

Heaton Mersey Village Conservation Group



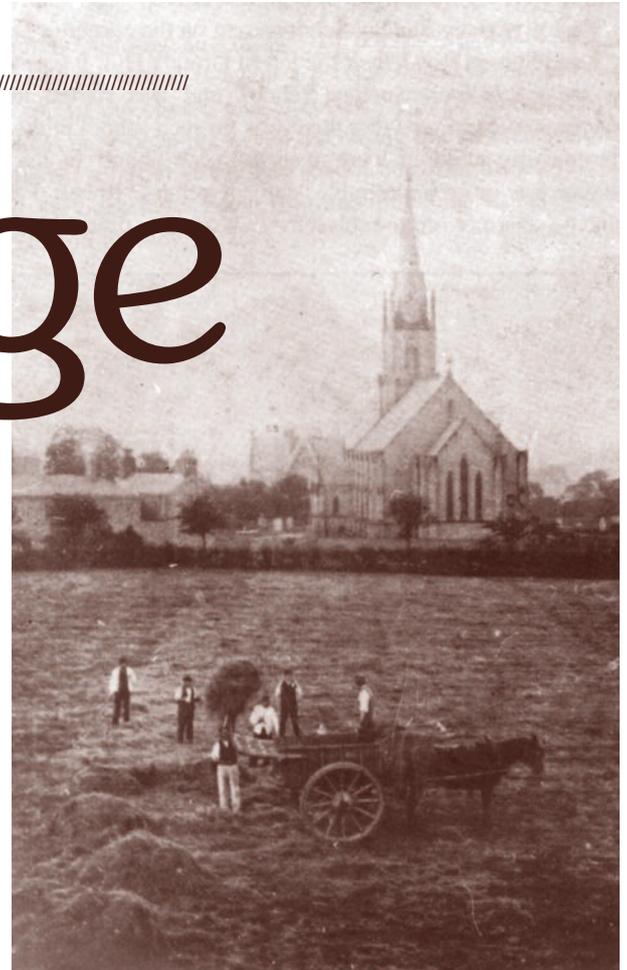
# Heritage Walk

A family oriented heritage walk, taking in the key historical sights of Heaton Mersey including St John's, Thorniley Grave and the River Mersey.

*Heaton Mersey Village*  
conservation group



STOCKPORT  
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL



## Heaton Mersey

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There has been some kind of settlement along the Heaton Mersey ridge since Anglo-Saxon times and probably earlier. Rising to over 35 metres above the river valley and sloping steeply down to the south and west, Heaton Mersey was originally a small area of moor, woodland and heath and was rather poor agricultural land.

Heaton Mersey was the western part of what was known as Heaton Norris and was in Lancashire until 1913. Heaton or 'Heton', meaning a farm or enclosure on a heath or high land illustrates the Anglo-Saxon connection with the area. 'Norris' relates to William le Norreys who was granted the area in the 12th century. Mersey comes of course from the river which flows through the valley. Germanic in origin, the meaning is 'boundary river' and this was the boundary between the kingdoms of Mercia and Northumbria long before it became the boundary between the counties of Lancashire and Cheshire.

Until the Industrial Revolution Heaton Mersey consisted of hamlets at Grundy Hill, and Parrs Fold.

Heaton Mersey was changed almost beyond recognition by the Industrial Revolution. Samuel Oldknow, a muslin manufacturer, established a finishing works at Heaton Mersey in 1784. The works, originally for bleaching, and later for printing and dyeing, were built by the River Mersey where the river was diverted to power a waterwheel by

constructing a weir and mill race. Parrs Fold had a 'Truck Shop' where the bleach workers were obliged to buy their necessary provisions from the bleach work's owner with the 'tokens' with which he paid them for their work. Houses were needed for the bleach workers and were built in Vale Close and Park Row from the early 1800s.

The Thornileys, a yeoman family farming at Grundy Hill, illustrate well the changes that took place in Heaton Mersey during the industrial revolution. They maximised the potential of their relatively poor agricultural land by developing housing for the burgeoning population and setting up a brick and pottery works, much needed for the new housing. This area of clay pits is now Heaton Mersey Common. On their land bordering Didsbury Road they also built the Griffin Inn in the early 1830s to cater for the growing immigrant population.



Didsbury Road & Heaton Mersey shops in the early 1930s.



