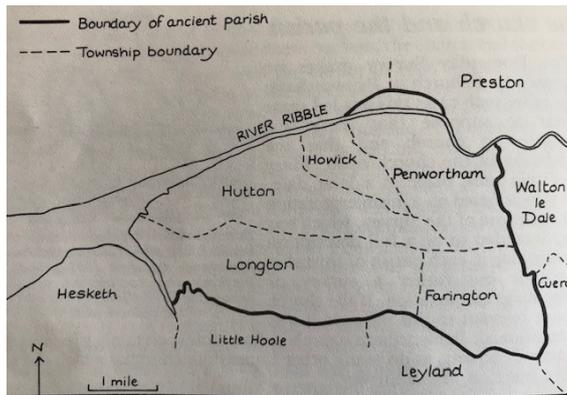


A Walk around St. Leonard's Parish Boundary, Penwortham.

Background.



Map courtesy of Alan Crosby from his book
"Penwortham in the past"

Penwortham is one of the ancient parishes of Lancashire. Until the 17th century it comprised of the townships of Longton, Howick, Penwortham, Farington and Hutton. In the early medieval period it also comprised of Brindle. The earliest written record of a church at Penwortham dates from the 1140's.

Middleforth the township (which acquired its name from the middle ford on the River Ribble) was gradually growing in the early first part of the 19th century and the Vicar of St. Mary's Rev. W.E. Rawstorne decided that the time was right to build a chapel school. Middleforth Chapel School opened in 1861 in the village, situated on the corner of Leyland Road and Marshall's Brow. In 1901 a prefabricated iron church was built next to the school. This was in use until the present church was opened in 1970.



As St. Leonard's Church in Middleforth grew further, it was soon able to manage its own affairs and in 1959 became a conventional district but still in the Parish of St. Mary, Penwortham.

Further growth took place with Penwortham becoming part of the Central Lancashire New Town. It was therefore decided that St. Leonard's could stand alone from St. Mary's and a new benefice of the Parish of St. Leonard, Penwortham was established on 1 April 1972 by an Order in Council dated 1 March 1972. The area concerned was taken out of the ancient parish of St. Mary and also from the parish of St. Paul, Farington.

I will create a separate boundary walk for St. Mary's Parish.

Distance: 5 miles

Time: 2 to 2.5 hours.

Grade: Easy. Some steps and inclines. Uneven ground in places.

Clothing: Boots with reasonable tread are advisable.

Map: OS Explorer 286 Blackpool & Preston

The entire route is suitable for walkers. Some of the route is suitable for wheelchairs, cyclists and horses.



St. Leonard's Parish is 1.2 Sq Miles.

In 2011 the population was 10,424. The number of occupied households in 2011 was 4,669

Legend

Boundary— **Blue**

Walk where away from boundary— **Red**

Alternative route — **Green**

Directions:



Fig 1

Start: St. Leonard's Church (Fig 1) being in the centre of the parish is a suitable place to start although the route can be commenced anywhere.

1. Walk from St. Leonard's Church, Marshall's Brow, Penwortham PR1 9JA in an easterly direction along New Lane. At the end of the road, turn right and travel along Leyland Road. Cross at the pedestrian crossing (Fig 2) to the left side of the road. Cross the railway bridge (known as "Skew Bridge")



Fig 2



Fig 3

2. At the advertising hoarding, pass through the gate (Fig 3) and take the footpath alongside the West Coast Main Line Railway. If you cast your eyes off to the right, the boundary is across the field and is the hidden brook which flows to the River Ribble. We will travel as near to the boundary as is reasonably practical but following footpaths. There are excellent views of Preston, Parlick and Fairsnape Fell. (Fig 4)



Fig 4

3. Continue along the footpath and pass through a gate, then alongside the farmyard until you reach Factory Lane. (Fig 5) Cross the road and follow the lane to Vernon Carus Sports Club keeping the brook (the boundary) on your right and the sports field on your left. Pass through the gate and follow the path signposted "Walton Park and Bamber Bridge". The brook now weaves its way in and out of the former East Lancashire Railway (ELR). When the railway was in operation, this area was known as the Whitehouse Junction. Remember that the brook was there before the railway and formed a natural boundary between the parishes of Penwortham and Walton-le-Dale.



Fig 5



Fig 6

4. Take the footpath sign posted "Preston" (Fig 6) up the incline and continue along the embankment. This section of the railway, completed in 1850 was built as an extension to the East Lancashire Railway which gave the company a direct route into Preston from Bamber Bridge. The route of the railway to the left was the West Lancashire Railway (WLR) to Southport via Penwortham. We will meet the WLR again several times on our route. It's a very pleasant footpath with a tarmac surface which enables walkers, horse riders and wheelchair users to travel into Preston via Avenham Park. As you approach the Ribble Bridge turn right down the incline signposted "Walton-le-Dale". (Fig 7).



