references to coal in documents. In 1534 in Westleigh a court case established the right to dig coal and transport it along Six Acres Lane for Piers Hamson and David Pennington. Coal mining benefited from the construction of the canals and collieries were connected to them by tramways. The presence of peat in the mosslands of Bedford and Pennington gave another valuable source of fuel for the manors and tenants under turbarry rights.

As well as the local smithies, nailmaking was another domestic industry in Leigh in the 17th and 18th Centuries. Amongst the local service industries several inns brewed their own beer but in 1823 the Bedford Brewery was founded and came to dominate the trade in Leigh.

### The Victorian and Edwardian Period

In 1841 the population of the Leigh townships had reached 11,025, but as shown by Map 1 in 1847 the built area was far from continuous with large tracts of open land separating Pennington from Bedford and from most of Westleigh's dispersed development e.g. along Kirkhall Lane. In Pennington much of the north side of Bradshawgate and both sides of Lord Street, Church Street and Twist Lane and the area of Down Croft (Albion Street) were still undeveloped. In contrast development around the Market Place was intense and whilst some gardens remained behind King Street and Market Street premises, backland infilling was continuing in the form of courts and rows either at right angles or parallel to the frontage properties.

By 1911 the population of Leigh had quadrupled to 44,109 and as indicated on Map 1, by 1908 the built-up area had expanded

**enormously.** The large undeveloped plots along Bedford Brook and the canals in Bedford and Pennington provided sites for very large mills and engineering works whilst further out massive collieries developed as the main generators of Leigh's growth.

The fate of the **Georgian manor houses** surrounding Leigh was particularly unfortunate all being **demolished** starting with the majority of Atherton Hall in 1825 and ending with Pennington Hall in 1963 leaving **only Bedford Hall intact and listed.** In the



Bedford Hall.

built-up area **high status housing**, usually with large gardens, was developed prior to 1847 at St Helens Road, subsequently at Orchard Lane and then further south on St Helens Road, Hand Lane and at Old Hall Mill Lane, Atherton and eventually at Kenyon and Glazebury. **Parts of Church Street and Bond Street** were also aimed at professionals and managers in the 1850s to 1870s and from the 1890s parts of Railway Road.

**Large numbers of sound and attractive workers' houses** were developed from 1860 but the adoption of the 1848 Public Health Act in the byelaws of 1864 left the use of a water-closet or an ash midden privy as optional and rear accesses need not be wide enough for carts. The Medical Officer of Health, in 1898, recommended the Committee *"that water-closets be substituted for the present privy accommodation in all those houses from which at the present time the contents have to be wheeled along passages and deposited in front streets before removal ..... At the present time all this filth is removed by the contractors in any kind of open cart ..... thereby causing the nuisance to be accentuated. For the removal of nightsoil and other refuse I would strongly recommend the adoption of covered carts."* Such carts had been adopted by 1902 but the vogue for privy middens was still a source of danger and nuisance. In 1898 for instance, there had been 109 houses disinfected after typhoid fever. In 1906 there were still 4,979 privies compared to only 2,349 water closets and it was not until after 1917 that all privies had been converted to water-borne sewage disposal.

**Added to these nuisances there were large numbers of horses in the town centre.** As late as 1900 at the Boars Head Hotel a double decker stable block was being constructed for 20 horses and in 1891 at the rear of the Bulls Head on Bradshawgate a stable for 21 horses had been constructed. **Traffic was also congested on the narrow winding central streets** especially on Market Street so that **there was a need for action by the local government authorities.** The actions taken included a **privy conversion programme, closure or demolition of insanitary housing and a series of road widening schemes** using the 1875 Public Health Act. **As a result much of the town centre was redeveloped between 1890 and 1905.** Bridge Street, Market Place and Street and Bradshawgate were widened between 1898 and



Market Street, looking north, prior to widening.

1900 and Railway Road was widened from 1893 and **large housing areas beyond the town centre developed** as on both sides of Leigh Road, Railway Road, Chapel Street, St Helens Road, The Avenue and the Henrietta Street area.

**Municipal enterprise flourished in Leigh in the later 19th Century.** In 1874 the Leigh District Gas Company which had been established in 1834 was purchased and in May 1875 new police headquarters and courts were opened on Church Street and the old premises on King Street were purchased as the Town Hall. A good quality piped water supply was provided jointly with Hindley using Bolton water from Westhoughton in 1876 and Liverpool water from Rivington in 1894. Public baths at Silk Street were built in 1881 and later extended. In 1885 Lilford Park was developed on land rented from Lord Lilford and in 1888 the Leigh market rights were purchased from Lord Lilford. The Technical School and Public Library were opened at Railway Road in 1894 and by 1898, with Atherton, a £140,749 water-borne sewerage system with purification plant was established at Hope Carr, extended in 1910. The electric power station at Albion Street was opened in 1899 and Church Street Gardens in 1901. Between 1904 and 1907 Leigh Town Hall was built at a cost of £45,000 and Leigh Infirmary at The Avenue and Leigh Council or Board School followed at Windermere Road in 1908.



Leigh Infirmary of 1908 was among many municipal enterprises of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

This increasing level of municipal activity was **facilitated by a series of important changes in the local government arrangements at Leigh.** The traditional form of local government in the townships involved an annual meeting of property owners and these voted on the appointment, compulsorily if required, of

township officers from the population of voters. The officers included churchwardens, overseers of the poor, constables, and a surveyor. The Local Government Act 1858 enabled ratepayers to resolve at a public meeting to establish a Local Board with powers created by the Public Health Act. **Meetings took place in the Pennington, Westleigh and Bedford townships in 1863 and a Local Board was created for each of them.** Eventually the major problems of water, gas and sanitation led the Boards to amalgamate **in June 1875 as the Leigh Urban Sanitary District or Leigh Local Board** with six elected representatives for each township. The Leigh Local Board continued **for 19 years** and much of the improvement of the town was completed or initiated during this period culminating in the opening of the Technical School and Public Library and an agreement with Atherton's Local Board to move the northern boundary to Orchard Lane. In 1885 the Leigh Parliamentary constituency was created covering the area of the medieval parish of Leigh.

The Local Government Act 1894 replaced Local Boards with Urban District Councils and the new **Leigh Urban District Council first met in December 1894.** In May 1897 a petition for a Charter was sought and **on 2nd August 1899 the Charter creating the Municipal Borough of Leigh was signed.** The Borough of Leigh was to be governed by a Mayor, 8 Aldermen, and 24 Councillors elected for 8 Wards and the new Council met for the first time on 9th November 1899. The Borough coat of arms was granted in December 1899 and a new Borough Bench was created for Leigh with 33 magistrates in March 1903. Since 1974 Leigh has been part of the Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council area.

The growing size of Leigh not only led to changes in local government but also in the church. **St Mary's Church was rebuilt between 1870 and 1873.** The growing industrial population of Westleigh led to **St Paul's Church in 1847 and St Peter's in 1887.** **Christ Church, Pennington** was built in 1853 and at **Bedford** a new church of **St Thomas** was created in 1839 and **rebuilt between 1902 and 1910.** For the Roman Catholic population **St Joseph's Chapel at Chapel Street of 1778** was replaced by the stone church of **St Joseph in 1855.** **Our Lady of the Rosary, Plank Lane, 1879, Twelve Apostles Nel Pan Lane, 1877, and Sacred Heart, Walmsley Road 1929** followed and by 1901 there were also 18 non-conformist chapels in the Borough.

The growth of Leigh between 1841 and 1911 was sustained by the development of **large scale industries in the form of textiles, coal mining and engineering** and the development of these was enabled by improved transport links. Leigh already had canal links but more significant was **the arrival of the railway.** The Bolton to Leigh railway was opened for goods traffic in 1828 and as such is the oldest public railway. Passenger traffic followed in 1831 and in the same year the **Kenyon and Leigh Junction Railway** was opened linking Leigh to Manchester and Liverpool, very early, by train. Following the construction of the line from Eccles to Wigan via Tyldesley in 1864 the London and North Western Railway Company built a branchline to Leigh which continued to the Leigh-Kenyon line.

Textiles in the form of **silk** during the Victorian period involved both domestic hand loom weaving and weaving shed factory production. Leigh was never involved in silk spinning or throwing as the yarn was supplied from Macclesfield or Leek via Manchester. Estimates of silk weavers in Leigh Parish between 1828 and 1871 show the peak of 10,000 employed was reached in 1830, 8,000 in 1841 and 2,301 in 1871. In addition by 1836 20 firms were trading in Leigh, 15 in 1848 declining to five by 1876 and only two in 1897. In the mid 19th Century silk weaving was

clearly a major industry in Leigh, domestic weavers travelling for up to 8 miles to and from the agents' warehouses. Changing fashions made the business uncertain and in 1870 a duty on French silk was lifted which meant that most firms could not compete. The introduction of powered weaving from the 1850s also meant that less work was available for the domestic weavers who suffered great poverty. Many of the manufacturers from the 1850s employed weavers both in their homes often on a large scale and in weaving sheds. For instance, Bickham and Pownall at Stanley Mill employed 1,000 with only 500-600 in the weaving shed. There were no fewer than 9 silk weaving sheds by 1870 and most of these were subsequently converted to cotton weaving and several were extended as at Brook Mill.

These conversions greatly augmented the **cotton weaving** capacity in Leigh which had been concentrated at Kirkhall Lane Mills (Westleigh New Mill) built in 1836 and at Jones Bros. Bedford New Mills started in 1834 and developed as an integrated mill carrying out spinning and weaving in three large weaving sheds. In the early 20th Century three more large weaving sheds were constructed at Foundry Street, Elizabeth Street and Etherstone Street. Far more dominant in Leigh's townscape however were the **large number of multi-storey spinning mills** with massive floor areas. Only five of these survive today but there were many more. In Westleigh there were two groups - **Victoria Mills off Kirkhall Lane** developed by James and John Hayes from 1856 with three mills by 1887, and by 1902 the three Firs Mills, **off Firs Lane**, of Tunncliffe and Hampson. Most impressive were the two groups of mills in Bedford **along the canal and Bedford Brook.** **From 1913 Leigh was at least the fifth largest spinning centre in Greater Manchester** as measured by the number of spindles. **In 1911 no fewer than 6,146 people were employed in the cotton industry** with 32 large scale textile buildings by 1925.



Butts Mill.

The other traditional industry of Leigh which showed phenomenal growth in the second half of the 19th Century was **coal mining.** In 1851 there were 17 active pits in Leigh, mainly in Westleigh. All of these were relatively small concerns, many with less than 10 colliers producing about three tons of coal each in a day. **From the 1870s the industry developed rapidly** partly because Wigan's coalfields were in decline. In 1873 John Speakman developed **Bedford Collieries** and in 1872 Ackers and Whitley began to develop the **Bickershaw Colliery** at Plank Lane, Westleigh. By 1899 the number of male and female employees at Bickershaw reached 2,500. In 1970, 1,489 men were employed and they produced 1,716,479 tons of coal in the year. **Parsonage Colliery** was developed between **1913 and 1920** with shafts exceeding 1,000 yards in depth and in 1970 953 men were employed and produced 444,120 tons of coal in the year. **In 1911, 5,782 men and about 200 women were employed in mining but the industry ceased in 1992.**



Bickershaw Colliery was developed by Ackers and Whiteley from 1872. Canal and rail links facilitated large scale mining.

The colliery buildings have been demolished and spoil heaps reclaimed to give little indication of this former mainstay of Leigh's economy. There are, however, wharves on the canal especially Bedford Basin built in 1858 to handle coal from the Atherton Collieries. Perhaps the most impressive reminder of Leigh's coal mining is Pennington Flash which resulted from the subsidence of the land as coal was removed over an extensive area. Streams such as Hey Brook previously crossing the area filled the depression until new outlets could be established.



Pennington Flash is perhaps the most impressive reminder of Leigh's coal mining industry.

The third major source of employment in later Victorian and Edwardian Leigh was **engineering**. At **Bedford Foundry of 1845**, **J Picksley and R Sims** made agricultural machinery and household items such as fireplaces until 1902. In 1872 **Harrison, McGregor** was established at **Downcroft** (Albion Street) off Bradshawgate and produced agricultural equipment which won numerous awards at international exhibitions. Smaller ironworks were located north of Brown Street, at Ellesmere Street, off Bridgewater Street and near the Three Crowns off Chapel Street. In 1877 the Bond Street brass foundry was opened. The Anchor Cable Company at Bridgewater Street was established in 1900 to manufacture electrical cables and eventually became part of British Insulated Callender Cables.



Three smaller breweries in Leigh in the late 19th Century were the **Bond Street Brewery**, **Jacksons** behind the **Lilford Hotel**, and the **Derby Brewery** at **Brown Street-Lord Street**. The **Bedford**, subsequently **Shaw's**, **Leigh Brewery** grew to a massive business in the early 20th Century. Other industry included a glue works in Westleigh between 1849 and 1876, the **Westleigh Chemical Works** from 1838 to 1886, and the **Plank Lane Glass Works** operated from 1833 to 1893. Steam corn milling was carried out at **Butts Corn Mill** and the **Leigh Friendly Co-operative Corn Mill** at **Ellesmere Street**. **Bedford** and **Westleigh** also produced bricks in the later 19th Century but the sites were developed for other uses soon after.

## SOME NOTABLE LEIGH PEOPLE

For a town of moderate size, Leigh has produced or been associated with a remarkably large number of people who have enriched the country's cultural and technological heritage. The following notes provide details of some of these characters. For those referred to on the walks only brief references are given. Some references relate to an intended future trail (Trail II).

**Richard Crompton** was born about 1540 at the Grange, Bedford. After attending Brasenose College, Oxford in 1560 he studied law at the Middle Temple, London. His works include an enlarged version of Fitzherbert's "Justice of the Peace" which was a reference book for Justices of the Peace in 1583; and "The Authority and Jurisdiction of the Queen's Courts" of 1594.

