

# KIRKHAM HERITAGE TRAIL

Walk 5

South Fylde  
Line Walks



4.1km / 2.5 miles with an optional extension of  
1.2km / 0.75 miles. Mostly level with some slight inclines

## KIRKHAM HERITAGE TRAIL –

From Kirkham & Wesham station to the town centre with an optional extension to take in the Grammar school.

The railway developed to meet the popularity of the seaside resort towns of Blackpool, St. Anne's and Lytham. From the 1920s to the 1950s huge numbers of steam trains plied their way to the coast via the station at Kirkham and Wesham. Recent improvements to the station have been lifts, an additional platform, new

signalling, electrification and an increased number of stopping services. The station was once located a hundred yards or so west of its current location and was traversed by a level crossing close by the Railway Hotel, now closed.

Our trail begins at the station which straddles the boundary between the two settlements of Kirkham and Wesham-with-Medlar, and serves both.

*On exiting the station, turn left and walk down the slope along Station Road towards Poulton Street (approx. 740 metres).*

Take note of the bridge's extensive curved walls built of blue engineering bricks which were used for their strength and durability.

To your left are bungalows built on the land formerly occupied by the Birley family home and a textile mill. Across the road you can see the town's Library.

As you make your way towards the town centre, note the architectural features of stone mullions and stained-glass windows of the houses on the right.

Further down Station Road, on your left, the "The Last Loom" of Kirkham is on permanent display. This loom, from the 1920s could produce an extensive range of fabrics including velvets, twills and Bedford cord.



On the opposite side of the road are the **public baths** (1), built in 1914 and paid for by the bequest of William Seger

Hodgson, the son of the man who built the handloom weavers' cottages in Preston Street. The Waterboard offices were sited here too.

At the traffic lights look towards the new flats on the corner. They occupy the site of the **former George Hotel** (2) noted for a body being found which had lain there undiscovered for three days.



*Bear left into Poulton Street*

This area is dedicated to **Kirkham in Bloom** (3) with attractive metal sculptures and planters which are bursting with colour from spring onwards. This is also the entrance to Mill Street where Irish families who came to work in the adjacent flax mills once lived. This is where Cleggs Clogs was situated which made clogs for the mill workers.

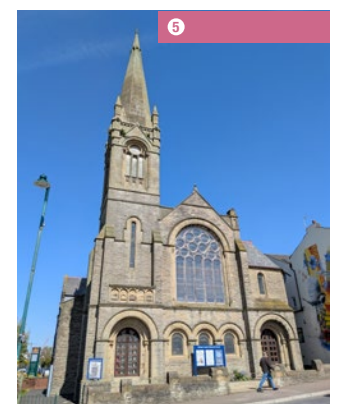


Pause to take in **The Lamp** (4) erected to mark Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1887.



*Cross the entrance to the supermarket car park.*

Adjacent is the Grade II listed **United Reformed Church** (5), which was formerly a Congregational Church, built in 1896 to a design by Briggs & Wolstenholme. Previously the Old Bowling Green Inn was located on this site.



Continue up Poulton Street

Note the vibrant mural **artwork** (6) on the gable end of the neighbouring property and further up the hill take in the **Gothic revival style building** (7) formerly a girls' charity school, more recently a bank, now closed.



After approximately 150m turn left into a ginnel

Here you can view the **gate and archway** (8) commemorating the granting of Kirkham's Royal Market Charter by King Henry III in 1296. Look out for the fused glass plaques called **'The Passage of Time'** (9).



Retrace your steps to the main road and turn left to reach pedestrian crossing and cross over to reach the other side of the road.

Look left down Poulton Street to see a **large bird sculpture** (10) above The Old Bank. This references a Griffin, formerly a symbol of the Midland Bank.



Turn left into Kirkgate and after 50m turn left again into Marsden Street.

Roman coins (the 'Kirkham Hoard') were found on Kirkgate and are now on display in the Harris Museum in Preston. The entrance to the Zion Chapel cemetery is 100 metres ahead of you. Part way down on the right you will see a **Foundation Stone** (11) of the Zion Chapel (now demolished) set in the grass bank. The cemetery can be seen through the hedge at this point.



On the left is **Amounderness Court** (12). The name "Amounderness" refers to the historical hundred, an old administrative division, in which Kirkham was located.



Turn left through the car park and access the alleyway named Chapel Lane. Walk down to Freckleton Street and cross the road bearing slightly left to reach the Police station.

