

Little Hulton

by

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Walkden and Little Hulton are situated on a ridge approximately 300 feet above sea level and form the northern lands of the former Urban District of Worsley which, since 1974 has been part of the Metropolitan district of Salford. The ridge on which the area stands is composed of the rocks laid down in the Carboniferous period (345 - 280 million years ago); towards the end of this period there was much faulting and separation of the coalfields. Also, around this time came the deposition of sandstones and shale rock stratas.

Much of the history of the areas is connected to the Hultons, the Bridgewater and the Ellesmere families and the coal-mining industry although there is evidence of coal-mining dating back to Roman times. The main road, Manchester Road, (A6) which passes through Walkden and Little Hulton, follows the route of the minor Roman road which ran a little to the north of the Roman road linking Castlefield, in Manchester with Wigan.

Finds of Roman artefacts and coins have been made on both of the Roman roads. On the Wigan Road a hoard of coins dated between 251 and 275 A.D. was found in two earthenware pots in a stone quarry in Boothstown in 1947.

In 1930 a Roman pot was dug up in the Vicarage of St Paul's Peel Church. That building is now Brierley House Community Centre opposite the Police Station. Earlier still in 1888, when the main sewers being laid in Little Hulton extensive tunnelling was carried out often to depths in excess of 25 feet (8 metres) which resulted in the finding of various objects from the Roman period in the form of horseshoes, coins etc. The English are believed responsible for the name of Hilton or Hulton – meaning Hill town.

The 1848 OS map shows Stanney Street as being that sector of Manchester Road outside the Stocks Hotel. This street name derives from Latin for the words meaning 'paved road'. As recently as 1910 the OS map of the A6 Roman road between the current Tesco's car park and the Stocks Hotel is just listed as 'ROMAN ROAD' –it is current called High Street.

The Manor of Hulton was held by the de Barton family. By 1212 the manor lands seem to have reverted to Edith the Barton and her husband Gilbert de Notton. Land passed through the de Worsley and de Hulton families. In June 1311 there were agreements reached between the two families which resulted in the re aligning of some of the boundaries in the area. The Hulton family lineage can be traced back to some 450 years.

There are three in fact three Hultons – Little, Over and Middle on the parish of Deane.

In 1871 the details are as follows;

LITTLE	1707 acres	4805 residents	Lord Kenyon of Peel Hall was Lord of the Manor
MIDDLE	1517 acres	911 residents	Earl of Ellesmere was Lord of the Manor and chief landowner
OVER	1316 acres	574 residents	The area was very much connected with the Hulton family

Strangely Little Hulton was the largest of the Hultons.

Coal has played a major part in the whole of the area, even in Roman times. Originally only shallow mines were needed since the product was only required to meet local demand. Bell pits and drift mines locally known as day-eyes were used to reach to coal in the early 17th century. Records show that in 1775 to 1800 the roles of miners' cottages e.g. Half Crown Row, Barracks and others in the area now occupied by Tesco's car park. From the 18th century to the 19th century the industry developed. There was a greater demand for coal, hence there were deeper mines which came with associated problems such as flooding and a need for better ventilation. There was also the problem of excessive waste from the mines as well as transporting the product beyond locality.

I don't want to go into too much detail about the coal industry as it is well documented elsewhere but one point worth mentioning is that in the middle of the 19th century there were 150 mines in Worsley and Walkden, a further 130 in Little Hulton making a total of 280 mines in the area which were either in use or derelict. Also, at the time the shallower mines were running out and the deeper mines were not linked to the underground canal system. Still, since 1,300 miners were employed underground with a similar number of workers on the surface and the 1851 population of Little Hulton was only 3,184, Worsley, (which included Boothstown and Swinton in the figure) had just over 12,000. It can be seen that a sizeable percentage of Little Hultoners were employed in the coal industry.

As already mentioned the need to move coal further afield had to be met and the new railway companies came to the rescue. There had been opposition from the Turnpike Trusts and the coaching companies as well as those connected with the Bridgewater Canal who saw it as a potential threat. However, and, despite difficulties the Lancashire and North Western Railway line reached Worsley in 1861. That same year John Gibson the owner of Smithfield colliery in Little Hulton, pressed for a railway line linking Worsley with Little Hulton and onward to Bolton. He was aided by the petitions of Matthew Bennett (Streetgate Colliery), Francis Charlton (Bank House Colliery), Wharton colliery and others. By April 1871 a single track had reached Buckley Lane/Cleggs Lane.

By 1875 line had reached Great Moor Street, Bolton, for passengers and freight.