**Roger Lowe** was born in Leigh and from 1663 to 1679 when he died he kept a diary of his day to day life as a shopkeeper. For this early period, his diary is unique and has been described as an historical document of considerable rarity and importance.

**Thomas Highs** was born in Leigh about 1720 and in the 1760s invented early versions of the spinning jenny and water-frame - key machines in the mechanisation of the textile industry. (See pages 14 and 45).

**Joseph Farington** was born in Leigh in November 1747 and died in 1821. He was an important English watercolour artist, diarist and Royal Academician. (See page 28).

**Gerard Manley Hopkins** 1844-1889, was curate at St Joseph's Church, Leigh from October 1879 to December 1879. He is recognised as a major Victorian poet and whilst in Leigh he wrote the poem "At the Wedding March" and started at least two others. (See Trail II).

**Mary Pownall Bromet** was born in Leigh in the mid 19th Century. She became an eminent sculptor with an international reputation, exhibiting as far away as Japan. (See Trail II).

**Tom Burke** was born at 7 Mather Lane, Leigh in 1890 and became an international opera and film star. (See Trail II).

**James Hilton** was born at 26 Wilkinson Street, Leigh in 1900. Two of his outstanding novels were "Goodbye, Mr Chips" and "Lost Horizon" which led to successful films. (See page 37).

**Lord Alan Bullock** (born 1914) moved to 716, Leigh Road, Leigh, in 1915 when his father was Minister at the Twist Lane Unitarian Chapel. He was the Founding Master (1960-80) of St Catherine's College, Oxford, and subsequently Vice Chancellor of Oxford University. His books include "Hitler: A Study in Tyranny" (1952), "The Humanist Tradition in the West" (1985) and "Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives" (1991). He has been Chairman of the Trustees of the Tate Gallery, London.

**Sir Peter Maxwell Davies**, although born in Salford, was educated at Leigh Grammar School between 1945-53. As one of the foremost composers of the post-war period, he has over 200 published works including four operas, two full length ballets and 56 orchestral works.

**Pete Morgan** was born in Leigh in 1939 and is recognised as one of the best English social poets with collections published regularly since 1968. Some of his poems have been set to music and recorded and he has written and presented television series.

**Philip Larkin** (1922-1985) the leading post war poet and novelist, descended on his mother's side from the Day family who lived at 13 The Avenue, Leigh (See Trail II).

**Georgie Fame** was born in Leigh in 1943 and as Clive Powell lived at 5 Cotton Street, Westleigh. Georgie Fame gained success as a singer, pianist and composer and achieved No.1 in the "pop" hit parade several times in the 1960s, e.g. "The Ballad of Bonnie and Clyde" and at least once displaced the Beatles from top of the hit parade. He later worked with Alan Pryce and in the 1990s with Van Morrison.

**Ronnie Taylor** 1921-1979 was born at 159 Hope Street, Leigh, and became a leading radio and television producer and scriptwriter and Head of Light Entertainment for ABC (ITV) Weekend Television. (See Trail II).

**Professor R W Brunskill OBE** was born in Lowton and subsequently lived in Leigh and through his teaching and numerous books has greatly raised the level of recognition and appreciation of vernacular i.e. traditional local architecture. He is a former Commissioner of English Heritage and was Vice Chairman of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. His books have become standard references including: The Illustrated Handbook of Vernacular Architecture (1971) and Brick Building in Britain (1990).

## WALK ONE

### Market Place and Railway Road

Numbers refer to observation points on Map 4 after Page 67.

Start at Leigh Civic Square, facing Leigh Town Hall.

The Walk lasts 2 ½ hours - it can be varied to suit individual needs.

*Route directions are in italics.*

Dates and names in brackets are those of the building and architect.

\*\* Buildings Listed as of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.



- 1 The walk starts outside Leigh Town Hall, \*\* the symbol of Leigh's civic pride following its incorporation as a Municipal Borough in August 1899, and close to St Mary's Church and Market Place, the heart of the townships of Pennington, Westleigh and Bedford and the medieval Parish of Leigh. *Stand far enough back to view the front of the Town Hall (1904-1907 J C Prestwich).* It cost approximately £45,000 to build and uses



Leigh Town Hall by J C Prestwich.

Darley Dale stone with a pale green Westmorland slate roof. It is a fine example of the **Edwardian Baroque style** with classical architectural features used in a monumental manner. The large symmetrical section centred on the entrance porch, has a hipped roof surmounted by a large turret with pediments and dome. The section is framed by two characteristic "giant-order" pilasters or projecting vertical features extending from ground level to the roof cornice. Between the pilasters are seven sections or bays each with a window, separated by **giant columns with Ionic capitals**. The columns are "blocked" with alternating octagonal and round sections. Of the seven first floor windows the two to the left light a committee room and the remainder light the Council Chamber. **The ground floor is far more solid and plainer** apart from the elaborate entrance porch with paired, blocked columns having Ionic order capitals at the top. Above

these is a semi-circular pediment with a deeply sculptured coat of arms of the Borough. The quarterings of the shield contain a spearhead (from the Urmstons of Westleigh), a mullet - the star shape (from the Bradshaw's of Pennington), a shuttle (from the Shuttleworth's of Sandypool, Bedford) and a sparrowhawk (from the Atherton's crest of Atherton). The crest above with a bear's paw clutching a spear combines symbols of the Powys family (Lord Lilford) and the Urmstons of Westleigh. The motto "Aequo pede propera" or "hasten with equal foot" means "to make progress steadily".



Leigh Municipal Borough coat of arms.

The additional full height section of the front to the far left contains a glazed door to a second committee room with an open segmental pediment above and a balcony. Notice the **scrolled brackets** with acanthus leaves and the **richly carved figure** supporting the balcony. At the left hand corner is a prominent, octagonal corner turret springing from a carved base and rising tower-like to a dome. Notice the fine cast and wrought iron classical

railings and gates. Inside is a sequence of **high quality interiors** including the classical entrance hall with scagliola (imitation marble) columns, an impressive "imperial" staircase, and the Council Chamber, committee rooms and Mayor's Parlour with their fine plasterwork, woodwork and glass. **The fixtures and furniture were designed by Prestwich.** When open it is well worth looking inside and see if the keepers can show any of the grand, first floor rooms. The original Spinning Jenny tiled picture is preserved in the entrance hall. *Go to the left hand corner of the Town Hall and turn right into Market Street. Taking care, as far as possible, look up at the stone facade to Market Street.*

2 ➤ The main features of the **Market Street facade** of the Town Hall are the large gables with massive cornices at both ends, four giant order pilasters and a small projecting oriel window at the centre. The end sections include elaborate oriel windows with blocked attached columns and to the right a circular bull's eye window, with an elaborate carved surround in the gable. Supporting the oriel windows notice the carved corbel brackets. The ground floor is occupied by a row of nine shops separated by massive, rusticated (grooved) piers. From the corner the first four have inappropriate modern shop fronts but the next four shop fronts are original and display fine detailing, especially in the deep recesses, including classical and Art Nouveau carving. Notice also the finely turned corner posts or mullions. Many of the fascia signs to the shops are over-deep but two units have appropriate shallow signs. *Return to the Civic Square and stand near the middle of the space.*

3 ➤ This is a **court type space** being **almost square in shape and successfully enclosed** by the Town Hall, the Turnpike Centre and St Mary's Church and its trees. Unfortunately the east side is unenclosed though the bank at the corner of Lord Street and the adjoining shop unit hint at the character of the historic street and enclosure. In 1986 the removal of concrete flags and replacement with clay brick paving (paviors) together with seating and tree planting greatly enhanced the square.

To the west is a modern building, **the Turnpike Centre** (1971 J C Prestwich and Sons) which contains Leigh Library, an art gallery and a meeting room. Originally a theatre was also planned. The Turnpike Centre is a striking building which, despite its reinforced-concrete frame and pre-fabricated concrete panelled walls, presents a relatively high level of three dimensional interest and texture. The deeply textured relief sculpture above the entrance was by a leading sculptor of the period, William Mitchell. *With your back to the Turnpike Centre entrance a little to the left is a stone obelisk. Move towards this.*



Turnpike Centre entrance sculpture.

**The obelisk \*\*** was erected in 1762 by Robert Vernon Atherton Gwilym of Atherton Hall and Lord of the Manors of Atherton and Pennington. Obelisks originated in Egypt but placing them on pedestals was a Roman and Renaissance practice, perhaps adopted by Atherton after a 'grand' tour or from engravings. Robert Atherton erected a similar obelisk in Atherton Market Place. The obelisk base may comprise stones from the base of the medieval Market Cross. The upper portion has marks left by street lighting brackets attached around 1900. The obelisk has been moved and rebuilt twice (in 1859 and 1986). The obelisk and earlier cross had been an important location in community life as public announcements were usually made there. For instance the Riot Act was read here at the time of the 'Leythe Fight', in 1839, when troops charged 1000 protesters who were attempting to shut mills as part of a campaign to extend voting rights (in 1863 only 450 of the 5015 population of Pennington could vote). In 1881 when a miners' strike occurred which lasted for 28 weeks, despite the reading of the Riot Act at the obelisk, 15,000 people marched along Church Street and a detachment of the 12th Hussars were sent to the neighbourhood to prevent disorder breaking out.



Leigh's medieval Market Place in 1883 - Doctor's Nook is at upper left and St Mary's Way at bottom right. Showing former enclosure at east side.

Originally the obelisk was located in the road space now occupied by St Mary's Way at its junction with Market Place. This was the centre of the small Market Place complete with butchers' shambles along the churchyard wall facing the Market. It was also the location of Leigh's two annual cattle and trading fairs one of which, in 1581 caused a dispute with the Lord of the



Chief Manor of Warrington when his own Warrington fair could be affected by the competition from Leigh. The 1893 map of Leigh (below) and a late 19th Century photograph (p.25 above) show how small the Market Place was. Between it and the site of the Town Hall was a whole block of buildings and across, what is now the front of the Town Hall, ran a narrow lane, Sugar Street. When the new Town Hall was developed to the south side of Sugar Street the properties to the north were demolished and the market extended. In front of what is now the Turnpike Centre were properties fronting Newton Street and Back Salford. In 1968 the market moved to the north side of St Mary's Church to enable the library and Civic Square to be developed.



Market Place in 1893.

As was usual from the medieval period onwards, the market attracted numerous public houses around it - 11 in 1800 including the Swan Hotel, White Lion, Boar's Head, Millstone Inn, Saddle Inn, Queen's Arms, The Kings Arms, Fox Inn and Kings Head Inn. In the row of properties facing Newton Street, that is, in front of the present library entrance was Leigh's Cloth Hall where small scale manufacturers put out yarn to domestic weavers and bought finished cloth. Between 1842 and 1865 the top floor was occupied by the Leigh Mechanics' Institute and from 1864 to 1875 the Pennington and Westleigh Local Boards held their meetings here. *Once again face the entrance to the Turnpike Centre and move towards its right hand corner. At the end wall of the brick flower bed notice a plaque commemorating the Earl of Derby's stay in the cellar of the Kings Arms prior to his execution in Bolton on 15th October 1651 and then cross St Mary's Way, turn left and enter St Mary's Churchyard on the right. (In doing so you have crossed the old boundary between Pennington and Westleigh).*

as well as the Leigh area. The names of the Rectors from 1189 and Vicars from 1448 are known but the medieval church (pictured on page 10), probably built in the late 14th or early 15th Century, was demolished in 1870. The present Church of St Mary the Virgin\*\*, by Paley and Austin, dates mainly from 1873 but the inner structure of most of the tower survives from 1516 whilst its outer facing is of 1910.



Leigh Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin mainly of 1873.

The Church has a long unbroken roof and clerestory containing the nave, which lay in Westleigh, and chancel in Pennington. The nave comprises the six bays to the west each with one pointed arched window, except at the door, at aisle level separated by projecting buttresses and two windows at the upper clerestory level. The chancel is denoted by decoration to the roof battlements, walls and more elaborate tracery to the windows and square headed aisle windows together with massive gabled buttresses giving support to the walls and roof. The aisle windows have continuous mullions (vertical stone sections) and a vertical rectangular panel character - characteristic of the Gothic Perpendicular style. Notice the hood moulds over the windows which shed water away from the windows and their fine carved ends or stops at the chancel. The entrance has a finely detailed porch with an elaborate niche canopy and statue. The red sandstone is notable for its hammered texture.

Inside, the clerestory is supported by arched arcades with octagonal piers. Tie beam and hammer beam roof trusses alternate inside the nave and chancel and the north aisle roof has heavily moulded beams from the old church roof. The interior also contains many fine features in stone, such as the gothic revival font, and timber, such as the early 18th Century altar, and the reredos, screens and benches. The organ of 1777 by Greene of London with its classical organ case is particularly fine as is a Georgian candelabra. The east window, stained glass, by Kempe is notable. At the west end of the nave the old tower stone has evidence of the low roof height and arches of the 14th/15th Century church. Facing the south porch move to the west end of the Church noting the gravestones surfacing the path with references to breadth of graves purchased by the various families.

4 ➤ Because of the trees it is difficult to get a clear view of the church but by moving around it is possible to see most of the following points of interest. The large parish of Leigh was founded about 1189 and included Atherton, Tyldesley and Astley

5 ➤ At the foot of the west tower notice the fine 16th Century oak door with its elliptical arch and numerous iron studs, which imply a layer of horizontal planks on the inside of the door fixed to the vertical external planks. The tower has diagonal buttresses projecting from the corners providing support for the great weight of

stone. The parapet at roof level is again battlemented. St Mary's is a particularly good example of Paley and Austin's work.

