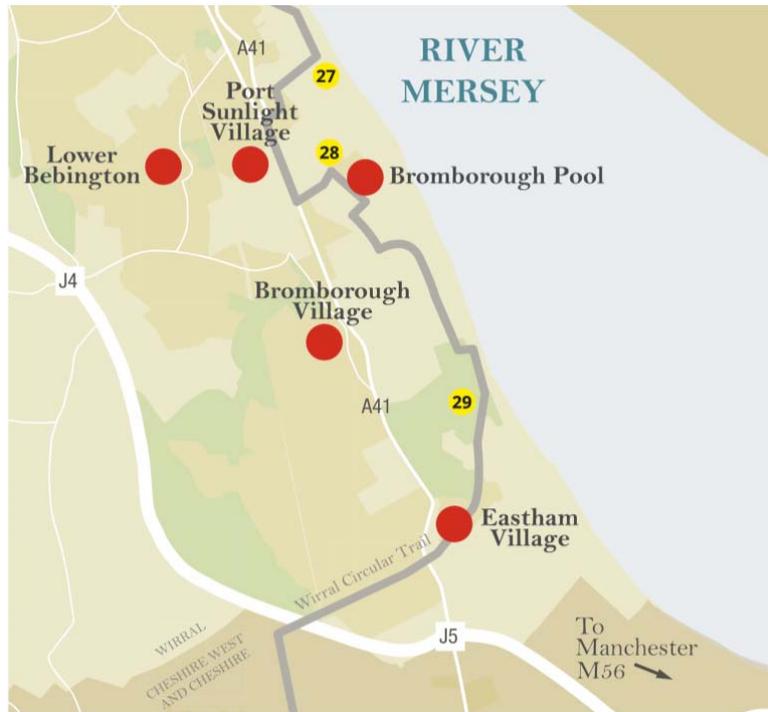


## Wirral Conservation Areas and Heritage Trail South East section



### **Introduction:**

The South-East Quadrant of Wirral is an area of sharp contrasts. To the west much of the land is farmed. To the east an almost continually built up area runs parallel with the Mersey shore. Equally contrasting are the quadrant's Conservation Areas, some ancient in origin and some much more recent and owing their creation, in the nineteenth century, to entrepreneurs and philanthropists.

The traditional settlements of Eastham and Bromborough Village, though engulfed in later development are clustered round ancient churchyards and still retain some of their early buildings. Thornton Hough, also medieval in origin, was remodelled, first by Joseph Hurst and then, and more spectacularly, by William Lever, later Lord Leverhulme, and contains some fine examples of high Victorian and Arts and Crafts architecture.

Employees 'estates, with well-planned working-class housing and a range of public buildings are represented by Bromborough Pool Village and the internationally renowned Port Sunlight. Both reflect the philanthropy of their founders, the Wilson Brothers, owners of Price's Patent Candle Company and Lord Leverhulme. Also with its medieval parish church and churchyard, it owes Mayer Hall, the former Library

and Mayer Park to the gift of the Liverpool goldsmith, Joseph Mayer, whose home, Pennant House, has acted as council offices.

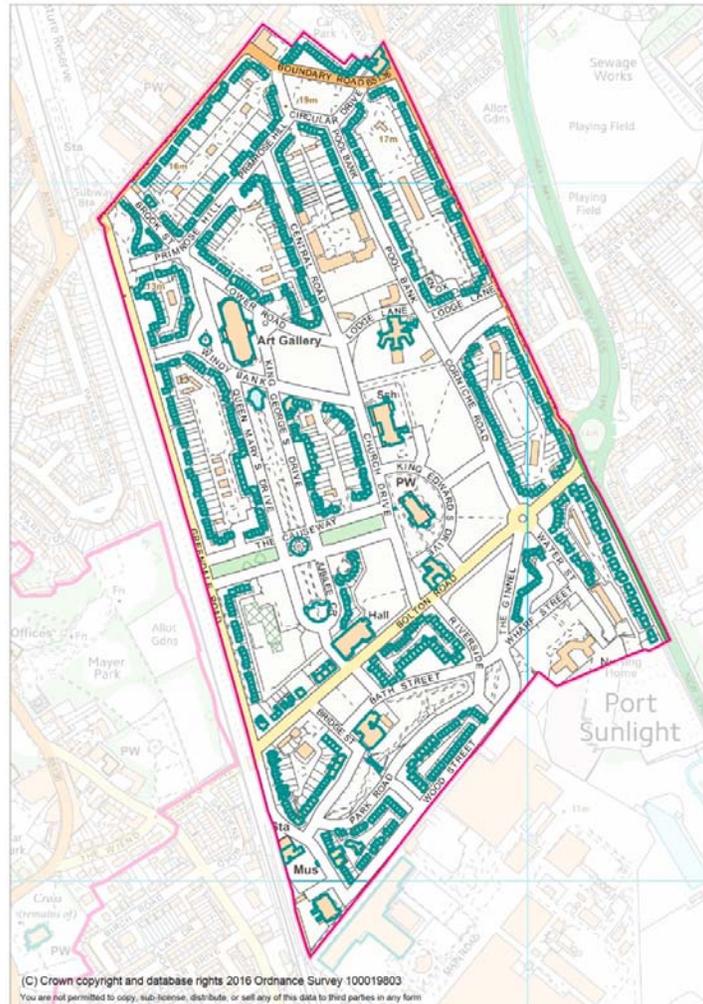
**The trail starts at Port Sunlight Station by initially exploring Port Sunlight:**