Two years later in February 1877 eighteen seventy-seven train was put under arrest at Bolton. Apparently the Lancashire and Northwest railway company has failed to pay their poor rate to Little Hulton and Great Lever. At Little Hulton Station three solicitors and two bailiffs boarded the train. It was held under threat of sale unless the railway company unless the rate was paid. The action worked and £114.14s 6d was paid by the railway company.

The railway company also owned the Manchester-Eccles-Wigan line with the station at Ellenbrook. (The track bed is now called the Tyldesley Loopline which continues as the Leigh Guided Busway from Ellenbrook through Tyldesley to Leigh)

The third railway line at the district is in Manchester-Wigan-Southport line of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway. Only this line remains today. It had the station known as Walkden High-Level as opposed to Walkden Low-Level (formally known as The Stocks Railway Station) which was on the Worsley through Little Hulton to Bolton line. Nowadays the High Level Station is just called Walkden. Besides the passenger lines there was the development of a railway system that connected collieries as far away as Astley Green to collieries operated by Bridgewater Trustees who had taken over most of the collieries in the Walkden and Little Hulton area by the end of the 19th century. On the 1910 on survey map there were over 15 miles of railway track in the Little Hulton district comprising of 5 ½ miles a passenger track

and 9.9 miles of goods only track. Now there are only 2.1 miles on the Manchester Victoria to Wigan line, the former Lancashire and Yorkshire line.

The Post Office directory 1858 shows the occupations in the Little Hulton district and nearly all can be said to be dependent to some extent on the prosperity given to the area by the coal industry. Predominant occupations were farming and beer retailing. There are also references to shopkeepers, blacksmith and wheelwrights, two surgeons and a plumber. Middle and Over Hulton each had a dozen or so farmers listed and practically no other occupations.

With industrialisation became the need for more housing and the population grew from 3,029 in 1861 to 4,805 in 1871 – an increase of 41.7% % whereas in England and Wales the growth of the same decade was 13.2% . Houses were being built along A6 especially on the north side of rows of terraced houses south facing aspect. If aone walks from Tesco's in Walkden to Cleggs Lane there are over a dozen terraces with a date signs on display but the oldest one is on the south side of the road 'Albert Square 1867' next to the Methodist chapel. Date signs abound in Little Hulton on Victorian properties – a splendid examples is in Cleggs Lane where the sign reads "Mount Pleasant 1st May 1856" – a very rare example of an actual day on the sign.

The A6- Manchester Road West and East was long enough to accommodate practically all the housing although it was a need for some developments in streets of right angles to the main road e.g. Bridgewater Street, Pemberton Street and Corrie Street. By 1873 little home was growing rapidly – it are three schools, National, Presbyterians and Wesleyan. The number of commercial residents in the last 15 years increased from 70 to 117, a 70% increase. Occupations of other residents now included linen drapers, cotton spinners, painters and plasterers, a tailor, tinsplate workers, a fishmonger and a clogger. The cooperative Society was also established in 1873. Also associated with the rapid increase in the population is the development of churches and schools but a more detailed look about this later.

Little local board was constituted on 25 June 1872 – prior to this the Overseers of the Poor, the turnpike trust, the Vestry and other similar bodies controlled the area. The Local Board was followed by the Urban District Council. The U.D.C. in the early part of the 20th century was the Highway Authority, and also the Gas Authority for a large part of the area– the gas was provided by Brackley Coke Works adjacent to Brackley Colliery.

Water was supplied to the area by Bolton Waterworks whilst water from the Lake District flowed through the Thirlmere Aqueduct through the area to supply Manchester Corporation. This pipeline can be seen as it crosses the linear walkway as it crosses Cleggs Lane. Large square stone buildings housing valves for the Aqueduct can still be seen off Bridgewater Street and Mather Fold Lane off Newearth Road.

In 1925 Little Hulton had 7 cotton mills that had both spinning and weaving capabilities, spinning being the larger industry. At the same ime established industries included:-

Edward Bennis – Mechanical Stokers,

Batty's – Areated waters, cordials, etc.

L.H. Industrial Co-op Society, with 1206 members out of 7911 residents

James Roscoe & Sons, Peel Hall Collieries, dating from 1850 with 4 collieries

Joseph Eastham, "Leading Grocer of the District"

By 1925 the Little Hulton Town Guide urges residents to shop at home rather than go to the large towns, making the point that is better to be a valued customer at the corner shop than to be an anonymous customer in the large stores. The Guide also stated that the Council owned 90 acres of land and about 50 houses, 43 erected under the assisted scheme of 1919. The Council also owned 3 sewage works. In 1933, Little Hulton U.D.C merged with Worsley to form Worsley U.D.C. (Worsley U.D.C. became part of the City of Salford in 1974)