St James Church, Didsbury served the spiritual needs of Heaton Mersey until the mid 1800s when work started on St John's Church in Heaton Mersey. There were also active non-conformist congregations of Methodists and Congregationalists.

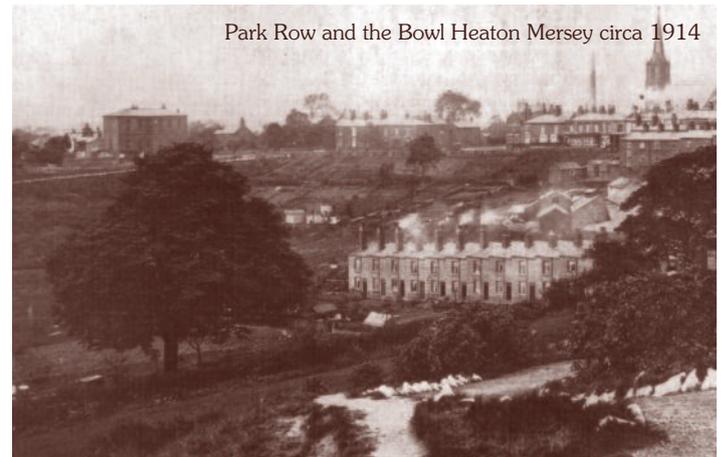
Heaton Mersey was by now no longer purely a rural, agricultural area but part of an emerging industrial community and the coming of the railway through Heaton Mersey in the 1880s encouraged even more housing and shops for the prosperous people who could now travel outside the area. Farms remained in the area through into the mid 20th century and these were certainly needed to feed this increasing population.

Since the brickworks and the bleachworks were closed, Heaton Mersey has seen a further revolution in that the greenspace has to some extent returned to its pre-industrial times. The diverted River Mersey flows again along its original route and is much cleaner and there has also been a return of abundant wild life which can now be enjoyed along the Mersey Vale Nature Park.

The community in Heaton Mersey has changed considerably in the past 200 years. We are fortunate that the diverse nature of residents coupled with the conservation of the Bowl, Heaton Mersey Park, the Common and the many historical buildings have together helped to make Heaton Mersey the vibrant and wonderful place that it is to live.



Heaton Mersey Station in 1909.



Park Row and the Bowl Heaton Mersey circa 1914





## 01 CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

The Congregational Church was built in 1840 and stood on the corner of Didsbury Road and Heaton Mersey Road. The old Sunday School building is now used as the Church. In the original graveyard was the family vault for Sir James Watts' family.



## 02 ST JOHN'S CHURCH

The Church and the surrounding School (now Stella Maris), Rectory and School House were built between 1850 and 1860. The 125 foot spire on the tower of the Church has been removed. In the graveyard is the grave of James Prince Lee, the first Bishop of Manchester.



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## 03 WAR MEMORIAL

The War Memorial was unveiled on 13th September 1921 and is a memorial to those from Heaton Mersey who died in World War 1 and 2.



## 04 THE GRIFFIN HOTEL

The Griffin Hotel was built in the early 1830s by John, great grandson of Isaac and Hannah Thorniley. The pub probably was built using bricks made in their own brickworks. John's brother Richard and then Richard's son Thomas became the licensees. Thomas died in 1899 and in 1921 his widow sold the Griffin to Joseph Holts Brewery. Continuing along Harwood Road, which used to be called Pottery Lane, brings you to Heaton Mersey Common which was the brick and pottery works.

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05

## GRAVE OF ISAAC & HANNAH THORNILEY

The inscription reads: Sacred to the memory of Isaac Thorniley late of Heaton Norris Yeoman who departed this life June 8th 1804 in the 86th Year of his age and whose body was here interred agreeably to his own request. Also Hannah his wife who departed this life October 21 1792 in the 76th year of her age. Isaac and Hannah were married on 2 July 1738 at Manchester Cathedral. Hannah, daughter of Joseph and Mary Torkinton was baptised at Gee Cross Unitarian Church, Hyde on 11 December 1716. There is also an oval shape on the grave inscribed ITH and dated 1760. It is likely that their son or grandson, both stonemasons, inscribed the stones. The grave was in the garden of Grundy Hill House, referred to locally as Foxglove House. Isaac and Hannah's great great grandson Thomas was living here at his death in 1899.



06

## THE POLICE STATION

The Police Station was built with accommodation for 2 Officers and their families with cells to the rear. Prior to 1870 there was a lock-up in this area with cells in the cellars.