**Parking:** Street Parking available nearby.

**Buses:** Regular services through Port Sunlight from various locations.

**Trains:** from Chester and Liverpool stop at Port Sunlight.

### Port sunlight conservation area (1978)



Port Sunlight was founded in 1888 by William Hesketh Lever for the employees of his Lever Brothers soap works. The village is one of the finest examples of early urban planning in the UK and a forerunner of the Garden City Movement. It is still confined within its original boundaries and was largely complete by the start of the First World War.

The earliest village buildings date from 1889 and all but a few blocks of post Second World War houses were given Grade II listing in 1965 with Conservation Area status following in 1978. The village adopted the character of a Conservation Area from its

early days, with Lever's own interest in historic buildings, tight planning controls and the encouragement of visitors.

Two sections of the village landscape (The Diamond and The Dell) are included on Historic England's Register of Parks and Gardens of special historical interest.

The village is spread over 130 acres, with the groups of individually designed houses spaciouly arranged within parkland and set back from broad tree-lined roads.

Open spaces and uniform front gardens are a feature of the village, although the present open character dates from the 1950s when railings that once enclosed the gardens were removed and a more municipal landscape plan was introduced. Many of the public spaces are infilled and landscaped branch channels that once penetrated the site from the River Mersey.

Port Sunlight contains a wealth of outstanding public buildings, most of which are listed. In the south-east corner of the site, Gladstone Hall (1891) was the first principal building in the village and was opened for use as a men's dining room by the statesman W. E. Gladstone. On the opposite side of Wood Street is Lever House (1896), the main entrance to the offices of Lever Brothers, now Unilever.

The most well-known public building in the village is the Lady Lever Art Gallery (1922), a classically inspired civic monument clad in white Portland stone which houses William Hesketh Lever's art collection and is dedicated to the memory of his wife Elizabeth.

Also worthy of note is Christ Church (1904) in the Neo-perpendicular style of Gothic revival.

Both Lever and his wife are buried in a narthex attached to the back of the Church beneath effigies by Welsh sculptor *Sir William Goscomb John*.



### **Lady Lever Art Gallery (1922)**

The village also contains several notable buildings that were built for education or social purposes and which have undergone changes of use over the years: The Lyceum (1896) on Park Road; Hesketh Hall (1903) on Boundary Road; and Hulme Hall (1901) on Bolton Road.

Many prominent architects worked at Port Sunlight, perhaps the most famous being *Sir Edwin Luytens (1869 – 1944)* who designed one block of cottages at 17 – 23 Corniche Road (1897).

Of the North-West practitioners, the most well-known are *John Douglas (1830 – 1911)* who designed many buildings in Chester and on the Duke of Westminster's estate at Eaton; *Edward Ould (1852 – 1909)* who designed Hamilton Square station and Hillbark House on Wirral; and *Edmund Kirby (1838–1920)* who designed many prominent churches and civic buildings on Merseyside.

Lever formed close connections with the Liverpool School of Architecture and helped found the school's first Chair of Civic Design. The School's professor *Sir Charles Herbert Reilly* designed one block of cottages in the village, 15 – 27 Lower Road (1906). Later, when a plan for the completion of the village was required, Lever instigated a competition at the school to find the winning design. The scheme was completed with help from the studio of Thomas Hayton Mawson (1861 – 1933), the most famous landscape architect of his day and a significant influence on Lever's approach to landscape planning.

Port Sunlight Village Trust is responsible for the conservation and promotion of the village. It invests £2 million each year in maintaining the village's parkland and gardens, monuments and memorials, most of principal buildings, and one-third of the houses, and in life-long learning programmes through Port Sunlight Museum and its associated events and community initiatives. As a charity, the Trust relies on income from property rentals, museum admission charges, gift shop and tea room sales, and grants and donations in order to carry out its charitable mission.