The census figures before and after the merger as follows:-

	Worsley UDC	Little Hulton UDC	Combined number
1901	12,462	7,294	19,756
1911	13,933	8,113	22,046
1921	14,910	7,911	22,821
1931	14,247	7,874	22,121
1941	No census taken		
1951			27,363
1961			40,281
1971			49,651
1973	Estimated		50,010

The reason for the increase in post-war years is the Salford Overspill Scheme, whereby here, in Little Hulton, was an area which acres of open space and the Council was able to come to an agreement with Salford City Council, an authority in desperate need for land for house building. The first overspill house was occupied in 1948. By the end of March 1959, 2,617 dwellings had been provided for some 9,683 persons. The 'exporting authority' - Salford, paid £8 per year for 10 years for each dwelling provided. Increasing house densities meant that the land provided for 4,150 dwellings instead of the 3,00 as planned originally. There was a further 350 dwellings as part of Worsley's own developments and thus 4,500 in all.

A Manchester University Survey was conducted in the summer of 1959 into overspill programmes. Points mentioned were that contacts with relatives were reduced, time spent and cost of getting to work had increased and very large increases in rent were experienced. (On average some 300%). Visiting relatives now became an outing. Furthermore, 10% had returned to Salford and a further 17% wished to return and many workers were spending 90 minutes and 2/6d travelling to and from work, daily. Today there are approximately 6,000 overspill houses. The main overspill-building programme ceased in 1964 with a total occupancy of 20,000 people.

Four wards form Little Hulton and the area, population and density are shown as follows:-

	Area (ha.)	Population			Density pop/ha.
		1961	1971	change	
Armitage	194	2,445	5,890	+140%	30.4
Kenyon	121	4,972	4,526	-9%	37.4
Mount Skip	85	7,032	6,315	-10%	74.3
Peel	149	3,699	6,163	+66%	41.4

The whole of Worsley UDC	2,923	40,281	49,651	+23%	17.0
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It seems ironic that Little Hulton railway station should close in 1954 when the overspill development was in full swing because here was a station having a direct link with Salford in that is on the same line as Cross Lane Station (closed a few years later) which had excellent bus links with Trafford Park and also Manchester Exchange Station.

The early development of the Mount Skip estate actually saw the naming of roads after places in Salford, helping newcomers to keep links with their former city these road are:-

Bexley Drive

Regent Avenue

Hope Avenue

Seedley Avenue

Ordsall Avenue

Weaste Avenue

Windsor Avenue

Kersal Avenue

Irwell Avenue

Langworthy Avenue

Adelphi Drive and Grove

Buile Hill Avenue and Grove

Broughton Avenue

Claremont Drive

Ladywell Avenue and Grove

Trafford Drive

Crescent Drive

All that seems to be missing on Pendleton and Greengate. It is worth noting here that there are very few actual 'streets' in Little Hulton, fewer than 20 of them. Private housing is now dominating the scene with developments such as Windale and Ridyard Street, probably the second generation of people from the overspill schemes wanting their own housing but at the same time remaining in the area.

From Now to take a closer look at three of the churches in the area. Firstly Wharton church which is no longer standing, then St Paul's Church at Peel and finally, St Edmunds on Bridgewater Street.

During part of the 17th-century, Presbyterianism was dominant in Lancashire but things changed in 1660 following the arrival on the throne of Charles the second all ball ministers were expelled many continued to preach to their old congregations. One such minister was Rev James Ward of Chowbent who found a true friend and benefactor in Robert Mort of Wharton Hall who provided him with the home and the room set aside for their services. Wharton Hall had been built about 1629 but parts were believed to be earlier still. It had been built by a member of the Wharton family. Robert Mort went to live there about 1650 and was succeeded by son, Nathan, who was a generous help when Wharton Chapel was built in 1723 even though, 11 years prior he had moved to Atherton. The first Minister at Wharton was Rev Peter Valentine who was still there till his death in 1754. He is buried there with his wife and four children. Other ministers followed including one who had to resign 'on account of his intemperate habits'. There was also a Mr Jackson who died in 1837. A letter from his son dated 1861 talked of the area as a desolate place, a few people had some religion in them, people were nearly all poor weavers and a few farmers.

There was an old school which had the boys downstairs and the girls upstairs and in the floor was a trap door which was 'thrown open' during praise and prayers. In 1866 restoration of the church cost £300 and the following year the graveyard is extended through the purchase of land from the adjoining estate for £81 and five shillings. By 1889 the church was starting to show signs of effects of mining operations and ground subsidence. The colliery proprietors accepted liability and from time to time inserted bolts into the church and carried out sundry repairs. Patching disfigured the church and in 1896 that Bridgewater Trustees paid out £350. Hundred and £20 is spent on urgent repairs to the Church mans and cottages. A decision was taken in which a new church prepare preferred to repairing the present one. The cost of the new church was estimated £2000. Closing service in the old church took place on Sunday. 28 June 1900 the new church opened in the autumn of that same year and in the meantime. The services were taken in the school with its isolated position and the decline in population of churchgoers in new church survived until some 20 years was pulled down and replaced by chapel by Peel Park.