The short road running past the west end formed part of Vicarage Square. Looking across it to the left is **Leigh Vicarage** (1959 D Buckler) which is a relatively small, neo-Georgian, double fronted house in light red brick. Notice the vertical sliding sash windows with Georgian glazing bars and the wide timber sections at the side (exposed weight boxes) slightly recessed - typical of early Georgian windows. The Vicarage has been in this vicinity from 1448 when the post of vicar replaced that of rector and a vicarage of 16 marks yearly with a tenement was ordained and separated from the former rectory at Kirk Hall. In 1771 the vicar, John Barlow, built a new vicarage part of which can be seen next to the church tower in the photograph of the old church on page 10. The house and the farmland forming the glebe land belonging to the vicar are described in a document of 1789:-

*"The Vicarage House is 16 yds. in front and 12 yds. broad, was lately rebuilt by the Revd. John Barlow the late vicar with brick and covered with slate is 3 storeys high and contains 6 rooms on a floor the ground floors are laid with flags and the upper rooms with dale boards 2 front parlours the stair case and 2 upper rooms are ceiled with plaster and the walls hung with paper all the other rooms are ceiled and the walls plastered with lime mortar the outhousing consists of 1 building 17 yds. long and 7 yds. broad is built with brick and covered with thatch.*

*The Glebe consists of 2 small estates of inclosed land the Quantity of land on the whole is 15 acres and a half..... the first estate contains 8 acres..... is inclosed with quickset hedge and is chiefly meadow and pasture land is bounded on the east and north sides by the road leading from Leigh to Wigan.... the other estate (distant about half a mile) contains 7 acres and a half..... has a dwelling house upon it built likewise by the said Revd. John Barlow with brick and covered with thatch is enclosed with quickset hedges is chiefly meadow and pasture land..... There are no orchards, woods or underwoods upon the glebe or any right of commoning belong to it at the Vicarage House there is a small convenient back yard and garden containing about 20 perches fenced in with quick-set hedges there are no valuable timber trees upon the glebe they being cut down and made use of in rebuilding the Vicarage House in the year of our Lord 1772."*

The Glebe included the land north of the vicarage to Kirk Hall Lane and until 1890 it remained largely undeveloped. A map of 1907 still showed extensive "Church Fields". Between 1734 and 1767 William Farington was Vicar of Leigh and his son Joseph Farington was born in Leigh in 1747. **Joseph Farington** is recognised as a nationally significant artist and diarist and was a leading member of the Royal Academy. At 16 he was sent to London to train under the major landscape painter Richard Wilson and in 1768 he became one of the original students at the Royal Academy Schools. He went on to become a successful topographical artist making tours, producing drawings and water-colours and some of these were reproduced as engravings or aquatints and published in collections such as "Views of the Cities and Towns in England and Wales" of 1790, "A History of the River Thames" of 1794/6, "Britannia Depicta" of 1806 and "Britannia Magna" 1818. Farington specialised in tone and line and using pencil, ink and, often, grey washes produced landscapes of great serenity and strength. His paintings today appear in all the great national collections such as the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Queen's Collection. Joseph Farington was elected to membership of the Royal Academy in 1785 and although he did not hold any major posts he was a member of its Council and influential committees. As a leading



View of Lancaster by Joseph Farington from "Views of the Lakes in Cumberland and Westmorland" 1789.

figure in the Academy his support and advice were sought by many younger artists, including Constable. He also wrote a biography of Sir Joshua Reynolds. His diaries, kept from 1793 until his death in 1821, record, in intimate detail, much of the life and politics of the Royal Academy and London society in which he moved at the highest levels. The 16 volumes of the diaries have a rich character and are an invaluable research source for the period.

To the right of the vicarage across a former narrow lane stood Vicarage Farm. Today in the distance the rich roofline of the former Leigh Girls Grammar School can be seen. *Pass out of the churchyard and turn right and almost immediately right again into Church Passage and walk along the north side of the church to near the far end.*

6 ➤ At the left side of Church Passage, at its end, stood **Leigh Grammar School** which had been founded about 1578 from when its head teachers are known. Various endowments in the early 17th Century established it as a free school. A new school was built on the site in 1719 and eventually collapsed in 1919, after the school had relocated in 1889. Its site together with a burial ground, established in 1828 and used until 1856, and other land were used for a new **market hall** and outdoor market in 1968. In 1880 the Leigh Journal had pressed for a covered market to be built at the time of the opening of Leigh bazaar on Railway Road but it was almost 90 years before the hall was constructed. In order to build the market hall, 7000 bodies had to be exhumed from the Parish Graveyard. **The market closed in 1989** when it was transferred to a new hall at Albion Street with better access from the main shopping areas. On the right hand side of Church Way notice the stone building projecting from St Mary's Church - the vestry of 1910 by Austin and Paley. Near the end on the low wall to the right notice the **commemorative plaque** recording the Grammar School *and then turn right into the churchyard.*

**The east end of the church** reveals the form of the church with central chancel and lean-to aisles traditionally occupied by the Atherton Chapel on the south and Tyldesley Chapel on the north. This end is dominated by two octagonal turrets with pinnacles at the sides of the chancel end and a massive perpendicular gothic window. Notice the cusped rectangular panels produced by the tracery. *Now return to the pavement at the end of Church Way.*

Look across the main road towards Church Street and to its right notice the **Boar's Head Hotel\*\*** (1900) with its extensive use of highly decorative terracotta. It is one of the most flamboyant buildings in Leigh especially in relation to the first floor Ionic columns, terminated at parapet level by ball finials, and the three oriel windows to Market Place. At the Church Street corner the tower with bull's eye window within an elaborate cartouche surmounted by a cupola on columns and scrolls demands attention. Decorative gables are a feature of all three elevations as are the rounded ground floor windows with a frieze above. The building on the opposite corner, despite being relatively plain, forms an effective corner feature. Now turn left and cross Leigh Road at the pelican crossing and then turn right and proceed to Church Street. (Another trail will explore Leigh Road, The Avenue and Windermere Road).



The Boar's Head Hotel of 1900.

- 7 ➤ From this point look closer at the terracotta and other details of the **Boar's Head** across Church Street, especially the chimney stack, gable with a boar's head peering through an ornate arabesque sculpture and the first floor mullion and transom windows with aprons beneath terminated by swags. Now cross Church Street to Market Place and look at the front elevation of the Boar's Head. Notice the **curved oriel window** with reeded base above the main entrance, the strapwork decoration infilling the corners above the entrance arch and decorative ventilator grilles. BB stands for the Bedford Brewing and Malting Company. This was the brewery's "flagship" public house and brewery offices and the board room occupied part of the upper floor. At the end of the building cross Doctor's Nook and look back to note the gable and to the left the date plaque (cartouche) complete with boar's head relief sculpture. Much of the interior is intact and worth a visit. Overall the style is eclectic or mixed with baroque three dimensional complexity, Flemish Renaissance corner tower and strapwork and French Renaissance classical details.

Prior to major road widening in 1900 the previous Boar's Head building erected in the early 19th Century projected out into the road much more and formed the northern side of Market Place. (See map on page 26). Additional uses housed in the building included the Pennington Manorial Court Leet and rent office and Magistrates Clerks' offices. Theatrical performances occurred in a barn at the rear. Re-cross Doctor's Nook to the gate at the rear of the Boar's Head.



The old Boar's Head about 1890 facing Market Place. Note the narrow road and irregular building lines beyond Market Place.

- 8 ➤ Across the yard notice the **L shaped building\*\*** which is a **double decker stable block** for 20 horses with stable boy accommodation and tackle rooms. Notice the long ramp with sett surface providing horse access to the upper stables. Such buildings were quite common in densely developed urban areas and indeed Leigh had another off Brown Street South (demolished) but only a few survive nationally today.

Cross Doctor's Nook and walk along Market Place and Market Street and stop at the junction with Lord Street on the left noticing the railings and brick wall to the car park giving some enclosure to the street on the way.

- 9 ➤ The **bank on the corner** built in the early 20th Century is a good example of **neo-Georgian** architecture - notice the upper window frames and brickwork and the fan-light over the entrance door and the classical cornices projecting above the ground and second floor windows - all typical of the style. The white stone is **Portland Limestone** which has easily seen shell fragments. Notice the horizontal grooves between courses of stone (rustication) and the punched, rock-faced stone plinth at the base suggesting strength and stability on which the bank is built. Look across Market Street and note the full view of both sides of the **Town Hall** and how well the **corner turret "turns"** and holds the corner whilst linking two differently designed facades. Prior to the Town Hall, Sugar Street continued the line of Lord Street to Newton Street. Turn left and proceed along Lord Street to the pelican crossing and use it to reach the corner with Union Street.

- 10 ➤ Look diagonally across Lord Street to the relatively low, red brick **Musketeer Public House**. The 1840 Pennington Rate Book shows four **silk receiving warehouses** of the cottage type (see Page 14), where domestic silk weavers brought their cloth and received payment and warp beams and yarn from agents, located between Union Street and Hope Street (next street along Lord Street) and one of these was later occupied by The Volunteer and subsequently the Musketeer Inn. The Lord Street - Union Street area was earlier Folly Field. Now return along Lord Street to Market Street and turn left, pass the Town Hall and stop opposite a group of three shop units (Cook's / Eye).



Former silk receiving place (cottage style) – Lord Street.

11> The three shops opposite (c1900 Prestwich) show harmony in variety where the architect has used different details for each shop but they work as a group in the **Flemish Renaissance style**. Notice the vertical projecting pilasters giving strong vertical emphasis on all of them but forming a major theme at the left. The centre and right hand facades are almost a pair with their scrolled pediments above the second floor windows but the first floor projecting oriel windows differ. The central shaped gable has unfortunately been rebuilt in a plain form and a pediment is missing from the gable top at Turnpike House to the left. Red permo-triassic sandstone is used at Turnpike House but buff coal measures sandstone at the other two. A fine Prestwich “Arts and Crafts” staircase can be seen from the sales floor of the middle unit. *Continue along Market Street to the junction with Bradshawgate.*

12> This junction has been a significant location in Leigh for centuries. King Street with Market Street, recorded in 1698 as Stockplatt, was, from 1762 the Bolton to St Helen’s Turnpike Road and two gates closed off Market Street and King Street at the Toll House (Map 3). The condition of the roads was much improved by the Trust but by 1825 Baines wrote “a public nuisance, in the form of a toll-gate, stands in the centre of the town, which might be endured with patience when this was a small town of mean account, but it is totally incompatible with the present trade and traffic of the place, and ought to be removed forthwith,....”. The gates were later moved further out from the centre and were dispensed with in 1867. Railway Road to the right merely provided access to Back Salford but was eventually upgraded to reach Leigh Station which had opened in 1830. Even by 1893 development had only occurred along it as far as Bengal Street on the Pennington side of the old township boundary. Market Street was curved and very narrow (see pages 17 and 33). Bradshawgate, known as Windy Mill Lane, led to Manchester and Warrington. Bradshawgate, Market Street and Railway Road were widened between 1898 and 1900 resulting in new buildings along them. King Street in contrast was already relatively wide having been named Broad Causeway in 1698. Even here in rebuilding the corner building on Bradshawgate, about 1930, it was recessed behind the frontage of its King Street neighbour to allow for a future widening of the road.

Looking at the building on the corner of King Street and Bradshawgate notice the classical upper facades with a curved corner supported on two giant fluted columns with deeply recessed windows and giant pilasters to both side facades. The pilasters and columns have highly stylised Corinthian capitals

with central palmettes. Over all is a massive cornice. Note the typical 1920/30s metal window frames. The building originated as a branch of Montague Burton Tailors. In the late 1920s and 30s their architects developed distinctive, contemporary classical and Art Deco facades which were easily recognised as their premises. Turning to the right the corner of King Street and Railway Road is dominated by the buff coal measures sandstone bank building with its ornate detailing, corner turret and fine cupola and finial. The arched ground floor windows are spoilt by the box sign fixed across them. The style is Italian Renaissance palazzo (palace) and was built by the Manchester Union Bank. Further right facing the above bank across Railway Road is another impressive corner building occupied by a bank\*\*, originally Parr’s Bank (1908 Prestwich) in white Portland limestone in ashlar finish (carefully squared, smooth, sawn blocks with fine joints). The classical Italian Palazzo design is notable for its splayed corner with its second floor circular window framed by a festoon of fruit and arched cornice. The windows at first floor have segmental pediments broken at their base by giant keystones with stone aprons below.

The site was occupied by the White Horse Inn from the late 18th Century which was one of Leigh’s main coaching inns. Coaches left the White Horse for Manchester via Astley and others via Bolton and for Bolton, York, Liverpool and Warrington. The Inn was rebuilt around 1854 still in a late Georgian style and included an assembly room. Cases against protesters arrested after the Leigh fight of 1839 were heard by the Magistrates here and a bowling green was attached to the rear of the stable complex (Page 25). *Now cross to the diagonally opposite corner with the buff stone bank, probably best achieved by crossing Bradshawgate and then King Street.*



Market Street c.1896. Looking towards Market Place. Note the old White Horse to the left and the narrow curving street, prior to widening of Market Street c.1898.

13> From the corner of Railway Road, with your back to the bank, look diagonally across King Street to the right and note the three distinct heights and scales of the group of three buildings typifying their dates - 17th Century at the far right, 18th Century in the middle and 20th Century at the left corner. Also notice the small windows in the middle building on the top floor - a characteristic Georgian feature with the original sliding sash window frames. *Turning to face the far corner of Bradshawgate and*

## Leigh's Evolving Character at the Market Street ~ Bradshawgate Corner



Prior to demolition in 1863 the thatched smithy at the corner (from 1698) and the Anchor Inn to the left.



After 1863 the Rope and Anchor was extended to the corner until rebuilt in 1895.



The Rope and Anchor of 1895 (demolished in 1964).



The scene today.

*Market Street*, the extensive 1960's building is notable for its alien character and materials, extent and oversimplified and monotonous design. It replaced one of Leigh's finest corner buildings **The Rope and Anchor Hotel** (1895 Prestwich) with a large terracotta, projecting, corner, oriel window surmounted by a glazed turret or belvedere (look out) and complex cupola roof. It had an elaborate Flemish Renaissance style, the superb quality of which is shown by the surviving section along Bradshawgate (Burtons in 1999 see Point 30). The remainder was demolished in 1964.