For more information about Port Sunlight Village Trust, important events, and village groups and societies visit [portsunlightvillage.com](http://portsunlightvillage.com)



**Port Sunlight War Memorial (1921) designed by Goscombe John which sits at the intersection of The Causeway and The Diamond. Taking the theme of 'The Defence of the home', the memorial has recently been awarded Grade I listed status.**



**The architectural variety of Port Sunlight's houses**

No two blocks of houses are of the same design and nearly every period of British architecture is represented in revival style design. Over thirty different architectural firms worked on designing the houses, and Dutch, French and Flemish styles can also be seen. The houses are grouped together in what are known as 'superblocks' which all face outwards and contain garage blocks and gardens in the centre.

### **The Trail from Port Sunlight Village – Eastham Village:**

#### **Walking, Cycling and Driving:**

From Port Sunlight Railway Station take the road opposite, Park Road (right arc) to the roundabout, take the 3<sup>rd</sup> exit, The Ginnel, to the next roundabout. Turn right, Bolton Road. The next roundabout is the main A41 Roundabout with special facilities to cross/go round. Follow the brown signs straight over into Bolton Road East which becomes Dock Road South and leads down to the River Park:

#### **Heritage Site 27, the Port Sunlight River Park**

Port Sunlight River Park occupies the site of what was once Bromborough Dock. Situated at the mouth of the River Dibbin, the docks were once the biggest private dock in the world. Officially opened in 1931 they continued in use until closed by Act of Parliament in 1986.

The dock and the adjacent ponds then became a landfill site, operating between 1991 and 2006. When tipping ceased the area was landscaped and planted and today, with its mound rising to 37 metres, it provides 28 hectares of open green space with breath taking views across the Mersey.



**Map of Port Sunlight River Park.**



**View of Liverpool from the River Park**

**From the River Park** go back to the A41, turn left and follow the Wirral Circular Trail signs, over the main River Dibbin Bridge, turn left into Pool Lane at the Volkswagon Garage, and Pool Lane forks left as the main road becomes Old Court House Road. The woods on the left are on the ancient site of 'The Old Court House'.

**Heritage Site 28, the Factory Office Building:**

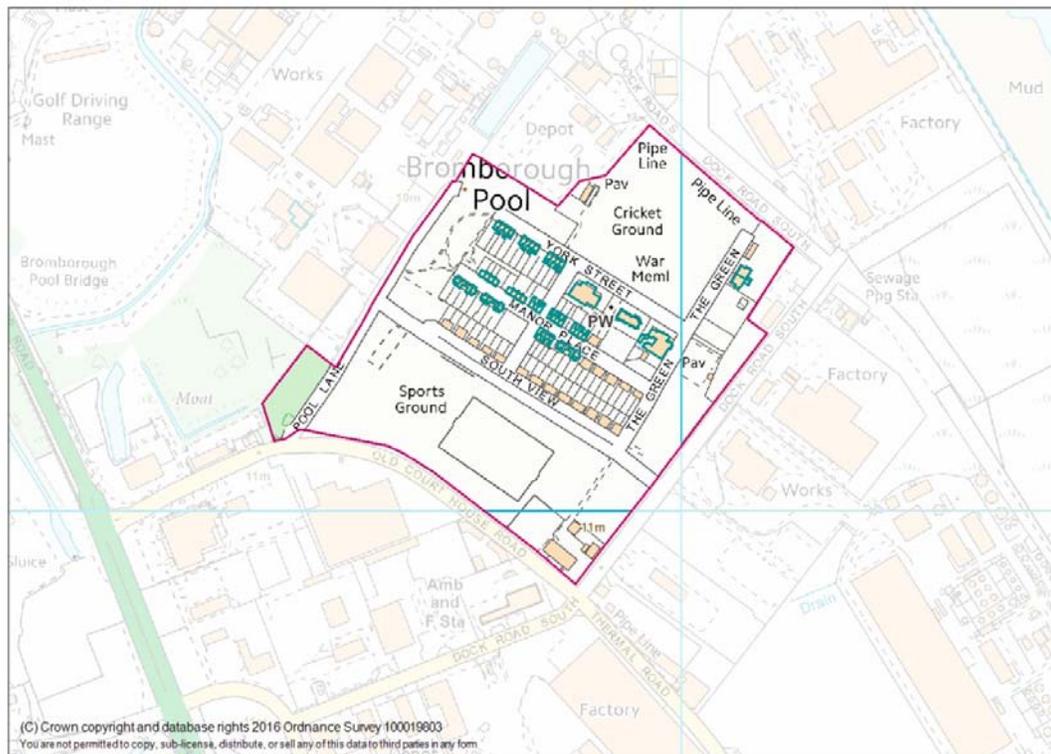
This is currently within a new large building site adjacent to the Old Court House site:

## The Bromborough Pool Factory Office Building.



These are the former offices of Prices' Candle Works. Built in 1853, of brick with stone dressings in Italianate style, the tower has round-headed windows and a clock face.