The church may have gone agree graveyard remains and is a rich source of history as evidenced by the gravestones. The northern part has had the gravestones neatly arranged and contained the following details:-

A 17 year old boy drowned in the Mississippi,

A Seaforth Highlander killed in France,

A child dying is only one day,

And a good many of the graves also contain the areas that the families came from example Little, Over and Middle Hulton.

St Paul's Church at Peel is the one with the tall spire just west of the junction of the A6 and Cleggs Lane. A Chapel was built here as long ago as 1759, being a chapel of ease to Deane Parish Church. Education was in the hands of the curate, the Rev Thomas Carey brackets a great scholar) and the school was erected on this site now occupied by the present school playground in 1819 the date stone being incorporated into the present school building. Plans

for a new church were put forward in the 1870s. Negotiations with Lord Ellesmere's Trustees secured a sufficient block of coal to be left under the foundations so as to ensure the safety of the church. The new site was near to the present chapel which ensure the continuity of the services as well as no interruption to the burial-ground. The foundation stone was laid out 4 p.m. on 5 August 1874 and at 11 o'clock on 14 December 1876, Dr Fraser, the Bishop of Manchester, carried out the Church's consecration. The following March saw the old chapel sold by auction to Mr Andrew Clegg £430. This excluded the organ and a lead on the roof, the two items realising a further £60. 10s. It must also be added that when the old chapel was been pulled down it showed the timbers to be in a very poor state as well as the brickwork being badly cracked.

The graveyard surrounding the church is again a good source of local history information with the front and the older parts revealing the following information:-

The former headmaster of Chorley Grammar School lived in New Zealand and died at sea.

Andrew Clegg of Streetgate, shopkeeper, who purchased the old Chapel in 1877.

The brothers John and Robert Hilton who were both ships of Masters who died in their 30s, the former buried in India and the latter, buried at sea.

A servant and housekeeper of 38 years to the Kenyon family.

George Whittle, schoolmaster, of Little Hulton old school from 1803 and for a time in charge of the 1819 school.

The final church I want to refer to in St Edmund's in Bridgewater Street. It was proceed in 1877 as a school-chapel before this the area been served by St Gregory in Farnworth and before that church the Catholics of the area had to travel to Bolton for Mass. In November 1876 a cottage at 99 Bridgewater Street was used twice weekly by a priest from Farnworth who came to give instruction. In 1877 the school-chapel was opened after a piece of land measuring 1,921 sq yds, secured from Bridgewater Trustees. Subsidence was a problem from the beginning and in 1893 a temporary church was built. However, on the night of Friday, 11 March 1896 a fire broke out in the church and despite the attendance of the Farnworth appliance and the one belonging to Bridgewater Estate, the building was completely gutted. I did difficulties well against fault that night and also very little water pressure for the hoses. The Sunday services were transferred to the school and plans were put forward to build a new church. In March 1899 the Bishop of Salford laid the foundation stone and the church was opened on 25 June 1900. The church had started a men's club in 1897 but it did not prosper until the turn-of-the-century when by changing the priest brought about a change of fortune. The idea of laying a Bowling Green was a success; it remained a superb green from most of the century before falling into disuse after the Second World War. It is now the nursery play area.

By virtue of its being the first Catholic Church in the area its parish boundaries are still quite extensive despite two new churches being built on the overspill estates. Joining the church is a social club and the primary school opened in 1955.

Most of the schools in the area date from around the time of the school development in the 30s and 60s. Next to St Edmund's is Bridgewater County Primary School which was opened at 2:30 pm on Saturday, 8 May 1954 by Lancashire County Alderman, Joseph Eastham J.P.- the

same Joseph Eastham as mentioned as 'the leading grocer of the district' in the 1925 Little Hulton Town Guide and the high school on Hilton Lane was named after him. (This school is now known as Harrop Fold School). His shop was opposite the station on the corner of Smithfold Lane.

As for the future of Little Hulton, its biggest claim to fame namely the Cutacre Tip the largest in Europe, is under threat with the prospect of opencast mining getting the go-ahead which would threaten not just Little Hulton but the adjoining parts of the boroughs of Wigan and Bolton. The disused railway lines which were a feature the landscape remain but plans convert them into linear walkways are advanced and hopefully the evidence to the past which I have been able to research will remain and be expanded upon.