The hotel under a range of "Anchor" names had been in existence from at least 1753 when it occupied a small Georgian building with a curved, truncated gable on Market Street adjoining the corner site. At the corner was one of the two ancient smithies of Pennington. From 1698 to 1863 the single storey, vernacular style, brick buildings were part stone slated and part thatched and adjoining them along Bradshawgate was another 17th century thatched building. In 1863 the smithy was demolished and a late Georgian style corner extension to the hotel was built with a curved corner and major eaves cornice. It was demolished for road widening in 1893 and replaced. From 1809 the tenancy of the hotel was held by the Greenhough family and between 1832 and 1886 by Richard Greenough who combined the hotel with an auctioneers. He was one of the main advocates of the improvement and development of Leigh proposing and subsequently becoming the Chairman of the Leigh Local Board of 1875 as well as holding many other public offices. At his death he was Lancashire's oldest licensed victualler and auctioneer. The evolution of this site once again emphasises the growing scale of development over the centuries. The need to manage change in historic areas of Leigh and ensure sensitive new development led to the designation of a Conservation Area in 1978.

Now walk along Railway Road keeping to the south side, noticing opposite, the fine red brick and terracotta Renaissance Revival building (1899 Prestwich) built to replace the White Horse after road widening and in 1999 known as Chambers, with its massive shaped gable, classical entrance features and pilasters and characteristic upper window frames and then continue to the far corner of Cook Street.

- 14 Looking across Railway Road to the right is the Leigh Conservative Club (J J Bradshaw of Bolton) built in 1879 during a period when, apart from 1865, Conservatives represented Leigh from 1859 to 1885. The style is somewhat eclectic (mixed); the ground and first floor windows with their cast-iron mullion shafts and entrance door shafts being Gothic Revival, the entrance arches Norman and the top storey, which is a later extension or remodelling, is Jacobean Renaissance. The top storey has distinctive stone and brick banding, mullion and transom windows with stone carved cartouches above and brick aprons below and triangular corbelled ribs terminated with ball finials at the gables. The right entrance door led to the assembly rooms known locally as "Sems". After presenting music hall entertainment, and occasional films, in 1908 it became Leigh's first regular picture house and continued as a cinema to 1963. In contrast, looking diagonally to the left, is a modern fronted building occupied by a store. The front was originally modernised to house car showrooms but the rear of the building dates from 1913, when it was the auditorium of the Palace Cinema. This had a particularly impressive facade by J C Prestwich in a classical baroque style with a giant pediment supported by giant order pilasters having a massive arched recess between them. Its demolition was another unfortunate loss from the scene.



Railway Road c.1915 showing the Palace Cinema facade.

The narrow street between the Conservative Club and the former Palace Cinema is **Back Salford**. Built in the late 18th Century Back Salford was, until the early 20th Century, a largely residential street with a continuous terrace of mainly, small, low houses on the left hand side. The houses had stone slate roofs, horizontal sliding sash windows with small panes and two storeys. In the 1830s William Thorpe of the Fox Inn and Thomas Makin of the Black Horse Hotel both had silk receiving warehouses in Back Salford and many of the houses may have been occupied by their workers as the houses were typical of those of weavers. Certainly, in the 1851 Census, of the 18 households seven were headed by a silk hand loom weaver and only three households had no occupant connected with the silk industry. These households were headed by a greengrocer, a tinsplate worker, whose wife was a tinsplate traveller, and an Independent Minister. Other heads of household included a brewer, an agricultural labourer, two tailors, a cotton power weaver, a heald knitter and a canal boatman.



Back Salford c.1905. Note the window frames and sandstone roofs.

Of the total population of 95, 36 were scholars or below school age and 35 were occupied in the silk industry including 26 silk weavers, 4 silk winders, 4 heald knitters and John Battersby, son of William Battersby the brewer, was a silk agent. The boatman's wife was a washerwoman and one of his daughters a nurse; the cotton power weaver had a lodger who was a coalminer and other individual occupations were a footman and a leech bleeder!

By 1891, reflecting the decline in the silk industry, the rise in coal mining and the generally greater diversity in the larger town's economy the occupational pattern had greatly altered with an increase in lower income jobs. There were now **eleven people in the cotton industry, ten in coal mining, seven labourers**, six silk workers, two "store pickers" and one grocer, lodging house keeper, groom, iron dresser, charwoman, joiner, slater, carter, brass founder's apprentice, washerwoman, painter, hawker of smallwares, a shopkeeper and a rag and bone dealer. *Now walk along the south side of Railway Road to the near corner of Wilkinson Street.*

- 15 The terraced houses along **Wilkinson Street** are of substantial size, with small front gardens, bay windows and large rear projections which attracted better off workers and young professionals, amongst them a schoolmaster whose son, born in 1900 at **Number 26**, was **James Hilton**. James Hilton was a successful journalist contributing to many newspapers and journals and whilst at Cambridge University in 1920 he wrote his first novel "Catherine Herself" followed by eleven other novels prior to 1933 when "**Lost Horizon**" made him famous. This romance, which took six weeks to write, depicted "Shangri-La", an isolated earthly paradise in the Himalayas where the inhabitants experienced none of the stresses of daily life and did not age. Shangri-La passed into the English language and is still to be found as a popular house name representing an idyllic retreat. Lost horizon was rapidly followed in 1934 by his other best selling novel "**Goodbye, Mr Chips**" which was originally written for the British Weekly magazine, the short novel having taken only four days to write! It is a charming, sentimental tale of the life and death of a public school master and his relationship with his wife and pupils.

Such was the success of the books that they were made into films with James Hilton being invited to Hollywood in 1935 to assist in the production of *Lost Horizon* which starred Ronald Coleman and Jane Wyatt in one of Frank Capra's film masterpieces. The film, "*Goodbye, Mr Chips*", was made in England in 1939 starring Robert Donat, for which he received a Best Actor Oscar and Greer Garson. A musical version of 1970 starred Peter O'Toole and Petula Clark. In Hollywood James Hilton was launched on yet another successful career as a scriptwriter and he received an **Academy Award in 1942** for his contribution to "*Mrs Miniver*", starring Greer Garson. Several of his later books were also filmed. He died in California in 1954. One of his last books was 'Time and Time Again' of 1953.

*Looking across Railway Road* notice the **end building at the right hand corner of Bengal Street** which was one of three large detached homes with gardens developed by 1893. It is notable for its complex form and gables but especially for its light red/orange bricks with darker red brick dressings, for example around the windows. The main lighter brickwork is in **header-bond** consisting of exposed brick ends. Only two other buildings using this bond, for whole walls, in Leigh and none elsewhere in the Metropolitan Borough, are currently known. The building next door was The Elms, the home of Herbert Strange Hall M.R.C.S.Eng., L.R.C.P.Lond. physician and surgeon and Medical Officer to the Leigh Union workhouse at Leigh Road. No development occurred on Railway Road beyond Bengal Street until after 1893. It is notable that behind these fine houses in 1904, when the Council sought a closing order, back to back houses at Bengal Square had neither back yard spaces nor privies; the residents had to use ashpits at houses across the road or walk 45 yards to a closet. *Continue along Railway Road to the far corner of Rydal Street.*



Railway Road in 1893 showing large detached houses now converted to shops.

- 16> Across Rydal Street observe the original display window to the corner shop with its classical entablature fascia area with dentil (small blocks) cornice and panelled pilasters at the ends. Also observe the shop fronts at numbers 67 to 85 with their classical pilasters and coved fascias and above the upper windows large, projecting brick hoods with stepped brick corbels below the ends and ornate moulded brick eaves cornice across the top. The terrace was built in 1896 for George Hampson, who owned and developed much of the land in Railway Road, and his architect often used the features mentioned above especially the window hoods. In front of the terrace is a wide pavement with the buildings set back. This enabled the construction of a cast iron and glass canopy along the street. Across Railway Road notice Osborne Terrace of 1895. These large houses are distinguished by their steep gables and large bay windows and their cornices.



Osborne Terrace of 1895.

Uses in this part of Railway Road were highly mixed with shops, services and houses. As the main route to Leigh's first railway station, replacing the route via Twist Lane, it was clearly seen as an important street requiring substantial high quality development and high class occupiers. It's location near the commercial centre of Leigh, at one end and the station at the other gave scope to attract travellers and town-wide retailing and service customers in addition to residents in the large housing areas to the north and south and the high status houses on Railway Road. Some of these attracted occupants, such as dentists who would use part of the premises to provide personal and professional services, making an impressive frontage essential. Residents of Osborne Terrace included Samuel Brooks M.R.C.S, L.S.A. surgeon at No.34, Joseph Jones M.B.Ch.B, L.S.A physi-

cian and surgeon at No.26, Albert Yard, insurance agent at 28, and three residents with independent means. *Continue to the nearest corner of Organ Street.*

- 17> Organ Street was named after the area adjoining Twist Lane which had been known as Organ Hill, the income from which supported the organist's salary at St Mary's Church under a trust. The terrace of shops on the opposite side of Railway Road (numbers 40 to 54) has a fine Flemish Renaissance design in terracotta and Accrington brick. Particular features include the Dutch gables (even if part of their top pediments are missing) ovolo moulded mullion and transom windows and sculptured panels. The timber sash frames slid up and down behind the transom. Most of the shop fronts have been spoiled by shutters and over-deep advertisements but the corner Post Office has a very special original shop front comprising very wide vertical sliding sash windows, which enabled trading and display through the shop front when the lower sash was raised. This design was at one time common for butchers, fishmongers and grocers but survivors are now extremely rare. The original occupier here was Collier and Sons fruiterers, fish-mongers and poulterers. Recent careful repairs by the present occupier should ensure a long-life for this important piece of Leigh's heritage (see p.1). Also notice the cornice across the top of the shop front. The pavement outside is wide and accommodated a cast iron and glass canopy from 1907. *Cross Organ Street and walk to the nearest corner of Ullswater Street.*

- 18> Across Railway Road notice the terrace, numbers 56 to 66, with its large end gables which are shaped rather than Dutch as they have no pediments. Some bay windows are complete with terracotta cornices, parapets above and ball finials. Across Ullswater Street is Leigh's original library and Municipal College (1894 J C Prestwich and J H Stephen). Look up and observe the corner tower with its complex ogee cap roof and open fretwork lantern, finial and lead roll ribs emphasising the roof shape. To its side notice the elaborate Dutch gable and also the window and red sandstone details. *Cross Ullswater Street and walk about 20m along Ullswater Street and observe a small, plain chapel built in 1893 for the Welsh Presbyterians to serve the needs of the Welsh miners and their families who migrated to the Leigh coalfield. Now return to Railway Road and turn left to observe the details of Wigan and Leigh College.*



Leigh's Public Library and Technical School 1894 by J C Prestwich and J H Stephen.

► Notice the red sandstone Tuscan columns at the former library entrance and the fluted pilasters at the former Municipal College entrance, the double transoms (horizontal elements) of the tall upper windows, the entrance and window pediments, the pilasters and finials and stone corbel blocks with either carved heads or fruit swags at the base of brick ribs with curved sides. *Continue along Railway Road and cross Thirlmere Street.*

► The **two shops** nearest the corner retain unusual features. The corner unit has an **oriel window** at first floor and above it and oversailing the angles is a gable. Apparent support is given to the gable corners by elegant curved panels. The leaded glass frieze across the top of the window has finely turned baluster-like moulded mullions. The next shop retains two small **sliding sash display-sales windows** of considerable rarity, it was originally and remains a butchers shop with an early refrigerator in the rear corner. (see point 17). *Cross Railway Road and turn right to the corner of Eyet Street.*

21► Look across Railway Road and enjoy the full expanse of the **College building** which has elements of the Flemish Renaissance but overall has a French Renaissance Revival character. Note especially the tower windows and cornices over the narrow first floor windows. Also notice the relatively **large area of glass** in the facade. The site had been purchased in 1890 as part of a joint movement by those seeking to establish a public library (which had been mooted to celebrate Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1887 but the hospital was chosen instead) and other groups seeking to establish technical education to meet the needs of the growing industrial town following the closure of the Mechanics Institute in 1862. The foundation stone was laid in 1892 and it was opened by the Earl of Derby in 1894, approximately half the cost of £14,066 having been raised by public subscriptions. *Walk along the north side of Railway Road to a point outside number 56.*

22► At number **56 Railway Road** is the Charles Abbott herbal medicine practice which was established by **Charles Clement Abbott** in 1910 when he was 21. He had been cured, against all expectations, of tuberculosis by a Bolton herbalist under whom he studied. Despite having no qualifications he built up a thriving practice with a claimed 10,000 patients per year drawn from all walks of life including the titled and famous. His traditional herbal and other practices proved no problem but in 1929 he introduced an electronic black box diagnostic machine which involved a spot of patients blood, vibrations and matching a herbal medicine to the vibration. He often clashed with doctors and, following deaths, with coroners but in a case which was taken to court following the death of a boy with meningitis he was acquitted of manslaughter. A book was published of the trial transcript under the title "Hocus Pocus". At the age of 83 in 1972 he was still busy with 2,400 registered patients and a long waiting list. At least one Radio 4 programme about him has been broadcast in recent years.

On the **opposite side of Railway Road** is a terrace of individually designed buildings which contrast with the terraces of uniform design in the vicinity. The two shops at the right hand end were branches of the **Leigh Friendly Co-operative Society**. On the first floor was the original headquarters of the **Leigh Socialist Party**. The adjoining symmetrical facade to the left is a small but exuberant design crammed with architectural details. These include

**12 short, bulbous, Ionic columns** - five to each gable and two supporting a massive arch. Two highly decorative first floor oriel windows incorporate "**Venetian windows**", which involve a central section with a semi-circular light above it, deriving from 17th Century examples at Ipswich. Notice the groups of three shaped brackets or consoles at shop front fascia level with triangular pediments above, another eclectic design, perhaps from Prestwich. *Now continue along Railway Road, looking at the details of the Post Office shop front on the way and go as far as Jaffrey Street.*



Railway Road shops with Dutch gables.