## Bromborough pool conservation area (1986)



Bromborough Pool, designated a Conservation Area in 1986, is a planned industrial village, developed over the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to house the workers of the nearby Price's Patent Candle Factory (erected in 1853 and Grade II listed). The site was chosen for its proximity to the Mersey; palm oil, a key ingredient of candle making was imported through Liverpool.

As many of the key factory workers were brought up from London, it was necessary to build a village to house them. As well as terraced houses (each with its own gardens and WC), the village grew to include a school, church, hospital and cricket pavilion – all of which remained in the ownership of the factory. With these facilities, it represents an early example of a philanthropic Garden Village, pre-dating the much grander Port Sunlight by over 30 years.



**Houses of red Ruabon brick 1896 onwards**

Although begun in 1854, the village's development has taken place in several phases. By 1858 there were 76 houses, with gardens front and rear, each with its own W.C. and designed by Julian Hill, a London architect. In 1872 fifteen more were erected in Manor Place, in 1873 came 1-6 South View and in 1877 came a further terrace of six. In 1896 twenty-four very different and larger houses appeared, built of red Ruabon brick, followed by a further fourteen of similar design in 1900. Most recently, and a subject of heated controversy, has been the development of 50 new homes in a C21st style.



**Village Hall 1857**

The first community building was the village hall, of 1857, originally used as a school and constructed of London stock brick, with a curved corrugated metal roof similar to the roofs in the factory. Later public buildings included the church, opened in 1890 and a new school, opened in 1899, both constructed of local sandstone. Other buildings included a hospital, a shop and a cricket pavilion, all of which remained in

the ownership of the factory. With these facilities, it represents an early example of English private company philanthropy.

There are 16 grade II listed buildings, or groups of buildings, within the Conservation Area. These designations include all of the remaining houses built during, or before, the 1870s and a number of the principal 19th century public buildings such as the church, school and village hall. The first houses in Bromborough Pool were designed by Julian Hill, a London architect. The church is reported by Pevsner as being designed by 'a Leach of London', probably Claude Pemberton Leach, known for his work on churches and for the invention of a bomb-throwing catapult used by the British Army on the Western Front during WWI.



**The School 1899**

Bromborough Pool, with its gardens, allotments and playing fields is one of the earliest examples of a garden village, pre-dating the much grander Port Sunlight by over thirty years.

**Route to Eastham continued:**

With the new houses behind you and Bromborough Pool on the left, follow the **Wirral Circular Trail signs**, right into Dock Road South, left into Thermal Road, left into Riverbank Road, right into Commercial Road and immediate left into Riverview Road.

**At the junction with Plantation Road, Walkers and cyclists** can turn left onto the walk and cycle path and follow the Wirral Circular Trail signs into **Eastham Country Park, through to the Visitor Centre** with a selection of other facilities.

**Drivers** have to go round by turning right at the next roundabout up Riverwood Road, fork left to Old Hall Road, left at the traffic lights down the A41, past the shops and left at the traffic lights into Carlett Park, take care through this new estate on the site of the old College through to Ferry Road and turn left down to the following location:

### **Eastham Country Park and Eastham Ferry Heritage Site 29:**

The Country Park comprises 100 acres of broadleaf woodland and offers opportunities for peaceful walks, birdwatching and orienteering. A network of surfaced paths provides access throughout the woodland.

A Visitor Information Centre, Rangers office and toilets are situated in the courtyard adjacent to the main carpark (coaches welcome). Picnic areas are provided on the open grassland close to the river and in the Tea Garden which serves refreshments and snacks for most of the year. Two public houses are situated on the riverfront.