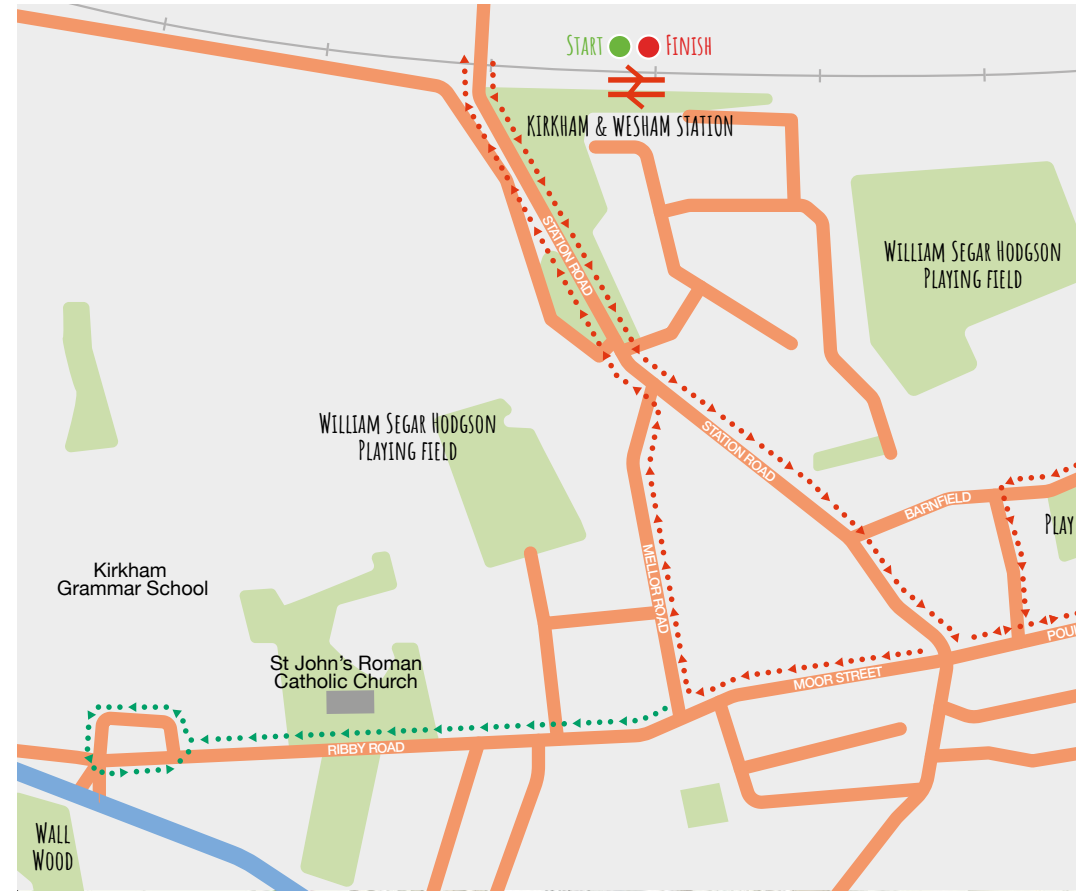


The **Police station** (13), though relatively new, displays a plate showing the **'standard measure of length'** (14), which is on the front of the building, accessed by the path, but well hidden by bushes. Note too, the traditional style police station lamp. The adjacent building was formerly the Magistrates Court, now named 'The Old Court House'.



The **Public Standards of Length (measure)**, are brass plaques designed to officially verify measurements like the yard, foot, and inch. They were used to combat imprecise, custom-based measurements during the Industrial Revolution.

Continue down Freckleton Street to reach the roundabout.



Note the **fish sculpture** (15) on the sign above Dawson's chippy to the left.

Continue straight across the roundabout and come into the central area of the town.

On your right is **Ash Tree House** (16), a Grade II listed building, built in 1765 by Thomas Langton, a local flax merchant and son of the founder of the Kirkham Linen Mill. It is currently a doctors' surgery and probably the oldest remaining building in the marketplace.



Cross the road

To view the Fish Stones (17) in the **Market Square** regarded as the centre of old Kirkham.



