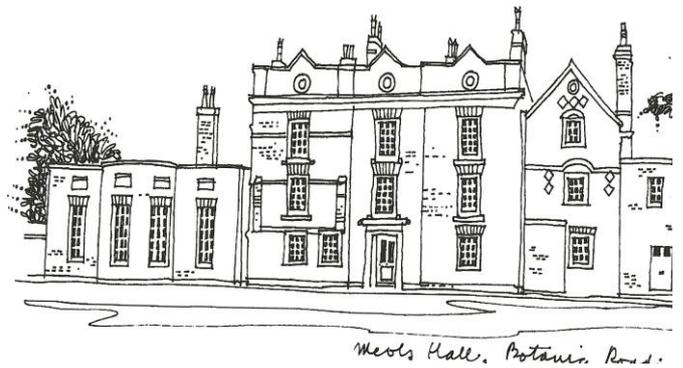


Churchtown and North Meols

Conservation Areas



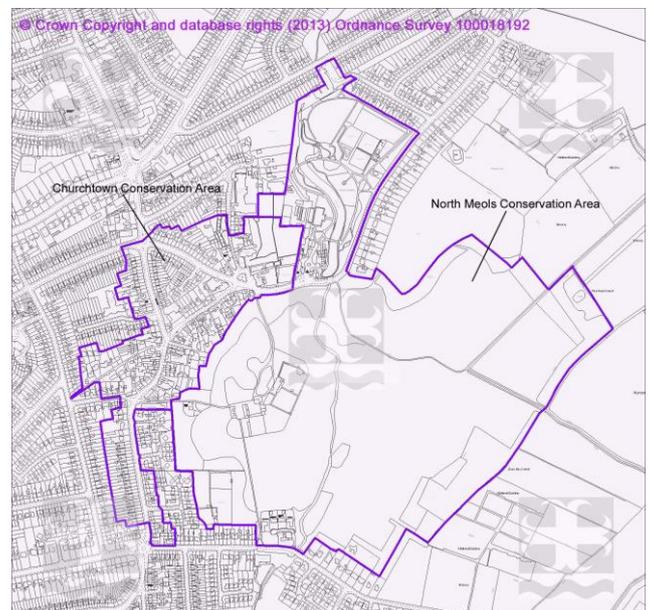
HISTORY

The early history of North Meols is closely connected with the present Parish Church of St Cuthbert and Meols Hall.

Churchtown is claimed to mark one of the twelve resting places of the remains of St Cuthbert, Bishop of Lindisfarne, whose remains were removed in the 9th Century by monks fleeing the Danish invasions. The ancient parish of North Meols, in which Churchtown is situated, is referred to in the Domesday Book as Otegrimele and as being held by five thegns. The name 'Meols' is thought to derive from an early word for sand, the term "meals" or "males" being a Norwegian term for sandbanks, this would seem to indicate the presence of a Viking settlement in the area.

During the 1200s the lands around North Meols were passed to William de Cowdray, whose son Robert built the first manor house in the parish upon or near the site of the present day Meols Hall. The hall was also located close to the sea, which in medieval times came up to Bankfield Lane. In 1903, excavations near the hall gates revealed evidence for a wooden landing stage about 3m below ground level.

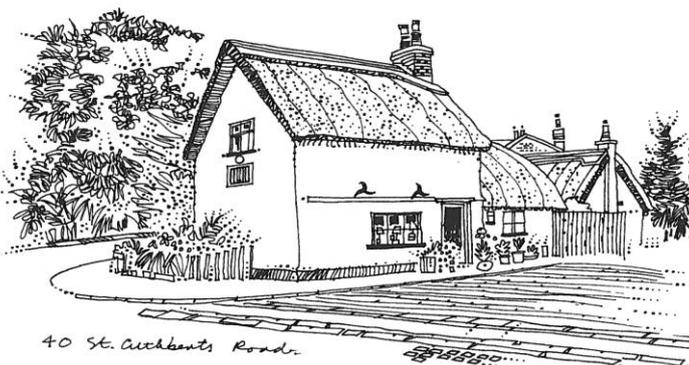
It appears that a church, a modest chapel of clamstaff and daub, existed in the parish from



the 12th century, if not earlier, but by 1522 an inventory indicated a more substantial structure.