**Eastham Ferry Hotel and original landing stage from 1846.**

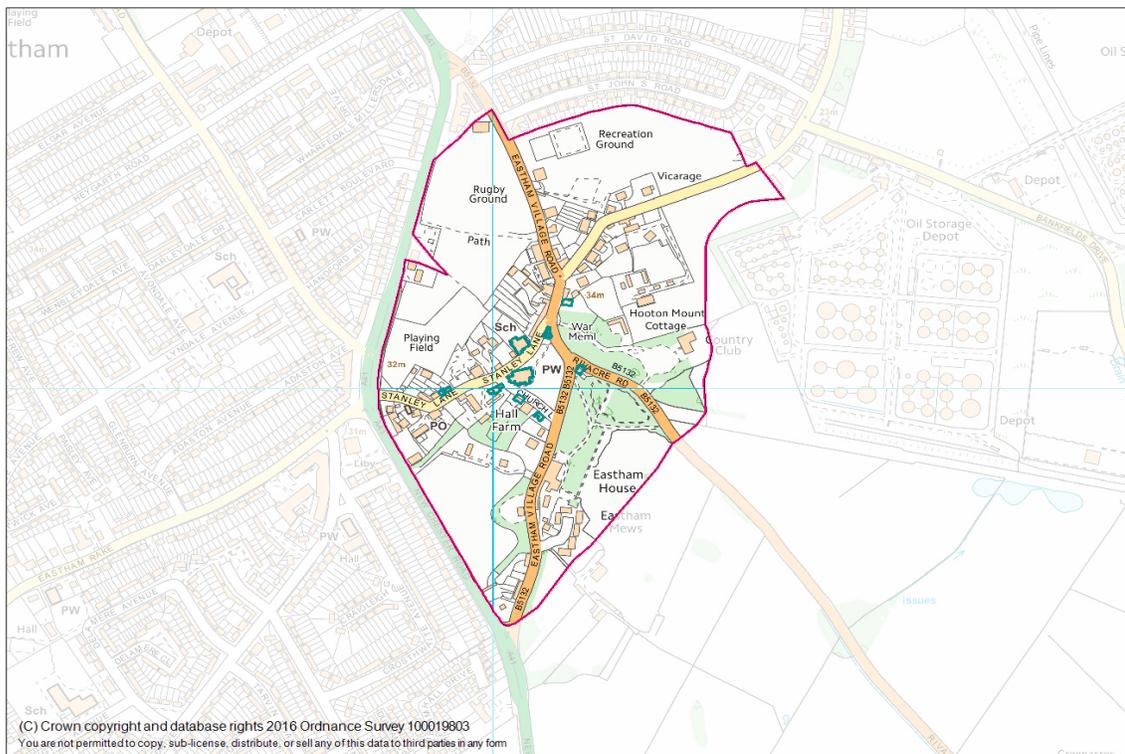
Since the Middle Ages, a ferry service operated across the River Mersey between Eastham and Liverpool, the early ferries being run by monks from the Abbey of St. Werburgh. By the late 1700s, up to 40 coaches each day arrived at a newly built pier, carrying passengers and goods for the ferry.

Paddle steamers were introduced in 1816 to replace the sailing boats, but the demand for a service declined in the 1840s with the opening of a railway link between Chester and Birkenhead Woodside Ferry. In 1846, the owner of the ferry, Thomas Stanley, built the Eastham Ferry Hotel and shortly after, the Pleasure Gardens were added to attract more visitors. The gardens were landscaped with rhododendrons, azaleas, ornamental trees and fountains. Attractions included a zoo, with bears, lions, monkeys and antelope, an open air stage, tea rooms, bandstand, ballroom, boating lake, water chute.

In its heyday Eastham Ferry was known as the 'Richmond of the Mersey', but its popularity declined during the 1920s and the last paddle steamer crossing took place in 1929. The Pleasure Gardens fell into disrepair during the 1930s and the iron pier and Jubilee Arch were later dismantled. In 1970, to commemorate European Conservation Year, the area was designated a Woodland & Country Park and today, it is once more a popular place of recreation.

**Walking, Cycling and Driving** can now take the same route along **Ferry Road to Eastham Village** and follow the Wirral Circular Trail signs into Stanley Road to the A41 traffic lights and turn right.

### Eastham village conservation area (1974)



Eastham Village is one of Wirral's earliest settlements, inhabited since Saxon times and mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. The village, designated as a Conservation area in 1974, reflects this medieval street pattern, with small terraces of cottages, interspersed with larger and more opulent villas, winding around the 14<sup>th</sup> century church of St. Mary.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Eastham became a fashionable resort for coach passengers taking the new steam ferries across the Mersey to Liverpool. By the 1840s, the Eastham Ferry Hotel had pleasure gardens with zoo, tea-rooms, ball room and many other attractions. The decline of the ferries and the opening of the Manchester Ship Canal in the 1890s inevitably changed the character of the village

and gradually new developments were built. The designation of Eastham Country Park in 1970 and the Conservation Area four years later, have helped to protect the historic character of this village and its rural setting from encroaching suburbanisation.

The opening of the Manchester Ship Canal inevitably led to increased industrialisation around Eastham and more dramatic changes came in the late 1940s, when the great oil-dock project revived industrial activity. Eastham oil dock was the largest in Britain, with large tankers berthed to unload oil via a pipe work to the refineries at Stanlow.

At this time new housing estates were built and there were fears that Eastham and its surrounding woods and fields would be lost. Woodlands to the north of the village were designated a Country Park in 1970 and the historic village core a Conservation Area four years later.



**Church of St. Mary**

Eastham has benefitted from the surrounding Green Belt and open spaces which act as a buffer against encroaching suburbanisation and have helped the village to retain a character which has evolved gradually over many centuries.

The focal point is the Grade II listed Church of St Mary, built between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and restored in the 1870s. The village sundial (dated 1798) and village cross (dated 1891) are both Grade II listed. The Stanley Arms, although unlisted, has a stone stag's head above the door, which is said to come from the original Stanley family seat at Hooton Hall.

