

This one hour trail will take you to the Littleborough Co-operative Society buildings and sites, which are part of the story of the development of Littleborough town centre. A longer extension to this trail can also be followed either on foot or by car. Buses and trains all stop within easy distance of Littleborough Square. From the Square walk left past the Royal Oak and along the right hand side of Church Street until Number 84 is reached. Each step of the walk is detailed below.

1 84 Church Street

Number 84 Church Street was previously a terraced stone cottage; the home of James Hill. The original members of the Littleborough Cooperative Society of Industry sold basic food stuffs in the evening here from the front room. After six years it became possible for the group to rent their own shop further along the road.



84 Church Street

From here walk back along Church Street past the Square until you reach the War Memorial.

2 Co-op shops, Church Street

In 1856 the Society rented a shop in Church Street which opened as a general grocery store. Later in 1861 Industry Street was built. This is a short road at right angles to Church Street, stretching from the road to the river. It is now an attractive row of cottages and flats. Initially the building was used as a warehouse and abattoir. Subsequently stores were established along Church Street including a greengrocers, a butchers and a fish and game shop.

“Butter was weighed onto a wooden board and patted into shapes with wooden paddles.”
“The ‘toffs’ bought their pheasants from the fish shop. I learned to skin a rabbit there when I was a boy.”

Fold here



Industry Street

Across the road at number 28a a painting and decorating shop was sited on the first floor. From Industry Street, cross via the pedestrian crossing and turn into a small cobbled lane, Lodge Street. On the left is Littleborough Coach House where refreshments, toilets and Tourist Information may be accessed. At the junction with Victoria Street turn left and then right into Hare Hill Road.

3 Co-op stores, Hare Hill Road

Walk along the right side of the road until you reach Sainsbury’s supermarket. This is the site of the central block of Co-operative stores in Littleborough. The shops included a shoe shop, men’s outfitters, milliners, grocers, butchers and a bakery which included a cafe.

“Everything was there in the village; we never needed to go into Rochdale. We could get shoes, clothes, furniture and everything from the Co-op here in the village.”
“In the cafe tuesday afternoons were quiet and “lovely people would come in then like Mr Taylor the dentist whose practice was in the toll house by the bridge near the arches”. “It was customary for people to come in for tea/coffees in the morning; then local shopkeepers would come in for their pre-ordered dinners. Workers from the Phoenix Foundry always bought their dinners from the cafe – a regular order. Policemen would often knock on the doors early for milk”.

Continue walking along the right hand side of Hare Hill Road until you reach Sainsbury’s car park and the junction with Bare Hill Street. Here the parade of shops ended in an impressive rounded building topped by a dome. It housed Co-op offices and had an internal spiral staircase. Many people recall climbing the staircase to collect their ‘divi’.

“Collecting the dividend was exciting. In Littleborough you went up the spiral staircase to the office in the Hare Hill dome, the staff were always kind. My mother always collected her dividend before Christmas and before wakes week for the holidays”



Littleborough Central Store, Hare Hill Road

4 Mill, Hare Hill Road

Continuing along Hare Hill Road you will see a water tower together with the remains of a substantial mill on the right. This mill was built in 1860 when the Littleborough Manufacturing Company was set up. The mill produced flannel, cricket whites and blankets. Many people can testify to the quality of the blankets.



Hare Hill Road Mill

“We were married in the Co-op Hall, it was a war time event, we saved rations to buy fruit for a cake and a friend who worked at the Mill gave us two blankets as wedding presents. They wore so well! The blankets lasted until they were replaced by duvets”

The Trail

The Littleborough Co-operative Society of Industry started just six years after the Rochdale Pioneers began their Co-op in Toad Lane. Thirty one men met together in a cottage on Church Street. They were all fullers who took part in the cleansing process of wool at Sladen Mill in Littleborough. As ordinary working people, the men had very few resources. However with £98, about £3 each, they pooled their funds and bought staple food stuff – flour, candles, tea and sugar. For the first six years these were sold in the evening after the day shift finished, from James Hill’s front room. From these humble beginnings the Society was able to rent and then buy premises on Industry Street and Church Street. Soon the Co-op dominated the main shopping street, Hare Hill Road with different departments for boots and shoes, men’s outfitters, milliners, grocers, cafe and bakery. Residents at that time often remarked that they never needed to leave Littleborough because they could purchase everything in the village. In addition to seven branches, the Littleborough Society had a painting and decorating department, coal delivery service, and a Dance Hall. They also built rows of small terraced houses, one of which is named Pioneer Street, off Barehill Street. The Littleborough Society was extremely successful and continued until it merged with the Rochdale Pioneers in 1968.



Littleborough Industrial Co-operative Society Heritage Trail



Hare Hill Road shops, Littleborough

5 Caldermoor Branch, Hare Hill Road

Continuing up Hare Hill Road to the crossroads you will see a small flower bed and a wooden bench on the left. This is the site of one of the largest branch stores of the Littleborough Co-op. It opened in 1868 at a cost of £1500. The junction was much narrower when the store was built, it would have protruded far into the present-day roadway. In 1870, the quarterly Co-op meeting was held here, declaring a two shilling in the pound dividend. In addition to groceries, the Caldermoor store provided provender for farmers, a newsroom and stabling for horses.

“I remember as a child helping to get the horses ready for a parade. They were so large that I could walk under them. I can still remember the smell of leather and hay”

In 1904 a fire started in the cloggers, adjoining the store and the building burnt down.