Development in North Meols was slow largely because of the topographical restrictions of the region. The area consisted of a narrow strip of arable land and meadows, bounded by the sea to the west and north and by Martin Mere to the east. It was fairly isolated and cut off from communication with the inland districts. Many of the original dwellings clustered around the church, this grouping eventually grew into the village known as Church Town. These dwellings were typically constructed of rough timber, mud and star grass and thatched with rye straw.

Over time the coastline has moved further westwards mainly due to the deposition of



materials by the Rivers Mersey and Ribble. A gradual process of land reclamation started as early as 1250 with the construction of an embankment by Cistercian monks. Bankfield Lane marks the line of this first sea defence. More embankments and sea-cops were built over the years, effectively moving the sea further back. However, it was not until the 17th century with the advent of large scale mossland reclamation and the draining of Martin Mere, at that time a large area of shallow water, that agricultural improvement allowed the settlement to expand. Traces of the early field systems can still be seen, characterised by the various ditch types constructed over the centuries. Traditional occupations for the inhabitants were fishing and farming, in particular root crops. Handloom weaving, especially for silk and cotton grew during the late 18th century. Many of the listed properties in Botanic Road and Churchgate built in the 17th and 18th centuries still exist, several thatched, white-washed cottages and some with cruck-frames.

The Church of St Cuthbert in the centre of the village was re-built in 1730-39, the only trace of medieval structure to remain is the diagonal buttress in a small portion of the south angle to the nave. Further extensions and internal improvements were made in the 1800s and a new nave was built in 1908.

Ownership of Meols Hall has passed through a line of Aughtons, Kitchens and Heskeths. It was rebuilt in 1603 by the lord of the manor, Barnaby Kitchen. The present building has been greatly restored and altered to a predominantly 18th century appearance by the late Sir Roger Fleetwood Hesketh in the early 1960s. It incorporates genuine salvaged material, including doorways and quoins from the demolished wing of Giacomo Leoni's Lathom Hall near Ormskirk. The bricks too are 18th century. The farm buildings have also been expertly restored in the 18th century tradition. For its mix of old and new, Meols Hall has been acclaimed one of the most convincing country houses created since the Second World War. It is a grade II* listed building.

The expansion of neighbouring Southport in the 19th century as a major resort, due to the popularity of sea bathing and improved transport links, resulted in a boundary extension in 1875 that absorbed the area of Churchtown and North Meols. Before 1874 the principal attraction to Churchtown visitors was the "Strawberry Gardens", where in season fresh fruits could be sampled. Located near the

bridge over 'The Pool', the Gardens were later re-landscaped in 1874 when a private company leased about 20 acres of land to create the Pleasure Gardens at Southport.

In 1875 this area of land was re-opened as the 'Botanical Gardens' and run as a commercial venture by the Botanical Gardens Company. The Gardens were laid out by John Shaw of Manchester, with rockeries, fountains and grottoes and 'the Pool' widened to form a serpentine lake. In 1876 a museum, fernery, conservatory and café were constructed and opened to the public. The museum and fernery were designed by Mellor and Sutton of Southport. The fernery was said to be one of the finest in England and described in 1894 as unique with its fairy-like foliage, mirrors, grottoes, waterfalls, fountains and fish pools. After World War 1 patronage of the gardens fell considerably and they closed in 1922.

The Botanic Gardens was purchased by Southport Corporation and re-opened in 1937 by Roger Fleetwood Hesketh as the town's memorial to King George V. The fernery, café and museum are important remnants and the Botanic Gardens so attractively laid out attract many visitors.

The Conservation Areas

Churchtown conservation area was designated in November 1973 and extended in May 2009 to include properties along Mill Lane. It has its focal point around the Church of St Cuthbert, and the Bold Arms Hotel and the Hesketh Arms, both 18th century listed public houses, and the older surviving properties in Botanic Road. Churchtown village has a uniformity of character that is particularly distinctive, epitomised by the small scale domestic dwellings, often white-washed and thatched and the tightly-knit street pattern. The village's appearance is also characterised by interesting detail in street furniture and ground surfaces like street lighting and various cobbled areas.

Expansion of Southport resulted in demolition of many cottages on surrounding roads from the late Victorian era until 1939 to make way for road improvements and new housing estates. The main concentration of the remaining older properties, many constructed with traditional materials, lies within the conservation area.