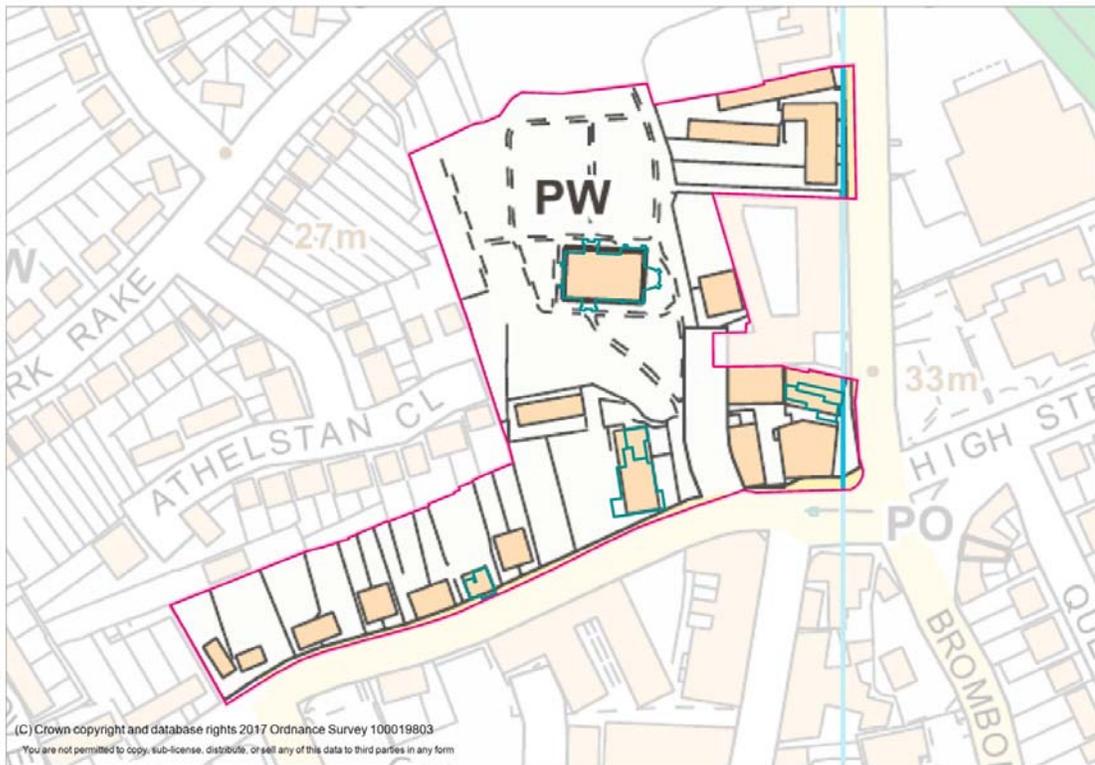


*as in most New England villages, but there were several crooked ways, gathering the whole settlement into a pretty small compass”.*

### **Eastham Village - Bromborough Village - Lower Bebington and return to Port Sunlight.**

Having turned right onto the A41 in Eastham Village with the shops on the left, fork left into Bridle Road which becomes Allport Lane. Eventually turn right into The Rake and to Bromborough Village:

### **Bromborough village conservation area (1972)**



This is one of Wirral’s smallest Conservation Areas. It is Centred on St Barnabas Church, PW: Place of Worship. Its boundary includes the core of the old village and remaining vernacular buildings. Although now surrounded by more modern development, the character of the original settlement and some notable buildings have survived. The church and churchyard (including a sundial of 1730) are of special interest.

Bromborough Cross is on the west side of the crossroads of The Rake, The High Street and Bromborough Village Road.

Today, the area has largely been overtaken by more modern development. However enough of the historic centre survives, thus enabling the character of the original settlement to be discerned. This character is principally derived from the historic market cross, the setting and visual dominance of the Church, shown as PW, ‘place

of Worship' on the map and the courtyard formed by its associated buildings at Church Lane. In general, the character of the conservation area can be described as a formerly rural village of medieval origins enclosed within an urban conurbation. It has a range of housing, including small cottages, semidetached houses and larger detached houses. The public buildings include a sizeable church and former village school, and there is a range of shops and commercial premises.

Bromborough Cross then and now:



There are a number of notable buildings within the conservation area:

- Church of St Barnabas
- Village Centre (formerly the School)
- The Master's House
- Nos. 54/56/56A Bromborough Village Road (formerly Tellet's Farmhouse)
- Pear Tree Cottage (No 6 The Rake)



The present Church was designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott in 1862-4, with the broached spire added in 1880. Most glass is by Clayton and Bell, c1870 although the east window was designed in 1863 by Ballantine and Son.

