



St Werburgh's Parish Centre / Catholic Club and Bowling Green Court retirement complex

Today, St Werburgh's Parish Centre or the Catholic Club, which is a grade II listed building, is located opposite the Stanley Arms Pub, overlooking the roundabout, close to the former site of Chester's Cattle Market. The name St Werburgh's Parish Centre relates to the connection between the Centre and the parish of St Werburgh's, which covers most of the city centre and the Eastern part of the City. The centre is also referred to as the Catholic Club because of the wider catholic community that uses the centre.

From the 1600s, for two centuries, the current site of St Werburgh's Catholic Centre was home to a **private dwelling**.

In 1805 this private dwelling became an inn; it was named **The Bowling Green Inn** and would have been used by traders and travellers passing through Brook Street and trading at the Cattle Market nearby. As the Bowling Green Inn & Hotel, some of the farmers who came to trade nearby, at the Cattle Market, would stay at the inn & at other inns & guest houses on Brook Street during their business.

Next to the old hotel was a **stable** which housed cattle, and, later during the visit of a circus to the city, elephants resided here.

At the turn of the last century, the inn, was bought by the family who owned the Wilderspool Brewery in Warrington. Greenall Whitley and Co. started this brewery in Warrington in 1787 and they replaced The Bowling Green Inn with its current building in 1913 - 4. **The Bowling Green Inn** became a **Wilderspool Stout & Ale pub**.

The actual bowling green, behind the former inn and pub, is one of the oldest bowling greens in Cheshire & in the UK. A 1745 map of Chester shows a bowling green on a street that appears to be the future Brook Street, so it has been in use since before 1745. However, in 2001, it was partially destroyed when the Catholic Church sold some of the land to allow the development of retirement apartments. The restored bowling green is still used for bowls.

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A "Chester Guide" describes it as follows: "At the Bowling Green in Brook Street the ground is kept in excellent order and there is every convenience and attention shown to those who may wish to spend an hour in this pleasing and healthy recreation. The green covers an area of one hundred and seventy-eight feet in length and one hundred and forty-eight feet in breadth and is well attended during the summer months"

During World War 2, the bowling green played its part in the war effort. In Britain, food was in short supply and people were encouraged to keep chickens and pigs and to grow fruit and vegetables. The government called this campaign "Dig for victory". Every possible green space was used to provide food. Brook Street's bowling green was converted into an allotment and provided vegetables and fruit during the war.

Also, during World War 2, just outside the main entrance to the current Catholic Centre, on the corner of Milton Street, a water pump was constructed for the benefit of the community. The letters "EWS" written in yellow on the brick work at the front of the building are still clearly visible, informing people that the **Emergency Water Supply** was here if needed.

In 1970 St Werburgh's Parish bought the property and, in 1975, opened the **St Werburgh's Parish Centre or Catholic Club**. The money to used to buy the property was raised by selling off the old St Werburgh's School and its grounds in Frodsham Street, to Tesco, who built their large Supermarket and car park.

Later, some of the land surrounding the Catholic Centre, along with adjacent land and buildings, was sold to build the **Bowling Green Court retirement complex**, which was opened in **2000**. As a result the bowling green was moved to its current position. The area that Bowling Green Court encompasses today has gone through many changes of use until it became a retirement complex.

During the 1950's and 1960's, Brook Street was the major street for travellers coming in and out of Chester city centre via the North East route and was the primary access road to the Railway station and the Cattle market. The building next to the current Catholic Centre was used by W. Williamson household goods store. This was demolished between 1964 and 1968 and an Esso garage and filling station was built on the site. Along with the Esso filling station, there was also a car dealership here in the 1980s. These were purchased and demolished to make way for the **Bowling Green Court retirement complex**.

Bowling Green Court comprises of 49 apartments, mainly one and two bedrooms, many enjoying balconies or decked patio areas. The complex offers 'Very Sheltered Housing,' supporting the more mature (over 55s) to retain their independence.

H1a



The History of Brook Street

Brook Street is located North East of Chester city centre. It was named after Flookersbrook, a nearby stream to the north of Chester city centre. Flookersbrook was a meandering stream, flowing through marshy ground that separated the township of Hoole from the City.

Brook Street follows the route of the old Roman road, and is developed along the main route northwards out of the City to Warrington, linking the historic lowest crossing points of the River Dee and the River Mersey.

Brook Street has existed since the seventeenth century and probably earlier as a pathway out of the city into the countryside.

Until the mid 18th century Brook Street remained relatively undeveloped (see http://chester.shoutwiki.com/wiki/Lavaux_Map) and comprised mainly of fields with a small numbers of buildings, which were concentrated towards the City end of the street. It is likely that many of these buildings were associated with the activities of the Gorse Stacks Cattle Market. Also, a bowling green has been located towards the upper end of Brook Street since Georgian times or earlier.

In the 1770s the Chester Canal cut the upper end of the street where, until its rebuilding in the 1950s, Cow Lane Bridge acted as a pinch point separating Brook Street from Cow Lane (now Frodsham Street).