North Meols conservation area, encompassing Meols Hall and the Botanic Gardens was designated in 1988 and extended in 2000 to

better reflect the formal parkland setting of the Hall. Botanic Gardens is now listed on the English Heritage register of gardens of special historic interest, and apart from being a very attractive and popular park contains landscape features and buildings of historic interest.

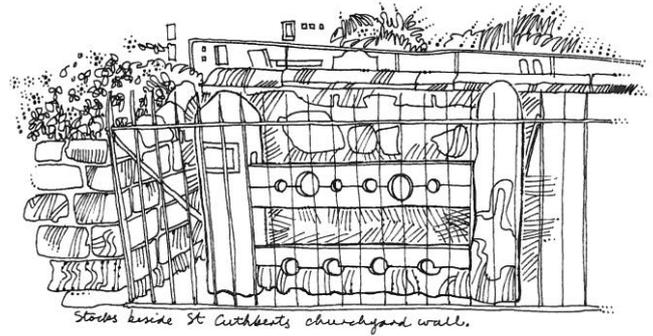
Within the Conservation Areas, it is not the intention to prevent change but rather to ensure that any new development, alterations or extensions are in keeping with its character and that any harm is balanced against wider public benefits.

Additional Planning Powers

Conservation Area status means that the Council can safeguard against some changes. These are special planning controls which relate to specific works which would normally be considered 'permitted development', i.e. works which would not require planning consent. Within the Conservation Area the following additional planning controls apply:-

If a building is a Listed Building additional special controls will also apply.

- Any proposal involving the demolition of any building, wall or other structure within the Conservation Area (with minor exceptions) will require consent.
- Anyone wishing to cut down, top, lop or uproot a tree with a stem diameter of 75mm or greater measured at 1.5m above ground level, must give the Local Planning Authority six weeks written notice of their intention to do so (a "Section 211 notice" under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) subject to specific exemptions. Within this time the Authority may grant consent for the proposed work, or they may consider making a Tree Preservation Order. It is an offence to carry out tree works without permission.
- There are greater restrictions over 'permitted development' rights for the enlargement of dwellinghouses, and on the provision, alteration or improvement of outbuildings within their curtilage.
- Dormer windows will require planning permission, and in some cases, other changes to roofs and chimneys may require planning permission.



- Cladding of any part of external walls in render, pebble dash, stone, artificial stone, timber, plastic or tiles would require planning permission, but is not normally considered appropriate.
- Planning permission is needed for satellite dishes where they are to be located on a chimney, wall or roof slope which faces onto a highway.
- Micro-generation (e.g. wind turbines/solar panels) installations will require planning permission in some cases.
- Some aspects of commercial development and adverts are subject to additional restrictions.

For up to date advice on what needs planning permission go to www.planningportal.gov.uk In determining applications for the development of land and alterations or extensions to buildings within the Churchtown Village and North Meols Conservation Areas the Council will pay special regard to:-

- The overriding restriction on new development within the Green Belt. See Council's website for further details.
- The retention, replacement and restoration of historical details and features of the buildings and their gardens including boundary treatments.
- The design and detail of extensions and alterations to existing buildings which will be expected to be in sympathy with the architectural and historic character of the building as a whole and to the setting of that building.
- The detailed design of any new building (including form, scale and materials) and its integration with its immediate surroundings

and the special architectural and visual qualities of the Conservation Area.

- The retention and preservation of existing trees and the provision of further appropriate landscaping.
- The retention and enhancement of views into and out of the area, vistas within the area and the general character and appearance of the village scene and skyline.

Guidance Notes for planning applications and use of materials:

Pre-Application Advice

You can request advice from the planning department prior to submitting a formal application. In some cases we make a charge for this service. Forms are available on the Council's website.

Planning Applications

A Heritage Statement will be needed to support your planning application; this should include an explanation of what the significance of the property is, and what impact the proposals have on that significance.

Outline applications will not usually be considered.

Demolition

The demolition or redevelopment of any building of individual or group value will not be permitted unless the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that the building cannot be used for any suitable purpose and it is not important enough to merit the costs involved in its preservation. Any consent to demolish would normally be conditional on the building not being demolished before a contract is made to carry out redevelopment. This redevelopment must be of a high standard of design and already have planning permission.