Other historic features include:

- The Village Cross, with a medieval stepped base and a head of 1974
- Church Cross (C10 or early C11, with interlace design, reassembled from part of a cross head and two bits of shaft and erected by the Bromborough Society in 1958)
- Sundial in churchyard (dated 1730)
- A number of early C19th gravestones echoing the style of the Church Cross

Other interesting buildings and features include:

- The Church Institute
- 8-10 The Rake (date stone of 1835)
- 16-18 The Rake (two dwellings, date stone of 1836)
- 20 The Rake (a single dwelling with a date stone of 1815, possibly formerly a pair of cottages)
- 2-4 and 12-14 The Rake (built between 1899 and 1911 and typical of early Edwardian semi-detached cottages, the only 'repetitive' feature along The Rake)
- 18 and 26-28 Bromborough Village Road, which form a group. No 18 was formerly used as the Mission Hall, Lecture Hall and Reading Room



**Bromborough Village collage.**

### **The Route continued:**

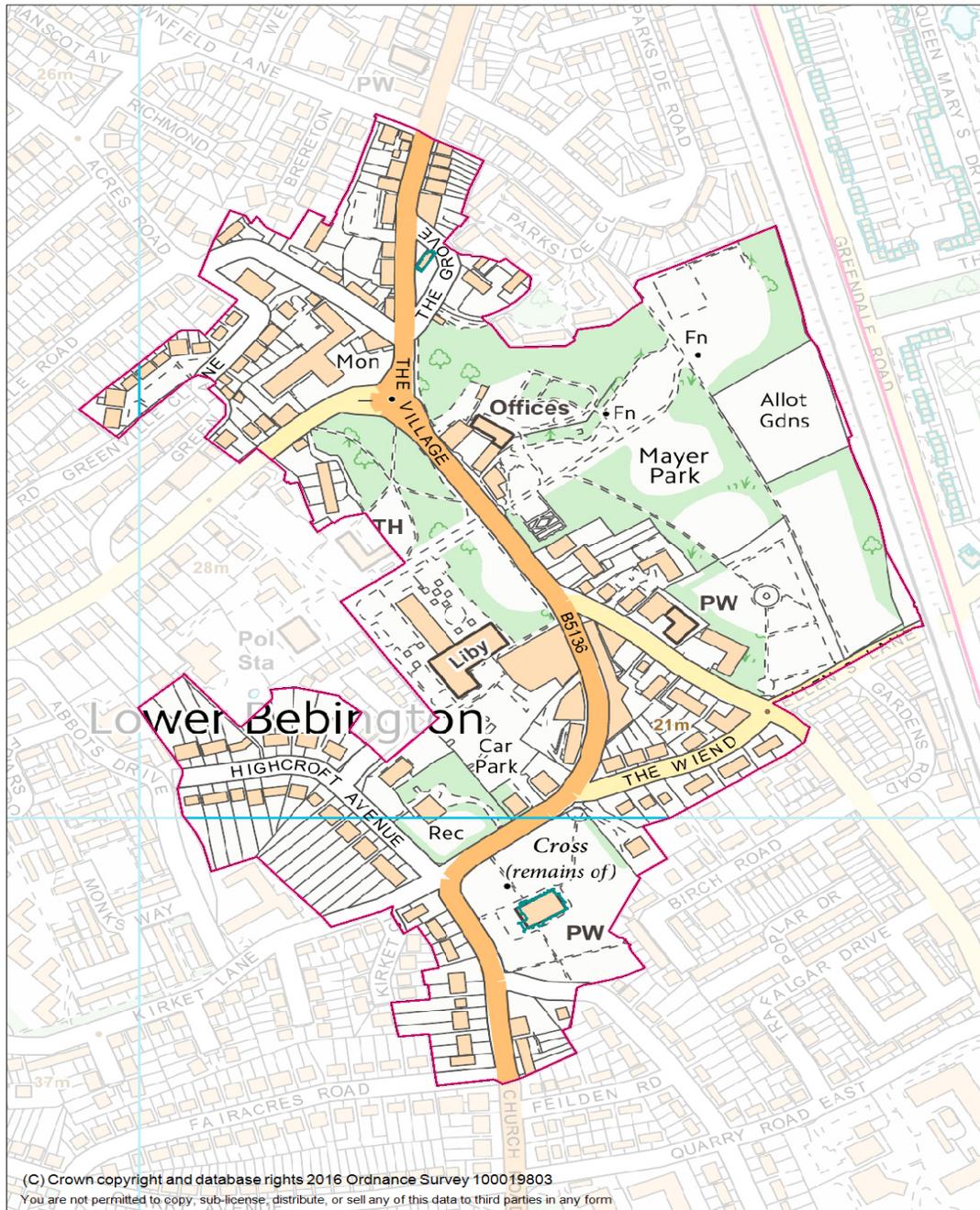
Turn left at the cross into Bromborough Village Road, B5137.