23► **Across Railway Road** is another architectural extravaganza with a row of six shops each with a **Dutch gable** finished with a triangular pediment in terracotta. The gable is punctuated by a narrow slit window with cusped (curved) head and the large mullion and transom windows to the first floor have cusping on the face of the terracotta lintel across the top of the window. Many of the shops retain part of their classical shopfronts. Recessed at the left hand end of the terrace is a small building which was **Leigh Grammar School** around 1900 but in 1898 most of the school had been housed at the Technical School during the day. *Continue along Railway Road and cross Bengal Street noting the header-bond brickwork at the corner building and stop at the point where a shop projects out in front of the adjoining shops, opposite a butchers on the other side of Railway Road.*

24► The **long terrace of shops** was developed by George Hampson in 1888 as recorded on the **first floor plaque** complete with a projecting bull's head sculpture, appropriate to the butchers shop, Hampson also having been a butcher. Again his architect used the distinctive projecting brick hood over the first floor windows (see Point 18) and coved fascias across the shop fronts. Many of the current occupiers continue the original trade of the shop unit, for instance 33 has always been a butchers and 39 a photographer's. *Now walk to the far corner of the Conservative Club.*



George Hampson's building 1888 - note the brick window hoods, typical of his properties.



► The tall building opposite is boldly labelled in terracotta “Leigh Bazaar”, the frontage designed by Prestwich in 1880 originally had an ornate shaped gable and more terracotta. Leigh Bazaar was owned by Christopher Cook, a clog and paraffin merchant in King Street, and sold all types of hardware including feather beds and soap! The shop was 215ft long and 35ft wide but only about half was opened in 1880. Even this allowed for **200ft of counters** and the remainder opened shortly after. Such large scale retailing was a novelty in Leigh and prompted comment from the Leigh Chronicle promoting the need for a Market Hall. The long single storey rear building had been built as **Mansley’s rope-walk works**, (hence its long narrow form), after they moved from Gas Street to enable the gas works to be built in 1834. Also notice to the left three low gabled shop units still with their original shop front surrounds, decorative upper windows and prominent gables with barge boards supported off ornate brackets. The long, deep sign over-riding three completely different buildings is most unfortunate. *Cross Railway Road and walk along Cook Street on the right noticing the Salvation Army building immediately behind the Railway Road shops on the right hand side.* This was built as the **Udenominational Chapel in 1887** in the early English Gothic style with simple pointed lancet windows. Note the square terracotta plaques. *Continue to the end of Youd Street.*

26► Look across Cook Street and observe the long narrow buildings associated with **Mansley’s Rope Works** and to the right **Lonsdale House** with its gables and the details of the Gothic window mullion shafts and indeed the different shafts on the four houses south of Lonsdale House on the same side, having crossed Cook Street to look at them. *Continue to the end of Cook Street and turn left onto Twist Lane and proceed to the pelican crossing near the junction with King Street and cross the first section of road to the pedestrian island to start Walk 2.*

## WALK TWO

### King Street and Bradshawgate

Numbers refer to observation points on Map 4 after Page 67.

Start at Twist Lane crossing island near the corner with King Street.

The Walk lasts 2 ½ hours - it can be varied to suit individual needs.

*Route directions are in italics.*

Dates and names in brackets are those of the building’s date and architect.

\*\* Buildings Listed as of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.



27► Turn to view the massive public house known as Edison’s in 1999 but previously known as the **Eagle & Child**. This impressive building, with plentiful details in the **Flemish Renaissance style**, more than adequately emphasises the importance of the major junction. Notice the gables at roof level and the array of stone details, some of them unusually elongated; the original carved stone name signs (painted black); the balance achieved between horizontal and vertical features within the facade and that achieved between the end gables and the corner chimney stack - a daring and, with its triangular vertical ribs, highly successful means of emphasising the corner. The previous pub on the site was built in 1795 and was called the Cock Inn until about 1840 when it became the Eagle and Child. The extensive domestic scale Georgian building in brick and stone slate was very plain in comparison with the present building of about 1895.



The former Eagle & Child, now known as Edison’s.



King Street - The Eagle and Child, built as the Cock Inn in 1795.

Now return to the pavement and notice the entrance doorway with its triangular pediment above, supported on fluted, carved, consoles or brackets and the central keystone gloriously enriched by an acanthus leaf.



Turn left at the corner and observe the King Street entrance with its scroll pediment, the open top occupied by a grotesque mask of Bacchus the god of wine, the consoles and keystone and dentil blocks at the base of the cornices. On both sides notice the ornate ventilator grilles. Use the pelican crossing on King Street to reach the second pedestrian island across King Street and turn to face the Eagle and Child (Edisons).

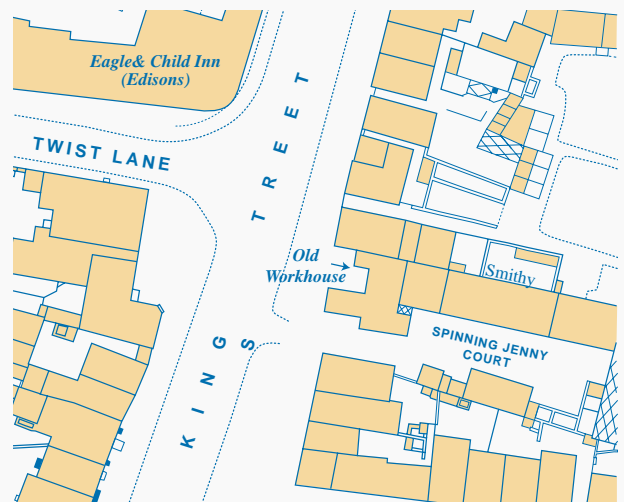
- 28 The east side is relatively narrow and tall, heightened by the chimney and complex pedimented gable. All the upper windows are mullioned and transomed. Turn and view the corner of King Street with the Spinning Jenny Public House (1990 Allison-Pike Partnership). Compared with the Eagle and Child (Edisons) and the road widths, the Spinning Jenny is diminutive but the architects have used features such as its complex layout, bay windows, contrasting coloured bricks, stone and roof features to produce a worthy corner building given the limited floor area required by the use. Now turn to the right to face the main road Spinning Jenny Way built in 1991 to take traffic out of the town centre and enabling Bradshawgate to be partly pedestrianised. The road area on the far side near the junction was the site of a farmhouse built in 1695 and standing in 1893 as a reminder of the earlier village character of Pennington.

As indicated by the photograph this was a substantial 17th Century yeoman type farmhouse with a high status, two storey, gabled, entrance porch with date plaque in the gable and characteristic projecting brickwork above the mullioned windows and door. In 1750 James Starkey gave the building to trustees for use as a workhouse for Pennington and Atherton and it was duly leased by the township's overseers. In 1777 the overseers let the workhouse on a yearly rent to two governors, who sought to make a profit from the "care" of the paupers. The governors were to have the benefit of all poor persons' work and nine pounds a year for wages, each township (eventually including



King Street - former farmhouse of 1695 used as the workhouse from 1750 to 1823.

Hindley) finding them five quarters of coal and fifteen pence per head, per week or 15 shillings for one month, should a female inmate give birth in the workhouse, in return for which the governors provided the poor with meat and drink, washing and lodging. In 1778 Vicar Barlow reported to the Bishop of Chester on the regime at the workhouse which was hard, "they who can work are not allowed to idle and they that cannot are decently appalled and properly taken care of". A whipping post and stocks were placed in the workhouse for the punishment of offenders, to assist in administering the regime! The workhouse closed in 1823 when the building was converted to shops. In the early 19th Century the land to the rear was built on to form Spinning Jenny Court which included a smithy in 1888. The workhouse building was demolished around 1900 and George Olivant built three shops on the site and Spinning Jenny Street replaced the court entrance, the court space being occupied by the Regal Cinema with its entrance to the north. Spinning Jenny Court was associated with the nearby Georgian house of Thomas Highs and his daughter Jenny.



King Street in 1893 showing Spinning Jenny Court and the old workhouse.

Thomas Highs was born in Leigh in 1720 and ran a reed making business at King Street. Following improvements to weaving looms, especially the flying shuttle, hand spinners were unable to keep pace with the hand-loom weavers' demand for thread which prompted the Society of Arts to offer a prize of £50 (awarded to G Buckley in 1763) for a machine capable of spinning six threads at once. Thomas Highs worked with a neighbouring clockmaker John Kay on model machines and on his own perfected a six thread machine in 1763 but too late for the award. He went on to construct improved versions for 20 and 25

threads in 1764 and 1765 for individual manufacturers. His machines were named after his daughter Jenny but Highs turned to spinning by rollers leaving James Hargreaves to perfect the famous Spinning Jenny (independently named) in 1770. Again with assistance from Kay, Thomas Highs **invented a roller, spinning, water frame machine** (powered by water) **prior to 1769** but was unable to raise capital to build a water powered factory.

Unfortunately **Richard Arkwright**, a Bolton wig maker who bought hair in Leigh, had capital and obtained details of Highs' secret invention via Kay and went on to establish mills in the East Midlands after taking out a patent in 1769, while Highs continued to make machines for other manufacturers. Arkwright's patent was challenged in three trials at the third of which Thomas Highs was a witness and Arkwright's patent was removed in 1785, but after making his fortune. As stated by Edward Baines in 1825 *"By the application of the principle of the rollers in rolling and spinning cotton, Sir Richard made a large fortune, and, through the invention of the reed maker of Leigh, the County of Lancaster has attained its present manufacturing emphasis."*

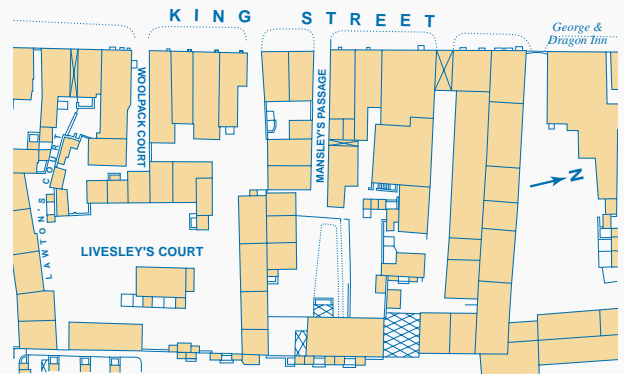
To commemorate this historic association Olivant incorporated a tiled picture depicting "Spinning Jenny" in a first floor window opening facing Spinning Jenny Street. When these buildings were cleared in 1990/91 for the new road (Spinning Jenny Way) the tiled picture was carefully removed and stored until the Leigh Soroptimists funded its restoration for the Borough Charter Centenary in August 1999 and it is now on display in the entrance hall of Leigh Town Hall. The construction of the new public house to the north of the new road enabled the association of the area with Highs to be continued not only in its name but also a replica tiled picture manufactured in the same manner as the original, using tube lining, is incorporated on the exterior. *Now cross the rest of King Street and turn left to the end of the Spinning Jenny and turn to the right to view the replica picture on the gable chimney stack.*



The new Spinning Jenny plaque at the Spinning Jenny public house.

*Walk along King Street* passing **Leigh Bus Station**, opened in 1992, with the gables of the Spinning Gate Shopping Centre beyond it successfully enclosing this large space. A small bus station had occupied part of the site but previously **the area had been fronted by Georgian houses and shops to King Street with a warren of courts and yards such as Lawton's Court, Woolpack Court, Livesley's Court and Mansley's Passage containing houses and industrial premises to the rear.** Woolpack Court for instance included a brewhouse, slaughterhouse, stables and four cottages.

*Taking care crossing the bus station entrance (using two pedestrian islands) stop at the planted area beyond the bus station and before reaching the George and Dragon Inn and turn to face the far side of King Street.*



King Street - Part of east side in 1893.

- 29 King Street had been known as Broad Causeway in the late 17th Century and in the 18th and early 19th Century the west side (opposite) with gardens was "The Walk". The building opposite, on the corner of the narrow Wilden Street, containing two shops with a wide doorway between them was **built in 1840 as a Police Station and Magistrates Court**. The Magistrates room had been used by the Pennington and Westleigh Local Boards from 1863 to 1864. When the Police and Courts moved to Church Street in 1875 the Leigh Local Board purchased the building for £3,000 and it became **Leigh's Town Hall** until 1907. The building is a plain classical building with Tuscan pilasters



Leigh's first Town Hall (1875 to 1907)

beside and entablature above the door. It occupied the site of the small 17th Century stone jug or lock up, which was ten by six feet with a stone roof, but had no windows. To the left is a grassed area and the distinctive, modern **Kingsleigh Methodist Church** (1974) which replaced the stone, perpendicular gothic Wesleyan Methodist Chapel of 1871 (C D Ellison) with its 150ft spire forming a strong feature in views along King Street.

To the right of the old town hall are three late Georgian style buildings and, to their right, **the flamboyant bank\*\*** built as the Manchester and Liverpool District Bank about 1900 in terracotta, brick and stone. The French Renaissance revival style building has three distinct layers. The ground floor sits on a firm, granite plinth with classical attached columns between the windows and a segmental pediment over the entrance, all in red permo-triassic sandstone. The first floor maintains vertical emphasis through its deeply recessed arched windows with narrow piers and projecting triangular ribs continuing the lines of vertical elements from below and up into the rich gabled dormer and shaped gable, complete with scalloped pediment and the company crest. Also note the lozenge frieze and foliage sculpture to the spandrels of the first floor windows. Surprisingly this



King Street with former Methodist Chapel spire. Note the former extent of the rendered terrace to the right partly replaced by the bank at Railway Road when it was widened.

elaborate and expensive design is continued on the narrow street to the side. At the rear is the former bank manager's house with attractive leaded windows and wrought iron railings. Notice how the bank's two storeys are equivalent in height to the three storeys of the older properties to both sides. Beyond the bank and side street is an early 19th Century building with a stuccoed (rendered) front in a severe classical style. Vertical emphasis is provided by the single windows and the unusual paired pilasters surmounted by the prominent cornice and parapet across the top of the building. Projecting sill courses extend across the front at window sill level. Originally there were two more, wider sections to the terrace but when Railway Road was widened in 1898 they were demolished and only partially replaced by the buff-stone corner building (see point 12 and 32 and photo above).