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## 07 STATION ROAD

Station Road replaces the approach road to Heaton Mersey Station which was built in the 1880s. There was a gate across the Didsbury Road end of the station approach. The Sunday School building, part of the Sunday School Movement was on the corner, on the right of Station Road, now a car park



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## 08 THE BOWL

The Bowl was used for the early bleaching process whereby the cloth was laid out in the fields for several months for the sun and the rain to finish the job which started with boiling the cloth first with lime or caustic soda.



[Click here to view map](#)





09

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## MERSEY VALE NATURE PARK

The area which is now the Mersey Vale Nature Park was previously where the lower bleachworks was built in 1785 by Samuel Oldknow. It was in use up until 1992. It was originally used for finishing processes – bleaching and printing. This site is now the Mersey Vale Nature Park and connects up to the Trans Pennine Way. There is a Park Ranger who arranges a variety of events in the Nature Park. Walking along the river towards Stockport will bring you to an information point overlooking the original weir, with details of the history on the bleachworks.



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## HEATON MERSEY PARK

Heaton Mersey Park was created in 1897 on what was previously known as the Maypole Field. Heaton Mersey Village Conservation Group hold their annual Harvest Farmers Market and Family Fun Day in the Park on the 3rd Sunday of each September as well as other events throughout the year. HMVCG, together with Stockport Council, maintain the park.



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## 11 VALE CLOSE LEADING TO PARK ROW/PLACE

Vale Close and Park Row were built to house the workers at the bleachworks. The three storey houses on Vale Close were originally for 2 families and all houses were built from the early to mid 1800s.



## 12 2&4 VALE CLOSE

Nos. 2 and 4 Vale Close are the oldest buildings in the area dating possibly from the 16th century. Part of these cottages was removed in the Didsbury Road widening scheme. They are Cheshire style, timber framed and brick panelled with the upper part of the brick gable to the road of herringbone framing. The white cottages, on the opposite side at the top end of Vale Close are thought to date from the 1600/1700s.



**[Click here to view map](#)**



# 13

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## THE CROWN INN

The Crown Inn was probably erected in the 1700s although there may have been a coaching inn on this site from an earlier date. The area around The Crown was known as Parrs Fold and the hamlet consisted of a few cottages, stabling and a baking oven. The Inn changed little until into the 20th Century.



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Heaton Mersey Village Conservation Group



# Heritage Walk

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## HEATON MERSEY VILLAGE CONSERVATION GROUP HMVCG

More information about the history of Heaton Mersey is available from:

### **Stockport Heritage Library Service, Central Library**

Wellington Road South, Stockport SK1 3RS  
Tel: 0161 474 4530  
Email: localheritagelibrary@stockport.gov.uk  
Also see: www.stockport1914-1918.co.uk

### **Lancashire Records Office**

Bow Lane, Preston, Lancashire PR1 2RE  
Tel: 01772 533039  
Email: record.office@ed.lancsc.gov.uk

### **Manchester Archives and Studies Centre**

City Library, Elliot House, 151 Deansgate, Manchester M3 2HN  
Tel: 0161 234 1979  
Email: archiveslocalstudies@manchester.gov.uk (includes Spinning the Web – the story of the cotton industry)

### **Greater Manchester County Record Office**

56 Marshall Street, New Cross, Manchester M4 5FU  
Tel: 0161 832 5284  
Email: archiveslocalstudies@manchester.gov.uk

### **Manchester Centre for Regional History**

Manchester Metropolitan University  
Room 103, Geoffrey Manton Building,  
Rosamund Street West, Manchester M15 6LL  
Tel: 0161 247 6491

### **Mersey Vale Nature Park**

Battersea Road, Heaton Mersey,  
Stockport SK4 3EA  
Tel: 0161 217 6111

The Nature Park can be accessed from Battersea Road, Heaton Mersey

### **Heaton Mersey Village Conservation Group**

62 Vale Close, Heaton Mersey, Stockport SK4 3DS  
Tel: 0161 442 8465  
Email: info@hmvcg.org.uk  
www.hmvcg.org.uk

Heaton Mersey Park can be accessed from Richmond Road, off Didsbury Road

The Bowl can be accessed from Station Road or Vale Close. There is also a path from Didsbury Road

Heaton Mersey Common can be accessed from Harwood Road, near the Griffin Inn, Didsbury Road

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