New development on vacant sites

Any new development should be conceived with the architectural character and scale of the area in mind. Early discussions with the Planning Department are recommended. The services of a qualified architect are strongly advised.

Conversion of existing buildings

Where planning permission to convert buildings into new uses is sought particular attention will be paid to the impact on the character of the

building and its external appearance, and the layout of gardens and car parking areas.

Every effort should be made to minimise external alterations, such as new windows (including dormer windows) and doors. Where external changes are required it should be made to a non-prominent elevation. Alterations or extensions should use the same materials as used elsewhere on the building. Again, the services of a qualified architect are strongly recommended.

External alterations to existing buildings including extensions

The following deals with some of the details of alterations and extensions to buildings.

Windows and Dormers

Traditional windows and detailing need to be retained, renovated or if necessary, replaced to match the original design. Additional windows should be restricted to the non-prominent elevations and also match existing designs. Imitation leaded lights, aluminium and UPVC windows should not be used as they completely change the original character of the building.

New dormer windows are not generally accepted on principal elevations. Any new dormer windows should be well-proportioned and kept to non-prominent elevations and use appropriate roofing materials.

Wall Surfaces

Brickwork and stonework should not be painted or rendered. Areas of brickwork or stonework requiring renewal should be repaired or replaced in their original form or pattern. Brick pointing should be compatible with existing construction, which is generally flush finish. Repointing should be carried out with lime mortar rather than cement to prevent softer bricks from deteriorating. Where stonework is to be cleaned, professional advice should be sought as the incorrect choice of treatments can result in damage.

Brick and terracotta features such as keystones, corbels and finials should be retained. Cladding of brickwork in stone, artificial stone, pebble dash, render, timber, plastic or tiles is not usually permitted as this wholly changes the visual appearance and character of the property.

Roofs

Original roofing materials and existing rooflines and views should be retained. Any renewals or repairs should use reclaimed or new materials to match those on the existing roof.

Thatched roofs require regular maintenance. Most thatched roofs in the village are now water reed, however the original covering would have been long straw – historically a locally available material, with a very plain appearance. The use of alien materials detracts somewhat from the local regional tradition.

Care should be taken to retain other traditional roofing materials such as stone slab and Welsh slate. Roof features such as decorated ridge tiles and barge boards on the Victorian properties are also very characterful and should be retained or replaced like for like.

Chimneys

In most cases, chimney stacks and pots form an important part of the design of buildings. If they become unsafe, they should be repaired or rebuilt to the original height and design, taking care to replace chimney pots, even if no longer in use.

Porches

Where new porches and porticoes are proposed they should be appropriately designed with materials that are sympathetic to the age and style of the building. Where porches are not part of the original design of the building, their addition should be avoided.

Satellite Dishes and Aerials

Aerials and satellite dishes should be located as sensitively as possible and should avoid main street elevations. The use of dark grey semi-transparent dishes on the rear or sides of houses is advised as they are the least obtrusive. Advice should be sought from the Planning Department.

Front Doors

Original doors and door surrounds should be retained and repaired wherever possible. Replacements should be to a sympathetic design. Wooden moulded and panelled doors are likely to be the most suitable. “Georgian style” doors with imitation semi-circular fanlights and uPVC should be particularly avoided. Again, advice should be sought from the Planning Department. Care should be taken to retain and repair details around openings, such as architraves, thresholds, transoms and fanlights.

Boundary Walls, Fences, Gates and Gate Posts

Original brick and stone boundary walls, including their stone copings, should be repaired or rebuilt to the original design, using reclaimed or matching materials. Boundary walls and gateposts should not be painted. Gate posts should not be painted. The street scene can be ‘softened’ and enhanced by the planting of boundary hedges, which has the added benefit of improving privacy. Existing gates should be repaired or replaced to the original design.

Openings in boundary walls should be kept to a minimum especially on principal street elevations so that the streetscape is not adversely affected.

Services

Wherever possible original rainwater gutters and downpipes should be replaced in cast iron to the same patterns. If replacements cannot be obtained then cast aluminium of similar colour and profile could be considered. Care should be taken in the siting of burglar alarms, central heating flues and meter boxes so as not to detract from the appearance of principal elevations.

Maintenance

It is strongly advised that owners keep their property in good repair and condition. Regular and thorough maintenance can help avoid major structural repairs that can develop through neglect.

Website & email:

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