The George and Dragon dating from 1698.

Now turning to look at the near side of King Street note the **George and Dragon Inn\*\*** which is largely of 17th Century date. Perhaps originating as a farmhouse, in 1698 the building is recorded as a beer house and in 1715 it was known as the George when it had a brew house. It may have been occupied by William Marsh the overseer for Pennington and later by Richard Guest, who combined the role of publican with man-midwife and his son, the surgeon, John Guest. Examination of the side wall reveals that typical shallow, irregular 17th Century bricks occur about two metres back from the front but that the section nearest King Street has deeper bricks, implying rebuilding or an extension. The imitation timber framing on the front and side dates from the early 20th Century. In buildings around its large, rear yard the Inn had its own brewery (recorded in 1715), "Only home brewed beer served at the George" being advertised in 1836 and there was also an assembly room in which a "Grand Miscellaneous Concert by the Bolton Philharmonic Society" was

held in 1848. In 1890 it was registered for feeding 40 people, providing two beds and stables for 15 horses. Extensive eating facilities, yards and stables, despite small bed numbers, were important to many of Leigh's public houses and hotels as they served the crowds of farmers, traders and customers on market and fair days, when stabling and vehicle parking were needed in addition to meals, as well as refreshments and horses for coaches and parking and stabling for train users and for horse omnibus companies at some of the hotels. *Now cross the front of the George and Dragon and then turn right into Bradshawgate. Stand on the south, right hand, side of Bradshawgate just beyond a narrow entry at the end of the tall corner building.*

**30** Bradshawgate is Leigh's most important shopping street where national and regional retail firms locate. Following the construction of Spinning Jenny Way, it was possible to pedestrianise part of Bradshawgate in 1997 for most of the shopping day and together with surfacing this has greatly enhanced Leigh's shopping environment. On the floor notice the concrete setts over the carriageway, they have many of the characteristics of stone setts but form a flat regular surface, which is comfortable to walk on, and also notice the band of small clay blocks in the pavement area, which assist partially sighted and blind people to navigate along the street through contrasts of colour and texture. The resurfacing of the street is one of the major benefits of Leigh's success in attracting European Union money under the Coalfield Challenge Programme.

Whilst Bradshawgate has been the main shopping street for many decades, this has not always been the case. Indeed **until the end of the 18th Century** when the road which led to Manchester was known as Windy Mill Lane, **buildings only extended as far as Albion Street on the south (right-hand side) and only to Union Street on the north (left-hand side) with fields beyond.** Map 2 indicates that little had changed by 1825 on the north side but a long terrace of weavers' cottages and a few other buildings were present on the south beyond Albion Street. Map 1 of 1847 still shows relatively little development on the north side beyond Silk Street. **Between 1850 and 1875, however, development gathered pace to complete the street frontages and extend to the north and south.** The scale and character of the buildings was that of domestic, late Georgian (still evident on the north side and on the south beyond Vernon Street). It must also be remembered that 17th Century thatched buildings survived at the smithy on the corner of Market Street until 1865, near the corner of Union Street until 1893 and at the corner of Ellesmere Street until 1897. **Major changes occurred following rebuilding on the south side as far as Albion Street from 1888,** whilst the booming growth of the Leigh Friendly Co-operative Society led to rebuilding immediately east of Albion Street, and road widening in 1898 led to rebuilding on the north side near Market Street. The new buildings were taller and wider and often incorporated elaborate details with gables heightening their three-storey facades and making many of the earlier buildings look small and domestic. Not only the appearance of the buildings changed but also their use.

**Census reports and trade directories** clearly show the changing pattern and intensity of use. **In 1841 there were 49 cottages but only three shops and two public houses** - the Bulls Head and Lord Nelson - **and the smithy** at the corner with Market Street. **By 1851 there were 29 shops** but in several of these manufacturing took place on the premises such as a candle-maker, a dressmaker, clogger, baker and two basket makers. Of the 125 households living along Bradshawgate, 24 were headed by handloom silk weavers, and a **sizeable colony of 133 resi-**



Late 19th Century buildings on the left contrast with plainer, older and more recent buildings on the right.

dents were silk weavers or winders and 12 were agricultural workers. A small number of the households included resident servants and rather more took in lodgers, often in considerable numbers. One in ten of the inhabitants of Bradshawgate was born in Ireland. John Martin, a fruit dealer with premises near Point 30 had a wife and three children at home and took in 14 lodgers; all but one in the household was born in Ireland. Most of the shops occupied converted houses or cottages and the business family lived over the shop.

In contrast, by 1885, the Postal Directory for Leigh indicates that all but about 10 properties of the fully developed road frontages were occupied by shops or other businesses including no less than 11 public houses. The 1891 census confirms this situation but also indicates that most shopkeepers were still living over the shop even in the latest purpose built shop premises. Sons and daughters of the head of household were often assistants in the business, sometimes apprentices lodged on the premises and many of the families could afford at least one servant living-in.

Look across Bradshawgate to the red brick and terracotta building occupied by Burton's Tailors (in 1999). This high quality Flemish Renaissance revival style building (1897 J C Prestwich) is a surviving section of the Rope and Anchor Hotel, which occupied the corner with Market Street and provides a taste of the former splendour of the corner (see point 13). The association is indicated by the anchor in the complex sculptured panel below the right hand second floor window. Notice the fine Dutch gable with massive scrolls in relief, the ornate chimney tops, the mullioned and transomed windows and arabesque panels, giving vertical emphasis by projecting in front of the brick wall, and the dormer window in the roof to the left of the gable. This section of the hotel at ground floor level was originally occupied by the Union of London and Smiths Bank. The left part of the building and part of the modern building to the left was, until about 1894, occupied by a 17th Century thatched building which included a weaver's house and two shops. In 1885 at the left hand shop was Peter Rannicars clog business. This distinctive footwear, with thick wooden soles in alder, finished with irons and leather uppers, gave rise to the bizarre "pastime" of clog fighting! This involved "purring" (kicking) and "up and down" (kicking of standing and fallen opponents). Often used to settle trivial quarrels, these fights were still common up to 1900. In 1885 there were 19 clog making firms in Leigh, 4 on



Bradshawgate c.1880. Note the thatched building on the right and how buildings on King Street used to enclose the end of Bradshawgate.

Bradshawgate, reflecting the demand for robust and secure footwear for Leigh's industrial workers. Now cross Bradshawgate diagonally to the far corner of the narrow Back Market Street and look across Bradshawgate at the buildings opposite.

31 The three storey building with a central gable is impressive because of its stone detailing, producing a grid of window openings. At the ends and at the central gables are continuous pilasters from ground level to the roof parapet wall. On the upper storeys these are brick, banded with buff stone but at shop front level dark red polished granite on grey granite plinths was used. At first floor notice the classical, Ionic order pilasters with their capitals surmounted by a classical entablature incorporating a cornice across the top.



14-18 Bradshawgate - formerly J C Prestwich's offices.

The pattern or rhythm of verticals across the facade is complex and interesting being made up of full and three-quarter stone pilasters, simpler stone mullions and brick piers with the outer sections being considerably wider than the central section. Note how deeply recessed the windows are and how the sash window frames slide up and down behind the horizontal stone transoms. The top floor is simpler, with stone bands (as in the gable) but the centre is emphasised by the tall window with its eared or widened architrave at the upper section and the elaborate cartouche above. Here we can note the initials J.C.P. for this was the office designed and built by the architect J C Prestwich for his practice, which remained here until 1989. In the 1970s with over 50 staff, it was one of the largest professional firms in Leigh. J C Prestwich and Sons were responsible for much of the late 19th Century and early 20th Century architecture of Leigh especially in the town centre as well as many commissions elsewhere (see page 5).

Also note **the building to the left** which was the **Bulls Head Hotel of 1891**. Notice how the first two sections are arranged symmetrically around an upper central, projecting feature finished with a gable and finial, but a further major section occurs to the left making the whole facade asymmetrical. It is unfortunate that the upper feature no longer continues to ground level, where it used to form and emphasise the hotel entrance - the shop fronts ignore this important architectural feature. The original ground floor windows were wide, domestic type windows. The first floor windows, have gothic, **stiff-leaf capitals** to the mullion shafts dividing the paired sash windows. The stone carvings vary between the windows. The Bulls Head was an inn as early as 1720, at the time of its rebuilding in 1891 a stable for 20 horses and coach houses were provided at the rear. It also had its own brewery and was one of the main places where farmers' carts were parked on market days and a weighing machine was located outside on Bradshawgate. Prior to the rebuilding in 1891 it was registered as feeding 50 people but having only 5 beds and stabling for only 6 horses. Clearly the new buildings increased the stabling and probably bedrooms as well. *Now walk along Bradshawgate towards the next junction, with Union Street and on the way notice the buildings on the north side which were built in 1924.* The brick range is notable for its "art deco" scalloped fans in the end pediments and steel windows typical of the period and for its more unusual "arts and crafts" inspired first floor window arches built in clay tiles. Look out for another similar facade on the south side beyond Ellesmere Street. The geometric centre feature of the upper part of Woolworths is more typical of the Art Deco style. *Stop at the corner of Union Street (Woolworths) and look across Union Street.*



Ellesmere Street corner prior to 1897.

corner, bank building with its upper and lower dome and tall finial as a dominant feature attracting and through its details sustaining attention at the corner and dominating the long linear space of Bradshawgate. The offset junction with Railway Road provides an element of dynamism in viewing or passing from the Bradshawgate space into the Railway Road space. In contrast the former Regency style King Street buildings completely enclosed the Bradshawgate space (see page 51). *Turning to the left look the other way along Bradshawgate.* Note how the cast iron and glass veranda projecting out into the street at the Boulevard usefully interrupts or punctuates the over long street space.

*Now continue across Bradshawgate into Ellesmere Street until the street widens out and on the left look at the main section of the Spinning Gate Shopping Centre of 1989 (Cullearn and Phillips).* It is a distinctive contemporary design using high

**32** This small corner building is typical of the domestic scale of much of Bradshawgate and will have originated as a house in the first half of the 19th Century. Its surviving late Georgian sash windows with small panes to Union Street, hand made red bricks in English Garden Wall Bond (see page 3) and deep, moulded, gutter cornice are typical of the period. Notice that its splayed corner and hipped roof give recognition and a limited emphasis to the corner (more splayed and curved corners occur later on Bradshawgate). In 1885 the building was occupied by Walter Wood grocer and provision dealer but by 1901 Thomas Darwell was trading here as a grocer, corn and flour dealer and wine, spirit and beer dealer. Large signs on the splayed corner and hipped roof announced these.

*Turning to face across Bradshawgate, the three storey building occupied by Superdrug in 1999* on the corner of Ellesmere Street, was built in the 1980s and replaced an undistinguished Victorian building. The present building, especially along the side, has traditional window openings and an attractive series of full height pilasters and horizontal sill courses. Its Victorian predecessor was only built in 1897 and replaced a remarkable survival in the form of a 17th Century brick building with a part stone flag and part thatched roof. It had been occupied by John Stirrup's grocery and fishmongers, Le Bone jewellers and to the rear Rayner Watson, a clogger.

In the vicinity of the left hand corner of Ellesmere Street, with its prominent gables and finials, was the Drill Hall Inn which was popular with members of the H Company 1st Volunteer Battalion of the Manchester Regiment who met in a large brick Drill Hall to the rear of the corner building. It was also used for public meetings, balls and concerts after its opening in 1867.

*Cross to the middle of Bradshawgate and look right towards Market Street and note the important role of the buff, stone,*



The Spinning Gate Shopping Centre.

quality buff and orange bricks and windows in bands. These are balanced by pronounced brick buttress piers surmounted by paired metal pilasters "supporting" metal gables, which are detailed with lines and windows to emphasise their shape. The roof is in slate and so provides an interesting mixture of modern and traditional materials and design. The modern main arcade in high quality metal and glass is worth visiting. *Then return to Bradshawgate and turn right* noting the three storey red brick building on the north side with its Victorian sash windows with single vertical glazing bars and shaped horns at the sides of the upper sashes, it's English Garden Wall brickwork and its decorative eaves corbelling in red, blue and yellow brick supporting the gutter, *to stand outside Boots Chemist on the north side.*

➤ Looking across Bradshawgate notice **two pairs of gabled shops** all of 1899 by J C Prestwich. The right hand pair have gables built completely in buff coal measures sandstone. The gable design and its relationship with the mullioned window below projecting up into the gable are in an Arts and Crafts, Jacobean style. The first floor classical revival design incorporates Queen Anne Revival window frames which occupy most of this part of the frontage. Also note the stone bands. The pair of shops to the left again have large windows especially at first floor but these have mullions and transoms throughout and the central sections are pedimented with distinctive scrolls on the second floor. These shops were occupied by Charles Ackers Tobacconist and James Dicconson Saddlers in 1901. On the far right is a lower building with a curved pediment and scalloped fan similar to those seen earlier. The tiled, flat arch above the first floor window is exceptionally wide, no doubt supported by a steel beam behind. Note how the panels, arch and verticals of the shopfront relate to the upper facade. *Continue along Bradshawgate to a point near the corner of Silk Street.*

34 ➤ **The corner building** has a distinctive **first floor canted oriel window** with a canopy roof above it supported on ornate ends. It is unfortunate that this important feature is missing from the left hand unit. Also notice the moulded brick drip-moulds above the second floor window and the ornate cornice in brick. On this site in the early 19th Century was the Drum and Fife beerhouse.