Fig 7

(N.B. The railway originally passed under East Cliff Bridge to the ELR platforms at Preston Station (now the Fishergate Centre Car Park. At the time of writing, the route at the bridge is fenced off, but hopefully in the future will be opened up to give direct access once again to Preston Station).

5. Walk down the path to the right which takes you to the River Ribble. The route we would normally take is under the bridge (Fig 8)

(NB. At the time of writing there was no access to continue our walk to the left under the bridge due to a footbridge which had been damaged during severe flooding. However, a diversion which is open to walkers only can be taken which enables a closer experience of the boundary).



Fig 8

6. At the bottom of the footpath, double back to the right and take the footpath with the field on your left. Pass over the footbridge which crosses the brook (and parish boundary) and enter the field. You can explore the boundary which circles the field on the left but then keep right and pass through the tunnel.

The photo (Fig 9) is a view from under the tunnel looking back at the field)



Fig 10

As you walked the old ELR line, you probably didn't realise that you were walking over a bridge of 57 arches! Look at Fig 10 and you will see some of the arches on the extreme left. There was a major accident when the arches were built in October 1849, some collapsed but fortunately nobody was injured. Some years later the tunnels were filled in and a banking formed for strength. They were like the tunnel you have just entered. There are now only two

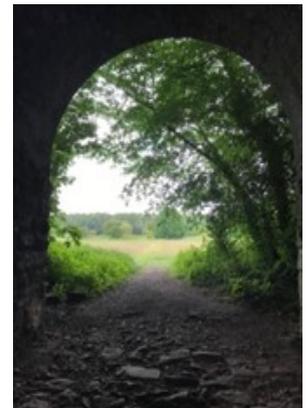


Fig 9

tunnels for the brook and one for access to the field you have left behind.

7. As you come out of the tunnel, walk straight ahead towards the West Coast Main Line then bear right which takes you to the footpath alongside the River Ribble.

Turn left and take the Ribble footpath, passing under the West Coast Main Line. (Fig 11) The viaduct carries the railway over the River Ribble. It was built for the North Union Railway Company in 1837-8, doubled in width in 1879-80, and now carries the West Coast Main Line. The viaduct is in sandstone, is approximately 200 metres (660 ft) long, and has five segmental arches with rusticated voussoirs. The Bridge is Grade 2 listed.



Fig 11



Fig 12

8. Continue along the footpath passing through the open gateway (Fig 12). The streets which form the community of Margaret Road, Hawkhurst Road and Talbot Road are to the left.



Fig 13

9. When you reach Back Fairhaven Road this is where the Ferry boat crossed the River Ribble from as early as the 14th century. (Fig 13). The white house on the Preston side is the rebuilt Boathouse. After the construction of the new bridge in the 1750's, the old road to the boathouse on the Penwortham side (roughly where Lark Ave and Stanley Ave is today) fell into disuse and was eventually abandoned. The ferry however did operate for foot passengers until the early part of the 20th C. Is the stone on the left by the garden wall a marker post for the ferry?

10. On the left there are Victorian houses, among them are: "Pleasant View" built in 1888 (Fig 14) and "Riverview Terrace" built in 1889



Fig 14



Fig 15

11. As you continue along Riverside there are two bridges.

The first is that of the old West Lancashire Line (WLR) or strictly speaking the piers of the bridge carrying a gas pipe line. (Fig 15). The WLR, like many smaller railways, was opened in stages, finally linking Preston and Southport in 1882 when the West Lancashire terminus at the bottom of Fishergate Hill was opened. At the Western end of the line, the company also had its own Terminus, Southport Central. After only 10 years, the line struggled to make a profit. More and more passenger trains were able to use the main Preston Station via the ELR and Whitehouse Junction. As a result the station closed to passengers except for use during two Preston Guilds. The line continued with goods traffic until it was named in the Beeching Report and was closed in 1964. Broadgate Cycles were based at the redundant Fishergate Station until moving to Hawksbury Drive in the late 1970's.

12. Take time to look at Old Penwortham Bridge. (Fig 16) Originally a toll bridge built in 1759, it is now a footbridge crossing the River Ribble. The bridge is built in stone and consists of five unequal segmental arches. The cutwaters rise to form refuges at the sides of the footpath. The parapets curve to form walls on the south side. The bridge is also a scheduled monument and is Grade 2 listed.