By the last quarter of the 18th century Brook Street had extended, on its western side to the junction with what was to become Brook Place and on the east side to what would become Egerton Street. Many of the late Georgian cottage rows such as numbers 39-61, 50-56, 72-82, appear to be associated with this era. (See Mutlow and Stockdales Map of 1795 <http://chester.shoutwiki.com/wiki/File:Zstockdale1795.jpg>).

The 1825 map (<http://chester.shoutwiki.com/wiki/File:1825BrookSt.jpg>) shows some further development, just prior to the explosive growth of the next half-century.

The History of Brook Street

In 1829, **Joseph Hemingway, former editor of the Chester Courant and the Chester Chronicle**, writing in *Perambulation of Chester* describes Brook Street as being “respectable” in appearance (as compared to “mean and miserable” Frodsham Street):

“The next opening presented by Foregate Street is on the north side named Frodsham Street formerly called Cow Lane and still more remotely Coole’s Lane. It is one of the principal entrances into the city from Manchester Warrington and Frodsham the houses are generally of the meanest description the street narrow filthy and inconvenient and but ill accords with the more distant approach at the beautiful hamlet of Flookersbrook and the respectable appearance of Brook Street. This street has excellent capabilities of being widened and improved there being abundance of vacant ground behind particularly on the east side where the houses are most miserable but as the property has a great number of owners who are generally in humble circumstances there is no immediate prospect of any material improvement here.”

In 1847- 48 Chester Railway Station was built just beyond the northern end of Brook Street. From this time until the 1970’s Brook Street was a main connection between the City Centre and Chester’s train station. It carried traffic flow from Hoole and areas to the north-east into Chester. The coming of the railway hastened the development already underway in this area.

Brook Street’s and the Newtown’s growth and its importance to the Chester economy was driven from about 1793 by its location by the canal network, and from the 1840s, with the development of the railway, by its location close to the two Chester railway stations: Chester General and Chester Northgate.

Brook Street, the route out of the city to Warrington and the North West, contributed to the growth of Chester’s large Cattle Market at Gorse Stacks and placed the area at the very heart of the Chester’s Industrial Revolution. Newtown provided most of the workers to Chester during the Industrial Revolution of the late 18th century, leading to substantial wealth for the city.

The 1872 OS map shows Brook Street after a half-century of immense change. In Newtown small terraced houses were built without front or back gardens but after 1845 with individual yards and back access. Employment on the railways was undoubtedly part of the reason for the rapid development of the area. Further working-class terraces were built east of Brook Street.

The History of Brook Street

Progressively the residential character of the area became mingled with industrial enterprises, at first these were located along the canal, examples including the pioneering steam powered corn mill of the 1700s and Walker and Maltbys Leadworks of 1800. By 1825 the extensive leather tannery, doubtless associated with the proximity of the cattle market had been established on the western side of the street and this partly survives today as retail premises 99 -103 Brook Street: its surviving facade from 101 to 103A provides the only building of industrial character to the street frontage

At about this time the residential character of the street began to change as it developed a retail function servicing the adjoining areas of workers' housing. Many of the existing dwellings were adapted to this new function - the cottage rows, along with many of the higher status buildings acquiring shop fronts. Only in Lower Brook Street was the residential character maintained. New purpose-built shops were constructed during the late 19th and early 20th century, apparently replacing earlier buildings most likely to be similar to the late Georgian cottage ranges.

At this time Brook Street followed the trend established in the principal streets of the City acquiring a variety of Tudor revival buildings. Some were associated with retail functions such as, 60, 84, 86 & 83, others entertainment such as 95 – 97, the former Majestic Cinema. The best work of this type is undoubtedly provided by the local breweries, whose public houses provide key focal points at the entry to the street at both its northern and southern ends and at the junction with James Street. Seeking a different architectural style, the former Cocoa Rooms provides a fine, but solitary, representative of the Arts and Crafts movement.

The street has a history of being cut through by new transport systems. This, with the exception of the coming of the ring road, had a beneficial impact on the economy of the street.

At the northern end of Brook Street lay extensive railway wagon works on both sides of Brook Street adjacent to the General station.

At the end of the 1960's the Inner Ring Road cut a (some say destructive) path through the city and the dual-carriageway of Hoole Way was built parallel to Brook Street. A part of the western side of Brook Street at the northern end was demolished in the process, and Brook Street went into something of a decline. The ring road severed the street just below the canal crossing at Cow Lane Bridge, the short length of Brook Street between the two now being known as Brookside. This upper part of the street adjoined The Gorse Stacks, an area that from medieval times had developed as the City's livestock market.

The History of Brook Street

The 1980s and 1990s brought further economic decline as much of the area's traditional employment base, including the Chester Hydraulic Company and The Railway Wagon Works closed. The area has suffered a long-term decline in business activity and population.

Brook Street contains over 70 shops, which offer a wide range of specialist products and is well known locally for its quality restaurant and take-away outlets. Whilst the location of these shops is in a good strategic position between the main pedestrian route from the Railway Station to the core of the City Centre, trade for the specialist shops has declined significantly over the recent years. Retailers selling outdoor clothing, camping gear, comics, music and diving equipment all reported trading losses and a rapid turnover in retailer presence on the street started to be apparent.