*Now look across Bradshawgate.* To the right is the decorative veranda and entrance feature to the **Boulevard arcade**. Notice the details in the cast iron and glass structure which provides a welcome incident in the long linear space formed by Bradshawgate. The arcade was formed in the 1980s, previously the Beachcomber Coffee Club was here with the attraction of regular performances by notable musicians such as Van Morrison, Georgie Fame and The Who. **To the left of the entrance is a long range of buildings** (1889 - 1890 J C Prestwich) stretching to the corner of Albion Street with a particularly rich and intricate roofline formed by a range of Dutch gables in the Flemish Renaissance Revival style. Each gable incorporates a sculptured terracotta plaque with urns and plants, including sunflowers favoured under the Queen Anne Revival style. Vertical emphasis is provided by the tall window openings, mainly in pairs, and full height pilasters tempered by horizontal stone bands. Also notice the sculpted terracotta panels with swags and tendrils between the first and second floor windows forming part of the composition of each of the gabled sections. The development is in two parts; the right hand section ends where the large shaped gable occurs. The shop beneath this gable was occupied by Robert Starkie and Sons, cabinet makers in 1901, and to the right of it the remainder was the **Lord Nelson Public House**.

The **Lord Nelson** originated in 1770 when William Wilkinson built it. "**Billy Wilkinson's Wakes**" took place on spare land next to the Drum and Fife public house opposite, on 12th August each year. This popular event included a foot race to the east end of Bradshawgate, a donkey race, a sack race, eating a roll of bread suspended on a string with tied hands and climbing a greasy pole for a leg of mutton. **To the left of the Halifax offices** is an important shop front at Dickens. The original banded stone and brick piers at the sides and the original classical fascia, with cornice across the top, survive. The display windows of about 1990 (B Kay) compliment the original shop front surround and show what can be achieved by design, sensitive to the character of the upper facade. In comparison many of the other shop fronts and fascia signs along Bradshawgate are over-large and out of

character. *Looking across Silk Street notice the rounded corner of the building opposite.* The upper, hand-made brickwork is in **Flemish bond** having headers (brick ends) alternating with stretchers (brick sides) in each course. On the corner lintel can be seen the original owner's initials and the date **1850**, which usefully indicates the period of development of this part of Bradshawgate **previously occupied by fields**. Notice the large, moulded classical cornice at the top of the wall. *Now turn left and walk along Silk Street to its junction with Lord Street.*

35 ➤ *Looking across Lord Street* to the left of Silk Street is the classical **Leigh Telephone Exchange** of 1925 in brick, unusually including dressings such as the rusticated (grooved) quoins at the corners and the prominent cornice near the top of the wall. The ground floor design is dominated by the round arched window and door openings. The exchange originally had 700 telephone lines. On the right hand corner of Silk Street is the large **Theatre Royal** (1884 T Norbury and J C Prestwich) with its tall, stage and fly tower for raising scenery sets at the far end of the building on Lord Street. The theatre, which opened in 1885, had 1400 seats and was used by travelling companies such as that on 15th February 1885 - Mr Clarence's "Comedy Dance and Burlesque Company". The theatre was owned by Mr J Williams (also known as De Castro) and was also known as "De Castro's Theatre of Varieties". In 1909 the management changed and the music hall became a cinema until 1954 from when it has been a night club. The area north of Lord Street will be covered in a further trail.

*Turning to face across Silk Street* to the south of Lord Street the far side of Silk Street as far back as Gerard Street was occupied by **Leigh Public Baths from 1881**. The baths cost £6,000 and were yet another design by J C Prestwich. Extensions occurred



Silk Street - Leigh's public baths developed from 1881.

around 1900 and 1927 (total cost £26,000) on the site which had originally been reserved for a market hall. The baths closed in 1977 and the site was used for car parking for two decades but from 1999 a store has occupied the site. *Return to Bradshawgate* noticing the importance of the buildings on the far side of Bradshawgate, which enclose the Silk Street linear space and with their gables provide attractive features dominating the space and encouraging movement towards them. *Having reached Bradshawgate turn left and walk to a point opposite Albion Street.*

36 ➤ **On the right hand side of Albion Street the corner is well emphasised** by the stone mullion and transom oriel window with its octagonal roof and finial. Bradshawgate widens at this point



Bradshawgate and Albion Street c.1895.

so that when viewed from the east the corner feature dominates views along the street at the break in the building line. To the left along Albion Street is a terracotta plaque in a frame with a pediment above featuring "egg-and-dart" mouldings, the date 1889 and the initials R.S. and E.H. The developer was Dr Richard Strange Hall of Leigh who was Medical Officer of Health for Ince-in-Makerfield and brother of John Hall, the Leigh chemist and druggist of Bradshawgate whose son was Dr Herbert Strange Hall the Leigh Workhouse Medical Officer. Further left is a large Dutch gable terminating this long high quality terrace forming **Central Buildings and the Lord Nelson**. Close examination of the bottom bricks of the vertical pilasters just above the shop signs reveals the highly unusual feature of projecting initials and names of the Hall family. At the gable notice the urn finials and the elliptical arch infilled with profuse foliage in terracotta, above the second floor windows and the swags beneath the windows. The corner building was occupied by Leigh Post Office, where William Moore was Post Master in 1897 (and printer and stationer) in the 1891 Census. He was followed by Miss Elizabeth Wheldon (in Directories) in 1898 and 1901. By 1905, the Post Office had moved to Silk Street and Williams Deacon's Bank occupied the premises, continuing until at least 1924.

Historically **Albion Street** was known by the name of the large field to the south - Downcroft. On this corner the Golden Lion Inn is recorded in 1695. Behind, from at least 1770, was Leigh's first theatre complete with stage, pits and gallery. Down Croft was an area of relatively early industrial activity in Leigh with Richard Guest's muslin receiving warehouse, winding and warping building in 1825 on the right hand side behind the Post Office site. Further south on the left side, from 1833 as shown on the 1847 plan of Leigh, was Hilton and Castre's (and subsequently Le Mare's) winding mill and receiving house. On the left hand corner (of Albion Street and Bradshawgate) from 1834 was Winkworth and Proctor's silk receiving warehouse and weaving shed with a heald workshop beyond on Bradshawgate. To the rear of Bradshawgate, east (left) of Albion Street, the street "Rope Walk" developed from 1825, when Mansley's ropeworks located here. In 1834 they moved to Railway Road / Cook Street (see point 25/26) and the Leigh Gas Works opened, the Rope Walk being renamed Gas Street. The Leigh Electricity works commenced on the site in 1899 and the majority of the remaining land and buildings as far as the Bridgewater Canal, including the former silk warehouses, were occupied by Harrison, McGregor and Company from 1872 as the Albion Foundry. Today Leigh Market Hall of 1989, built as part of the Spinning Gate Centre terminates Albion Street. A new covered open market is proposed between the hall and Bradshawgate.

In 1842 the silk weaving shed and warehouse, at the east (left hand) corner of Albion Street, was burnt down and was purchased by **Dr Charles Anderton**, who had been the first medical officer to the Leigh Poor Law Union, having moved to Leigh in 1835 to live and practice firstly at Sugar Street, followed by Vicarage Square. From about 1842 with his wife, four daughters, son and a resident servant, no doubt with another two daily



Dr Anderton's Phoenix House of 1842 on Bradshawgate.

servants, he lived at **Phoenix House**, which he built on Bradshawgate. He became a prominent member of the community, various societies and Chairman of the Pennington Local Board. Phoenix House was a late Georgian style, double-fronted house of two storeys with a substantial arched entrance and a garden in front. In addition, he built four cottages, 'Anderton Row', on Albion Street. The area between Albion Street and Phoenix House was occupied by five shops including Alice Smith's grocers at the corner.

The site of these shops and Phoenix House is, today, occupied by **Quality House**, built as the central premises of the **Leigh Friendly Co-operative Society** (opened 1899 J C Prestwich). Ruabon brick and terracotta was used for the upper elevations and stone for the ground floor of this Flemish Renaissance building the largest and grandest commercial building in Leigh town centre.



Leigh Co-op. Central premises 1899 by J C Prestwich.



There is much to see in the design of the frontages. Notice how gables occur at each end of the facades and how those at the Albion Street - Bradshawgate corner are raised slightly to form a prominent corner tower. Also notice how the detailing of each gable and the wall below vary. The gable at the Albion Street end of the Bradshawgate front has particularly elaborate strap-work, typical of the Flemish Renaissance style, associated with the date plaque (1898). Other details of note include the first floor blocked pilasters and the obelisks on urns above on the second floor, foliage and floral sculpture and the panels incorporating arabesques with masks and the arabesque frieze above the first floor windows. Interestingly after six months of building activity the Urban District Council decided that the Society should have been asked to set the Bradshawgate frontage back and after prolonged negotiation the front portion of the building already erected was pulled down and rebuilt about eight feet further back - a step which has benefited Leigh's townscape. **On the Albion Street frontage** are six very tall second floor windows with an entrance feature below. These were associated with the **large Co-operative Hall seating 1000** and a smaller hall on the second floor and a library and reading room on the first floor. The premises also included a large hydraulic lift and electric lighting.

The opening of the central premises which cost £19,000 represented a major landmark in the Society's history. The Society originated in a public meeting in August 1855 for the purpose of forming a 'protective society', a sort of union to look after the interests of Leigh's silk weavers. The silk trade was dire at this time. In the Leigh Chronicle in March 1855, the editor stated *"We regret that the staple trade of this neighbourhood (the manufacture of silk) still continues in a very unsatisfactory state. Many hundreds of operatives are unemployed altogether, and still greater numbers are only partially employed."* Many of the latter were suffering from unfair wage stoppages or abatements. A small group of men, mainly silk workers, had formed a mutual improvement class and, hearing about the Rochdale Co-operative Wholesale Society, decided to form their own co-operative. On 28 June 1857, nine members paid their first subscription of 6d per week and Leigh Friendly Co-operative Society was formed and was legally registered on 18 January 1858. Goods were sold from a garret over a newspaper shop at the corner of Sugar Street and Newton Street. By the end of the first year, membership had increased to 78, capital to £119 and a profit of £10 8s7d was returned. The garret became too small and the Society acquired a shop at No.97 Bradshawgate in 1858. Other Society shops soon opened on Bradshawgate and in April 1859 Alice Smith's grocery shop on the corner of Bradshawgate and Albion Street was purchased. Between 1859 and 1862 premises were opened in Astley, Lowton, Bedford, Glazebury, Golborne and Atherton. The reading room and library was moved from the Sugar Street garret to above the new grocery shop on the corner of Albion Street and the library of the Mechanics Institute was bought in 1865. In 1862, a new steam powered mill was opened next to the Bridgewater Canal at Ellesmere Street.

Between 1865 and 1895 a steady stream of additional shops were opened in the town centre; inner district shopping centres (such as Railway Road and Chapel Street); growing outer residential areas as at Westleigh and in surrounding towns and villages. A weaving shed was operated at Ellesmere Street between 1868 and 1890. From 1890 trade increased rapidly and the Society began to look for new central premises but decided to consolidate its ownerships at Albion Street - Bradshawgate. In 1890 and 1893 they bought Dr Anderton's premises providing a site 127 ft long on Bradshawgate and 113 ft on Albion Street, upon which the new central premises

were built between 1897 and 1898. By 1907, Leigh Friendly Co-operative Society had over 10,000 members and share capital amounting to £150,000. There were 35 grocery shops, 14 butchers shops, 6 clog and shoe, 6 drapery, one outfitting, one tailoring and one confectionery shop. It employed 410 and total sales for 1906 were £323,665 and the cornmill profited by £61,423. Up until 1939 rebuilt and new branches continued to be opened. In 1965 Leigh Co-operative Society had nearly 14,000 members in the area spending over £1,250,000 a year but the central store required modernisation. The modernised store was named "Quality House" and opened on 24 September 1965 providing 33,000 square feet of sales space in place of the previous 17,000 sq ft. Unfortunately as retailing patterns radically altered during the 1980s and 1990s, after various national and local re-organisations, the co-operative movement ceased to trade at Quality House in June 1999. *Now walk a little further along Bradshawgate to the near corner of Bold Street and further observe details of the former Co-op building.*



Bold Street corner - the former Leigh Club.

37 On or near this corner stood the Cheshire Cheese Public House. Of particular note across Bold Street is the red sandstone corner bank building (1906 J C Prestwich and Son). It is somewhat eclectic (mixed) in style with the Bradshawgate elevation loosely based on an Italian Renaissance Palazzo (palace) style with its first floor attached Ionic order columns (note the capitals) and panelled pilasters, supported on corbels or brackets, with carved foliage - rather Art Noveau in character. Note the dentil cornice made up of small projecting blocks at the roof eaves. The corner is emphasised by being splayed at ground and gable levels, with a massive projection at the first floor forming a canted oriel window, supported on large stone consoles (brackets) with a heavy balcony like parapet above. The Bold Street side has far less stone but high quality smooth pressed brick with stone dressings. These stone features are, however, excellent. The ground floor windows have bolection moulded architraves and massive baroque style stepped keystones. To the left is a giant doorway with mouldings surmounted by a date cartouche and cusped, mullioned windows. This doorway section of the building is much influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement. Notice how the dentil cornice continues in timber. Also notice how, further away from Bradshawgate, the building becomes plainer with more brick and how, as with many of his buildings including the Co-op, Prestwich used green Westmorland slate. As with his own offices (and shops) on Bradshawgate, here Prestwich was the developer as

well as architect. The development was originally for shops and the Leigh Club. Notice how the H.S.B.C. letters on Bradshawgate form an effective sign but without detracting from the architecture or stone - unlike the first floor occupier's sign.