This becomes Spital Road and passes The Dibbinsdale Nature Reserve and Brotherton Park on the left. The road drops down to a roundabout. Continue straight on into Bromborough Road.

After about 400 yards, **Walkers and Cyclists** may wish to turn onto the Port Sunlight Walk and Cycle Path on the old Unilever Factory railway running parallel with the road. Turn left and return back to Port Sunlight Village. The **Lower Bebington Conservation Area** is past Port Sunlight Station, turn left into Ellen's Road, enter Meyer Park on the right and you are in conservation area as per the map. Return to Port Sunlight by the reverse route.

**Drivers:** continue along Bromborough Road. At the traffic lighted junction with The Wiend on the left and Ellen's road on the right, you are now in the Lower Bebington Conservation Area.

## Lower bebington conservation area (2014)



This is Wirral's most recent Conservation Area, designated in 2014. The boundary largely follows the line of the medieval village, a linear settlement which stood on the former principal route between Chester and Birkenhead. Despite suburban development, the core of the village still retains built evidence of its history as an agricultural community.

Of outstanding importance are the Mayer buildings and park; the legacy of Joseph Mayer, the eminent and innovative Victorian antiquarian and philanthropist.

Lower Bebington is essentially a rural village which became subsumed into 19th and 20th century suburbia. The Conservation Area contains a range of buildings of different periods and styles, reflecting its development over the centuries. The oldest are vernacular in style, built of local stone and presumably originally for agricultural use.

Later neoclassical designs were introduced and there are good examples of Georgian and Regency style terraces and merchants' houses. There also are some fine Arts and Crafts Houses. The main open spaces are Mayer and Ormerod Park and the landscaped area in front of the Civic Hall.

### **Major Buildings**

Pennant House – from 1860 to 1886, this was the home of the antiquary and collector, Joseph Mayer, whose philanthropic contribution to enhancing the lives of the people of Bebington earned him the reputation of one of the great public benefactors of the Victorian period. Originally an early Victorian villa, it was remodelled for Mayer by the Liverpool architect Edward Arthur Heffer and named after Thomas Pennant, a previous occupier of the property and not, as often claimed, Thomas Pennant, the author.

No. 65 The Village – originally a farmhouse next door to Pennant House, this was bought by Joseph Mayer in 1869 and remodelled and extended to house his free library, one of the first in the country. At the same time Mayer bought 5 acres of farmland behind his house which he landscaped as a public park.

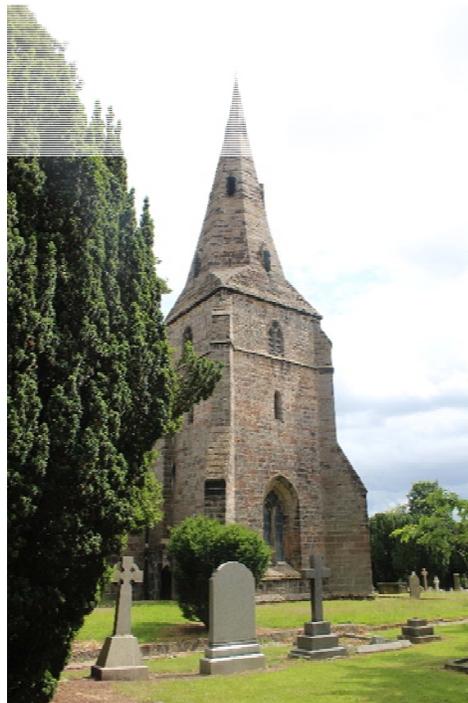
Mayer Hall – this was originally the farm barn, but Mayer converted it to a single storey public hall to be used for exhibitions and lectures. In 1878 he demolished the barn and constructed a new purpose-built hall with a ground floor to be used for lectures and concerts and an upper floor gallery to exhibit his collection of pictures and sculptures.

The Rose and Crown public house – listed Grade II and dated 1732. It was a coaching inn on the old Chester Road.

Willow Cottage, no.25 The Village - a typical timber framed 17th century yeoman's cottage, extended in the 18th century



**Mayer Hall**



**St Andrew's Church is listed Grade I and architecturally one of the most important churches on Wirral. Fragments of the original pre-Conquest church survive in the south wall**



**Civic Centre – a confident, modernist municipal building which was reputed to be one of the most ambitious district civic projects in the country when built in the 1960s. It has recently been listed.**

**Lower Bebington – Port Sunlight:**

Having explored the area as per the map return to The Wiend and into Ellen's Road traffic lights. Go under the railway bridge and right again and return to Port Sunlight Village.

**Total distance is about 9 miles.**

© RT Nov 7th 2017, draft 5.