H1b

Activities



Why was the street called Brook Street?

H2a

Describe the development of Brook Street through history.

H2b

What might Brook Street have looked like in the past?



H3



Industrial Revolution

Chester played a significant part in the Industrial Revolution, which began in the North West of England in the latter part of the 18th century.

The city village of Newtown is an area of northeast Chester, just outside the city walls and to the east of Chester Cathedral. The main layout of streets originated in the late 1790s because of the location by the cattle market and along the Shropshire Union Canal.

Newtown's growth and its importance to the Chester economy was driven from about 1793 by its location by the canal network, and from the 1840s, with the development of the railway, by its location close to the two Chester railway stations: Chester General and Chester Northgate. Brook Street, following the exact route of the old Roman road out of the city was the most direct route from the city centre out through the countryside to Warrington, which in turn contributed to the growth of Chester's large Cattle Market at Gorse Stacks. This placed Newtown at the very heart of the Chester's Industrial Revolution. Newtown provided most of the workers to Chester during the Industrial Revolution of the late 18th century, leading to substantial wealth for the city.

Because of its location in the canal and railway networks, Newtown in Chester became a hub of northern English commerce. The canal was the 'motorway' of its day and narrow boats carried produce and supplies to and from North Wales (coal, slate, gypsum and lead ore). Finished lead (for roofing, water pipes and sewerage), produced in the huge leadworks in Edgerton Street Newtown, was exported all over the country. Grain from the Cheshire farmlands was processed in the large mills and granaries on the banks of the canal at Newtown and Boughton; and salt (for preserving food such as fish and meat) came from Northwich. The last canal-side flour mill closed in the late 1950s.

The area supported a thriving community of artisans and working-class families who lived mainly in "two-up-two-down" terraced housing with no bathrooms and an outside toilet.

The inner Ring Road, built in the late 1960s / early 1970s, runs almost exactly along the route of what was 'Back Brook Street' and virtually dissected the 'old' Newtown in half.

H4a



Brook Street and the Cattle Market

Brook Street's location means it is the most direct route from the railway station to the city centre and, in the past, to the Cattle Market.

Royal Charter 1506: The great charter of 1506, which gave the city county status, also declared that traders were to sell their goods at certain places in the city. On **12th April 1844** a special committee decided to relocate Chester's Cattle Market from Northgate Street to **Gorse Stacks** in George Street. This is where the market was located from **1850** until its closure in the late **1960s**.

Gorse Stacks is a rather curious name. This area was called Gorse Stacks, because at one time it was used to store brushwood and suchlike fuel for baker's ovens, safely outside the city walls. This was a safety measure introduced nationally after the terrible destruction brought about by the Great Fire of London.

In the late 1960's the Cattle Market, once the centre of a thriving commercial district, was closed and demolished to make way for a traffic island on the new inner Ring Road at the junction of St. Oswald's Way and Hoole Way and for the widening of the road leading from the rebuilt of Cow Lane bridge. Part of the area of the former Cattle Market is again under re development.

For centuries, livestock were driven in from the surrounding countryside to be sold at the Cattle Market. Cattle were brought into Chester via trains. Brook Street connected the Railway Station with the Cattle Market on Gorse Stacks, Cow Lane bridge, Cow Lane (now Frodsham Street) and the city centre - the exact route of the old Roman road out of the city to Warrington. On Tuesday's poultry, pigs and sheep were traded at the cattle market, while Thursdays were for cattle. Farmers and traders would come to the market and nearby Brook Street would provide goods and services for them.

After the cattle was sold at the market, they were either herded down Brook Street to the train station and transported to other parts of the county or they were herded over Cow Lane Bridge and along Cow Lane (present day Frodsham Street) to the **abattoir**. The **abattoir** was located near the current Boots' car park in Queens Street, behind the present day Tesco's Supermarket. Tuesdays and Thursdays were days when you kept away from the Cow Lane Bridge and Brook Street area unless you were at ease with cows, bulls, sheep, pigs etc.

Can you imagine today a herd of cows being driven Brook Street. Often a cow (or even a bull!) would escape, charging down the street. They would run into shops if they hadn't closed the doors, as did people trying to dodge them! Hopefully not the same shops! At least, in Brook Street you could avoid them, but if you met the herds on Cow Lane Bridge, there was nowhere to escape to and hide!

H4b

Activities



Sights, smells & sounds

- Can you imagine visiting the Cattle Market?
- What sounds, smells and sights would you experience?



H4c

What would you do?

- What would you do if a cow or pig escaped as the farmers loaded and unloaded them or herded them along the street?
- Would you find it funny watching grown men chasing a squealing pig down Brook Street or a charging bull up Cow Lane (now Frodsham Street)?

H4d

Newspaper report

- Write a report for the local newspaper about a pig or cow that escaped from the market.

or

The Adventures of a Piglet

- Write the adventures of a piglet who escaped from the market.