Now return to Bradshawgate, turn left and walk along Bradshawgate noting the **The Globe Inn** at the corner of Vernon Street, which was built in 1854 and which, despite modern alterations retains its late Georgian style sash window frames at first floor. **Across Vernon Street was the Albion Inn.** Cross Vernon Street and continue until, on the left hand side of Bradshawgate, a terrace of white rendered three storey buildings are reached and look across Bradshawgate. Note a long terrace of very low, small shops which originated as silk weavers' cottages prior to 1825. The loom shops were in cellars and steps led up to the ground floor. Even in 1851 the census shows that 92 residents on the whole of the south side of Bradshawgate were employed in domestic silk weaving or winding. Cross Bradshawgate to stand on the south side opposite the mid point of the rendered buildings.

- 38 Look across Bradshawgate at the **three storey rendered terrace which extends to Charles Street**. These three properties, like the majority of the buildings on the north side of Bradshawgate, towards the east end, were built in the 1870s on

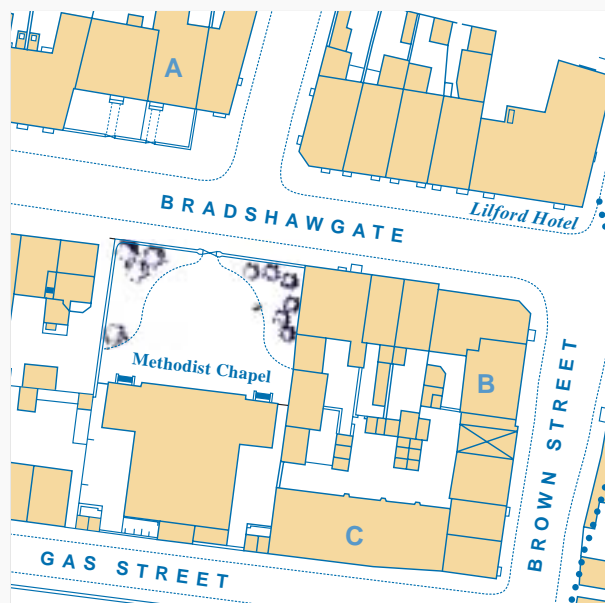


Charles Street corner with the Bradshawgate Inn now rendered.

open land. Victorian photographs show their late Georgian style with Flemish bond brickwork, splayed flat brick window heads and Georgian sash windows, some of which remain on the second floor. The new corner property was the Bradshawgate Inn and on the right hand corner of Charles Street was The Grapes Inn. Now walk to a point on the south side of Bradshawgate opposite the near corner of Bedford Street (outside Iceland).

- 39 Across Bradshawgate to the left of Bedford Street is a row of **four shops of single storey height** with two storey former houses behind. Notice the difference in the bricks used - smooth, machine made, pressed bricks at the front and dark, rougher, hand-made bricks behind. The four, two storey houses were built by Joseph Hall in the 1870s in the late Georgian tradition. He lived in the first house (No.113) on the left. Hall was a painter in 1885 but had retired by the 1891 Census. The houses were set back behind **quite long front gardens shown on the Ordnance Survey 1893 Map** and seen in the background of the photograph of the Lilford Hotel page 63. In 1891 at No.113 Joseph Hall lived with his wife and one general domestic servant. At 115 was the physician and surgeon, Edward Doyle, his brother who was a medical student, his housekeeper and a general domestic servant and at 117 Nancy Kay, cafe owner, with four other relatives and lodgers.

In 1903 the trustees of Joseph Hall applied to the Council to convert the houses to four shops with front extensions covering the gardens, as seen today, apart from the modern shop fronts. The fact that there were front gardens to be built on, emphasises the residential character of Bradshawgate historically. There is much surviving evidence for this in the form of existing buildings despite the changes in use on Bradshawgate. Such shop development on the front gardens of houses is more commonly found in suburban situations.



East end of Bradshawgate in 1893. Note the gardens in front of numbers 113-117 (north side) (A on plan) and the Primitive Methodist Chapel to the south. B and C were silk warehouses.

Turning to look at the south side of Bradshawgate, the **modern food shop and offices** replaced the new Empire Cinema, which closed after a fire in 1957, having had a new frontage built in 1926. This was a highly distinguished 1920s design dominated on the upper facade by a stepped brick centre-piece typical of Art Deco design which contrasted with a sweeping, curved roofline to the outer sections of the facade and curved ends to the foyer parapet roof and canopy. The cinema originally opened in 1908 as the new Central Hall and after a number of cinema remodelling schemes in 1924 became the Modern Dance Hall before reverting to the New Empire Cinema in 1926. **Between 1868 and 1903** the site had a very different use namely the **Leigh Primitive Methodist Chapel** complete with schools and set back behind a graveyard.



The New Empire Cinema of 1926.

Now turn and look across Bradshawgate at the large building on the right hand or far corner of Bedford Street. This group of buildings was built in 1876 and represents the completion of development on the frontages of Bradshawgate. It was developed by Thomas Smith as the Lilford Hotel occupying most of the far (eastern) half of the building and four shops. It is one of J C Prestwich's earliest designs and unlike the majority of his later buildings is in the Gothic, Early English style. This style is characterised by the simple pointed arched windows with stone shafts and stiff leaf capitals. At the third pair from the left is a waterleaf capital. Also of note are the deep, eaves frieze across the top with stepped corbelling and ornate moulded bricks, incorporating recesses reminiscent of medieval castle machicolations (holes through which hot liquids were poured onto attackers); stone and blue brick details, roll mouldings to the front of the window recesses and the ornate gabled dormer windows. Parr's Bank occupied the Bedford Street corner and adjoining shop in 1901 and 1905 until they moved to their new premises at the corner of Market Street and Railway Road in 1908. By 1913 Ratcliffe Brothers occupied the second shop with a wide array of hardware goods displayed within and outside their display window. In directories they were listed as cycle agents.



Ratcliffe's Hardware Shop.

The Lilford Hotel at the corner with Brown Street has a complex asymmetrical roofline comprising a large gable (with a stone relieving arch and drip mould above the paired windows and complete with the date and the Baron Lilford Coat of Arms); immediately adjoined by a brick gabled dormer and then a hipped corner roof with a pitched-roofed dormer matching those over the shops. The hotel had domestic type ground floor windows, paired with segmental arches, drip moulds and side roll-



Former Lilford Hotel about 1885 from Queen Street.

moulds. The modern shop fronts in the whole group detract from the character of this important building. The hotel composition makes a significant contribution to the townscape when viewed from Queen Street (Point 41). The hotel cost approximately £3000 and included four cellars, nine ground floor rooms, 12 bedrooms, stabling and a coach house and could feed 70 people but only offered four beds and stabled six horses in 1890. Bed spaces were limited by the large billiards and other reception rooms on the first floor. It was a popular venue with cyclists in Leigh. From about 1880 Joseph Jackson was landlord and in 1895 he built a brewery to the rear. Now cross Bradshawgate and walk along the left hand side of Bedford Street until, on the right hand side the small but decorative Lilford Cottage is reached and observe that it is double fronted and built mainly in common bricks with pale patches contrasting with the smooth, dark red bricks forming projecting bands, courses and strings across the building. Stepped, projecting bricks form corbels at eaves level and unusually at the base of the gable and more plainly along the gable verges (sloping sides). Small ornate gables with arts and crafts patterning punctuate the roof. In 1905 Alexander Patterson's dental practice and home was at Lilford Cottage.

Cross Bedford Street and look into the yard to the right of Lilford Cottage to see Jackson's Lilford Brewery buildings noting the blue brick details, especially those alternating with red bricks in the segmental arches above the windows and doors and the tall third floor doorway known as a taking-in door, where a hoist would lift the raw materials used in the brewery. Prior to opening,



Jackson's Lilford Brewery of 1895.



The former Derby Brewery (page 65).

in 1895, the new brewery was described in the Leigh Observer. *"The building is a very handsome looking one indeed, and is five storeys high, counting the cellar. There is an artesian well in the cellar from which the water is obtained, 35 feet deep; and there are ten rooms in the building. The bottling department contains two patent and most adaptable machines for corking and bottling, and there is also one for labelling. Each room has a concrete floor placed upon steel girders, and it is nearly an impossibility for a fire to spread from one room to another.... The rooms include mashing and hop rooms. The latter contain a refrigerator and malt mill.... ample provision is made for the production of 16 barrels at one brewing."* Now return to Bradshawgate noticing, close to, the roll moulding on the ground floor windows near the corner on Bedford Street and then cross Bradshawgate, turn left and walk to the end of Bradshawgate. Turn right into Brown Street and at the corner with Gas Street cross Brown Street so that you turn and face the mid point of Gas Street.



Bradshawgate - Brown Street - John Hilton's house and, to the rear, top floor silk receiving house. The Bradshawgate house was later The Derby Arms. B on map p.61.

40) A little further south on Brown Street was the boundary of the Manors and Townships of Pennington, Bedford and Atherton for on the east side of Brown Street was a long tongue of land which was part of Atherton until 1894. As previously mentioned, between 1825 and 1834 the south side of Gas Street was occupied by Mansley's Rope Works. On the north side between 1825 and 1847 a line of small cottages and industrial premises developed in particularly cramped conditions. When in 1834 the Leigh Gas Works later to be joined by the electricity works, were developed on the rope works site the street name was also changed. The Gas Works were cleared in the mid 1980s and the site used for parking and serving the Spinning-Gate Shopping Centre and New Market Hall. On the right hand side of Gas Street near the corner with Brown Street is a two storey brick building of about 1840 (B on page 61 map), which is likely to have been part of Hilton's silk warehouse - a rare survivor of the purpose built type, of muslin and silk receiving house, where domestic hand loom weavers collected their loom beams with warp thread and received wages upon returning finished cloth. As well as storage, winding of bobbins (pirns) and warping to provide long evenly tensioned warp threads on beams, were carried on in the buildings. Now turn north and walk to the near corner of Brown Street and Queen Street which forms a continuation of Bradshawgate.

41) Originally Bradshawgate turned 90° to the south where Brown Street is now and subsequently 90° to the east to join Chapel Street in Bedford but, about 1851, Queen Street was cut through a field in Atherton to give a much more direct route. Observe the former Lilford Hotel on the northern corner of Bradshawgate and note the importance of the roofline and upper details. Also notice No.5 Queen Street (third shop from left), which was Peter Yates and Sons bakers and grocers premises in 1905. Now cross Queen Street and look back at the south corner of Bradshawgate. The building on the corner again displays Leigh's former Georgian character with small paned sash windows on the upper floors (4 panes wide denoting the later Georgian period about 1830) and hand made bricks in Flemish Bond. The Bradshawgate section was the Derby Arms Public House in 1885, though Thomas Boydell in 1907 referred to it as the Beehive. The Brown Street section is unpainted and on the top floor, in place of a central window, has a taking-in door extending down to floor level. This top floor was the warehouse and winding and warping shop of a muslin, and subsequently, silk manufacturer or agent.

In the 1851 Census there is no reference to a Public House in this part of Bradshawgate (including Brown Street to the south) but John Hilton the silk agent lived here with his wife and five children but no resident servants, Lawrence Ramsdale an over-looker of silk winders, lived next door with his extended family, which included his son Edward, a silk agent, and two silk winders. In addition to the top floor warehouse, facing Brown Street, the Gas Street warehouse, referred to above, was likely to have been Hilton's or Ramsdale's premises. On Bradshawgate beyond the corner building notice a terrace of four late Georgian three storey houses, projecting in front of the corner building, with hand made bricks in Flemish Bond and a simple un-moulded, but angled, stone, gutter, cornice. In 1885 these premises from left to right were occupied by John Calvert, dyer and cleaner; Joseph Jones, tripe dresser; John Collier, greengrocer and fishmonger and Samuel Smith, wholesale baker and grocer. Now cross Brown Street and walk north along Brown Street to a point opposite the narrow street, Back Queen Street, to the right and turn to face Back Queen Street.

42) On the left hand side of Back Queen Street is the tall five storey tower, with its gabled roof (which widens to form two gables to the east) of the former Derby Brewery (see page 63). Traditional breweries relied on gravity to assist passage between the various stages and processes in brewing, so that towers are a characteristic feature of breweries. This is a notable example emphasised by the adjoining single storey building, on Brown Street. The single storey section admirably illustrates the functional tradition in English architecture with excellent proportions (the relationship of height to width in various elements of the building) and simple detailing including the projecting buttresses lending support to roof trusses, the projecting plinth with chamfered blue bricks across the bottom and corbelled and dentilled eaves across the top and segmental arched windows. Buff, blue and red bricks are used to good effect to emphasise these features. To the right of the tower along Back Queen Street is a long two-storey building typical of brewery stables and coopers' workshops where timber was stored and prepared for barrels. The brewery is likely to have been the brewery referred to in a newspaper sale notice in 1877 as the Bedford Leigh Brewery "situate in Brown Street, Atherton, near the Leigh and Bedford Railway Station with the plant, fixtures and utensils belonging thereto, and the adjoining stables, barrel-washing house, cooper's shop and storerooms. The carts, horses, barrels and stock in trade of the said brewery shall be taken by the purchaser at a valuation". Along with

the brewery (probably built in 1871), ten beerhouses and one public house were sold including the Bull's Head on Bradshawgate. As the Derby Brewery it appears in trade directories from 1885 to 1898 under the ownership of Richard Fairhurst and Co. Finally from this point note, on the right hand side of Back Queen Street, **another small, three storey brick building with tall square chimney** and a hoist and two upper taking-in doors. This was Peter Yates and Sons' bakery serving their bakers and grocers business at 5 and 7 Queen Street in 1905.

Clearly in the later 19th Century industry remained close at hand to the rear of Bradshawgate. The much greater segregation of uses, common today only started in the late 1880s and 1890s for instance in the large housing areas to the rear of both sides of Railway Road and north of Church Street and commercial activities alone on Bradshawgate and Market Street with large scale industry usually in more peripheral locations.

*You can now return to Market Street or Place via Bradshawgate - turn right or Lord Street - turn left.*

