

Birkby Trail

About the Birkby Trail

Birkby had only been a small green hamlet until the mid 18th century. During the 19th century it was transformed into a bustling centre of production and a large residential suburb connected by new roads and public transport spearheaded by the Huddersfield Corporation. By the start of the First World War, it had all the amenities of a small town, including many shops, a cinema, four churches, pubs, a public park and several major factories employing hundreds of locals. The growing migration from Europe, South Asia and the Caribbean since the end of the Second World War changed Birkby yet again into the multicultural community we know today.

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Images: Huddersfield Local Studies Library, Kirklees Image Archive, Huddersfield Examiner, Chris Marsden

Information

For more information about Discover Huddersfield or to learn more about the project and how to get involved, please get in touch through the following media:

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Discover Huddersfield offers new ways to experience this amazing Yorkshire town, through guided walks, talks and trails. See Huddersfield at its very best: grand listed buildings and small independent shops; a place for radicals from the Luddites to the Sex Pistols; birthplace of Rugby League; a town rich in creativity, stories, heritage and the odd ghostly encounter.

1 St. John's Church, St. John's Road



This grade II* Anglican Gothic revival church was built by Joseph Kaye between 1851 and 1853 to the designs of architect William Butterfield. It was erected as part of the northward extension of the New Town and paid for by Sir John William Ramsden. Reaching a height of 220 feet, the spire is a landmark which dominates the local skyline.

2 Britannia Works, Wheathouse Road



Opened in 1904 as the headquarters of Hopkinsons, established by Joseph Hopkinson in 1843. The firm became a major employer in town, with over 2,000 employees by the 1960s. Their products, including boiler mountings, valves, soot blowers, steel castings and centrifugal separators, were vital for the development of UK's energy industry. Britannia Works was bought by the Weir Group in 1989 and closed in 2005. Most was redeveloped for housing, including Annie Smith Way, a tribute to the Kirklees councillor who represented the area from 1990 until her death in 2006.

3 Birkby Infant & Nursery School, Blacker Road

The site of the Huddersfield Union Workhouse dating from the mid-1700s. In 1848 it was embroiled in a scandal due to its poor conditions.



From the 1870s it became an isolation hospital for infectious diseases such as smallpox, typhoid and scarlet fever. It was replaced by a new mixed school for 600 children opened in 1911.

4 Birkby Lodge, Birkby Lodge Road

Birkby Lodge (grade II listed), a large house dating from the 1840s, was extended in 1900 by celebrated architect Edgar Wood. Other significant properties in the area where Wood left his footprint are Rose Hill (Grade II*), Azo House and Crendon (Grade II), all nearby on Birkby Hall Road. Take the footpath past the wildlife garden and through Ponyfield Close or go up the road to see Holroyd's almshouses on Birkby Fold.

5 Birkby Hall and Birkby Grange, Birkby Hall Road

Historians have debated whether Birkby Grange was in fact once the Birkby Hall after which the road was named. Early maps and photographs show another old building across the road, perhaps the farmhouse for the Hall, or possibly the Hall itself. Below the site of this old house is number 158, a grade II listed building which was for many years Fletcher's Nursery.

6 Birkby Old Brewery, Birkby Hall Road



Birkby Old Brewery was located in an area with rich springs of water. This is now three private houses. Nearby are St. Cuthbert's Anglican Church on Grimscar Avenue established in a hall in 1913 (the current building consecrated in 1923 and completed in 1956); and the former Birkby Baptist Church on Wheathouse Road which opened in 1910 and is now the Vajrapani Kadampa Buddhist Centre.

7 Co-op, Norman Road



This branch of the Huddersfield Industrial Society, the 'co-op', opened in 1901. In 1910 it had butchery and drapery departments. By 1937 drapery had given way to fish and fruit. Later a yarn merchant used the building. Another co-op, the Hillhouse Perseverance Friendly and Industrial Cooperative Society had at various times five branches in Birkby.

8 The Masjid Omar, Blacker Road



The site of the Palladium Picture Palace, one of Huddersfield's early silent cinemas which opened in 1914. In 1937, an extended two storey structure with cantilever balcony and double seats renamed the Carlton opened on the site. The cinema closed in 1954. It briefly became a bingo hall. Since 1981 it has been used by Sunni Muslims of the Deobandi movement as a mosque and community space including Arabic/ Quran classes and function hall.

9 Masjid Riza & Islamic Centre, Halifax Old Road, King Cliff



Known locally as the Teapot Chapel, probably due to the ornamental urn at the top of the gable. Designed by John Kirk & Sons, it was built as the Hillhouse United Free Methodist Chapel in 1873-4 by a breakaway group from the Brunswick Street Chapel in Huddersfield. The chapel closed in 1962. It was bought by local Sunni Muslims of the Barelvi movement in 1976 and adapted into

a mosque with an Islamic school and several function rooms.

Also explore Beacon Street which hides what is thought to be the remains of a wooden motte and bailey, with the characteristic motte still apparent as a mound between the housing and factory carpark.

10 Bay Hall Mills, Bay Hall Common Road



Stork Brothers spinning mill (est. 1863) is now part of Camira Fabrics Ltd. This was one of three mills which were once in Birkby. The others were Clough House Mills (later Middlemost Mills) and the earlier Close Mill at the junction of Spaines Road and Halifax Old Road.

11 Bay Hall



This small timber-framed house is a rare survival from the 16th century. It is thought its name could come from the single timber 'bay' used in its construction. In the 1560s it was leased to the Brook family by the Byrons who held the manor of Huddersfield, later acquired by the Ramsden family. The name spread to define the area around the Hall, including the large house now two properties across the lane.

12 Ben Shaws, Willow Lane



Founded in 1871 as a manufacturer of 'botanical' non-alcoholic beverages, with its own spring, Ben Shaws became a household name in much of the North of England. The 'pop' was distributed by carts, pulled by shire horses.