Caldermoor Branch, Hare Hill Road

6 Drinking Fountain, Hare Hill Park

Returning back down Hare Hill Road, turn left into a driveway signed “Hare Hill Park and Library”. Follow the driveway towards Hare Hill House. Take the path to the right towards the band stand. You will then see a large stone Drinking Fountain which has inscriptions on all sides. The fountain was funded by Littleborough Co-op in 1902. Originally lead cups were attached to the fountain by chains; these were removed later to avoid toxicity.



Hare Hill Park Drinking Fountain

Exit the park and turn right into Sale Street. Follow the road which will lead you back into Hare Hill Road. At this junction turn immediately left into Barehill Road.

7 Co-op Dance Hall, Barehill Street

Immediately to the rear of what were the main Co-op stores was the Co-op Dance Hall. This building can be seen on the right of the street. Little is left of the Dance Hall’s former grandeur however the distinctive upper floor windows may still be seen. Opened in 1906, the hall provided a popular function room which could seat 400 people.

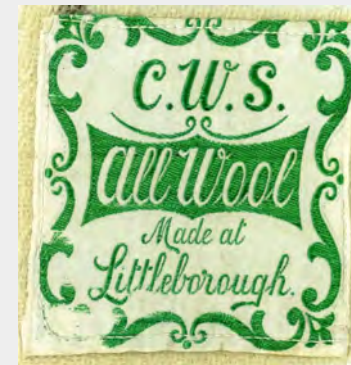
“There were weekly dances every Saturday in the dance hall, all the young people attended. I met my future husband there and married in 1950 and had the reception in the upstairs Dance Hall. My husband and father had their wedding suits made in the Co-op tailoring department”.

8 Co-op houses, Barehill Street

Walking further along Barehill Street, on the right you can see five short rows of houses built at right angles to the road. The first row is named Leah Street – Mr Leah was a founder member and manager of Littleborough Co-op. Further along is Pioneer Street. Other names were associated with the Newall family on whose land the houses were built. These 48 stone terraced houses were commissioned in 1868 by the Littleborough Co-op.

By retracing your route back along Barehill Street into Hare Hill Road it is possible to return directly to the town Square. Alternatively you can extend the route by visiting the sites of more branch stores. This can be done on foot or by car.

Littleborough Industrial Co-operative Society Heritage Trail



9 Durn Branch, 59 Halifax Road
From the Square turn right, through the traffic lights, under the rail bridge onto Halifax Road. After a short distance, passing over the canal you will see 59 Halifax Road on the left hand side. The Durn Branch was built in 1905; the shop windows and original date stone can be seen. To the side of the building is the 'drawing-in' hatch. Carts were positioned along the canal side and goods were hauled up by a pulley. Return back along Halifax Road to the traffic lights and turn right onto Todmorden Road. Proceed onto number 193.



Durn Branch Co-op, Halifax Road



Interior of Durn Branch, Halifax Road

11 Rock Nook Branch, Rock Nook
This branch Store was rented by the Co-op and not purpose built. It was a busy general store. At the time when the Fothergill and Harvey Mills employed many people there was a high demand for groceries in this area.

12 Summit, 76-78 Todmorden Road
Sited in a small converted terraced cottage, this small branch served this once populous community. "I hated being sent to work at Summit, at the back of the shop there were often cockroaches and vermin."

13 Lighthouses Store, Calderbrook Road
Going back along Todmorden Road, take the right turn up Barnes Meadows. At the top turn right for a short distance until you reach stone cottages called Lighthouses. These are now domestic houses. Outside the original store which opened in 1888, is a small post box set into the wall. You can also see a sign advertising 'Ices'. Lighthouse was popular with ramblers who bought drinks, cakes and chocolate. Typical of many small stores, the shop occupied the front room of the cottage. "Often you had to shout out because they (assistants) were all in the back having tea".

14 Featherstall Branch, Featherstall Road
Turn around and travel back along Calderbrook Road, through the junction with Hare Hill Road, past the site of the Caldermoor Branch along Whitelees Road. At the junction with Featherstall Road you will see ST Convenience Store. This was the site of the Featherstall branch, opened in 1872. The store was on the boundary of the Littleborough Society. A shop assistant remembers decorating the window of the Featherstall store for a competition. "I wrote 'If for a cup of tea you pine; just step inside say 99'". To return to Littleborough Square, turn left into Church Street.

10 Centre Vale Branch, 193 Todmorden Road

This building is currently used as a studio by the artist Walter Kershaw. It retains many original features, including decorated glass windows. The branch was established in 1910. Continue along Todmorden Road past the junction with Barnes Meadows to a stone building, now a residential house, on the right hand side - 2 Rock Nook, Marview Cottage.



Centre Vale Branch, Todmorden Road

1. 84 Church Street
2. Co-op shops, Church Street
3. Co-op stores, Hare Hill Road
4. Mill, Hare Hill Road
5. Caldermoor Branch, Hare Hill Road
6. Drinking Fountain, Hare Hill Park
7. Co-op Dance Hall, Barehill Street
8. Co-op houses, Barehill Street
9. Durn Branch, 59 Halifax Road
10. Centre Vale Branch, 193 Todmorden Road
11. Rock Nook Branch, Rock Nook
12. Summit, 76-78 Todmorden Road
13. Lighthouses Store, Calderbrook Road
14. Featherstall Branch, Featherstall Road



This document was created by The Co-operatives History Group (Rochdale), in collaboration with Rochdale Council, Link4Life and Rochdale Pioneers Museum.
 ■ Visit the web page and download the leaflets at: www.rochdalepioneersmuseum.coop/cooperheritagetrails.
 ■ For more information, contact the Visitors Information Centre at Touchstones Rochdale 01706 924928 - vic@link4life.org
 ■ Explore the Five Ways to Wellbeing at: <http://fiveways.rochdale.gov.uk>