Fig 16



Fig 17

13. The south side of Old Penwortham Bridge is in St. Mary's Parish, so we now have to go back to the adjacent bridge carrying the gas pipe line. Opposite is a footpath and the old embankment of the WLR.

Take the footpath (Fig 17), cross Leyland Road and continue the boundary walk passing Penwortham Methodist Church on your right. (Fig 18)



Fig 18



Fig 19

14. Continue along the footpath. The old track-bed of the WLR is on your left and allotments on your right. There is a footpath into Penwortham Residential Park on your left. However continue until you reach a flight of steps on the left. Take the steps to the top. (Fig 19) Alternatively follow the path round in a anti-clockwise direction to reach the top of the bridge. To keep as close as is reasonably practical to the boundary, cross over the bridge into St. Mary's Parish.



Fig 20

The Penwortham By-pass below was formerly the route of the West Lancashire Railway.



Fig 21

15. At the sign, take the footpath left towards Cop Lane (Fig 21). With Cop Lane School on your right, take the footpath left (Fig 22) and cross Cop Lane at the crossings. Cop Lane Railway Station was situated to the right in the cutting. Return to St. Leonard's Parish on the opposite side of Penwortham By-Pass.



Fig 22

16. Turn right and take the footpath along Millbrook Way and pass Booths' Store on your right. With the service station on your right, cross the Broad Oak Roundabout. **Take extra care. Do not attempt to cross anywhere other than the crossings.** Cross to the first island then left to the far side, (Fig 23).



Fig 23



Fig 24

17. Take the lane opposite and continue to the bridge with white railings. (Fig 24) The brook is the boundary with New Longton Parish. Take the bridle-path left which is signposted. (Fig 25)



Fig 25



Fig 26

18. The bridle-path brings you out onto Pope Lane near the junction with Penwortham Way. (Fig 26) . There are now two options as to the route you take.

18a (As this is a busy road, it is not suitable for children or large groups). At the traffic lights, go straight ahead crossing over Pope Lane and then left over Penwortham Way . Go straight ahead, for .3 mile, walk along the footpath, then the verge on Penwortham Way until the layby. Look for the footpath sign by the layby. (Fig 27)



Fig 27



Fig 28

18b Alternative route. Turn right and take the footpath along Pope Lane, cross Lindle Lane at Nutters Platt Farm. Walk as far as Green Lane and walk along that road. (Fig 28). Go straight ahead, over the stile next to the gate and walk along the farm track until the gate. Go over the stile on the left, walk through the field keeping to the right until the row of trees. Cross the wooden footbridge (Fig 29) and walk across next narrow field to the stile and up the bank. **Immediately at the top is Penwortham By-pass so take extra care as you cross the road. To the footpath sign** (Fig 27)



Fig 29

19. Be careful as you walk down the banking. Cross over the stile and walk through the field keeping to the left by the row of trees (Fig 30).



Fig 30



Fig 31

20. Cross over the stile at the gate. After the short stretch of track, bear right and walk along Bee Lane for .7 miles. (Fig 31)

Much of the land to the right has been set aside for a new development called “The Lanes”. A total of 1,100 houses are planned together with a primary school, shops and community facilities. The development is in Farington Parish. For further information see <https://www.southribble.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Documents/Masterplan%20Final.pdf>



Fig 32

If you wish to bail out, there is a footpath on the left which leads to Penwortham Community Centre and Kingsfold Drive. (Fig 32).

If you wish to continue the walk to the finish, continue along Bee Lane crossing Moss Lane. Walk to end via the West Coast Main Line Railway Bridge.

21. Turn left onto Leyland Road and walk for .2 miles to “Skew Bridge” and the advertising hoarding from where the actual boundary walk started. (Fig 33)

Keep to the footpath on the left and walk a further .3 miles back to New Lane. Turn left into New Lane and back to St. Leonard’s Church.

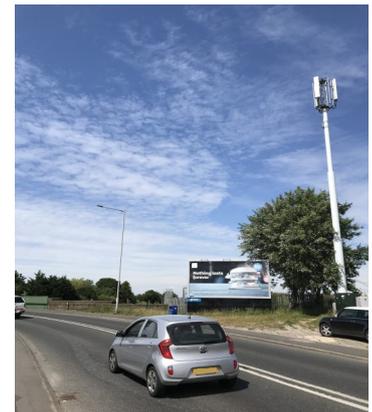


Fig 33

I hope you have enjoyed the walk.

Philip Walsh

#Lockdown during COVID19 May 2020.

Sources:

Church of England

“Penwortham in the past” by Alan Crosby . Carnegie Press 1988

OS Maps on-line

www.southribble.co.uk

www.preston.gov.uk

disused-stations.org

Photographs: Philip Walsh