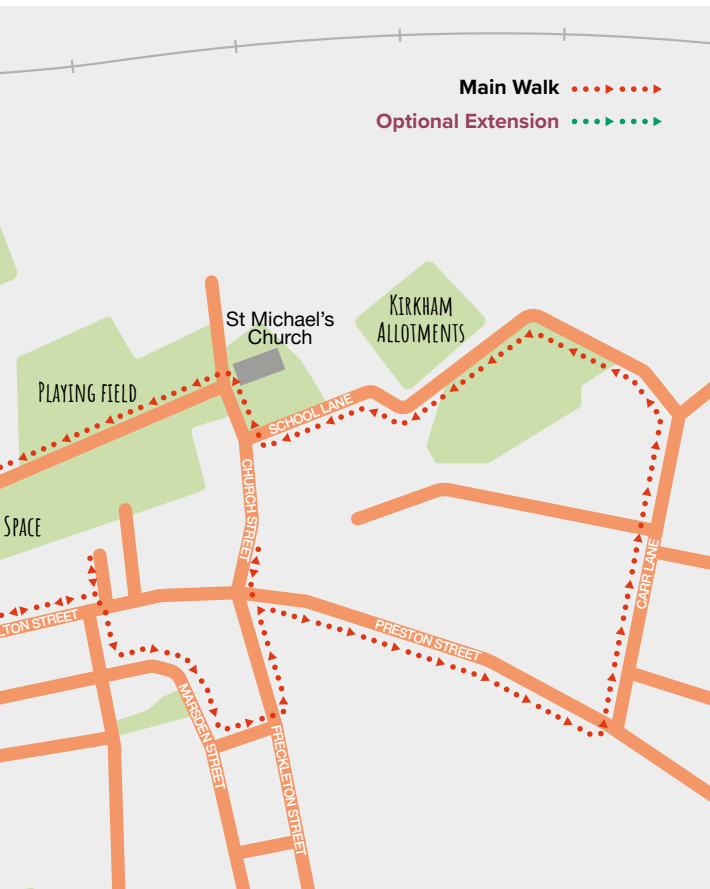
The Fish Stones are two flat stone slabs where fish was sold, and date from 1829. They are a Grade II listed heritage asset and a reminder of the town's market history. A weekly Thursday market has been held here since the 13th century

as part of a Royal Charter. The lamp in the centre was given by the Lord of the Manor, Thomas Langton Birley, in 1872.

Nearby stood Moot Hall and an inn, the Eagle and Child, whose one-time landlady, Isabel Birley was a benefactress of Kirkham Grammar School in the 17th century. Both the hall and the inn have long gone, as have other old buildings, demolished when the west and north sides were redeveloped in the 1960s.

A **Blue Plaque** (18) close by recognises those from Kirkham who went off to war in September 1914, following a recruitment rally on the market square.





In 1925 this area became the subject of a pencil on paper drawing by internationally renowned Salford artist, L. S. Lowry. In his later work "A Lancashire Village, 1935" he painted the scene again, but with a wider street full of people and a house in front of the church.

**NOTE: There are free public toilets in the square, which offer a free water refill point.**

*Retrace your steps to the roundabout. Turn left and begin to climb Preston Street.*

To your right, above Number 14, is a **Coat of Arms (19)** (Grade II listed) from 1729. This depicts the tools of the trade of a 'currier' who specialises in dressing, finishing and colouring leather hides. The Crest depicts James Harrison's membership of the prestigious Worshipful Company of Curriers, a London livery company still active today.



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Halfway up the hill, you will walk past the Grade 2 listed Hillside - built in 1810 for Edward Birley; opposite this, you may recall the Black Horse pub - a well-loved Boddingtons house, built in 1848 and rebuilt in 1982. It is now divided into private residential flats

As you approach the crest of the hill, there are **handloom weavers' cottages (20)** which have half cellars. Cotton was woven here in the 1820s, with the cellar windows providing natural light for the weavers.



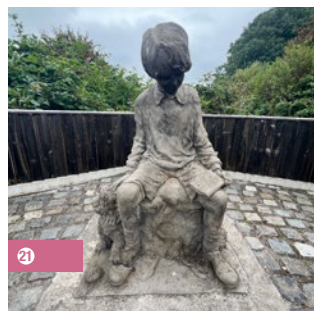
20

As you walk along this road, it slopes away from the crest of the hill; the eastern limit of the town is clearly apparent. This was the extent of the Roman Fort (AD 79-420). The walls of the Fort were discovered at the junction with Carr Lane. The cellar of a nearby house contains evidence of a Roman Bath House.

Look to your right (Carrwood Drive) and you are now looking at the site of the old Carr Hill House, which became a hotel and was during the 1930s a briefly thriving Kirkham racecourse.

*After approximately 375m turn left down Carr Lane and after approximately 320m turn left again into Remembrance Way.*

On your right are **'The Carrs'** a low-lying land area where flax was grown in earlier times predominately woven for ship sails. You will also see on your right as you walk along Remembrance Way, the **sculpture of a boy with a dog (21)**. This recognises the significant contribution the armed forces have made to the town. It includes reclaimed cobbles from the original fish stone circle and the plinth is adorned with flax plants which represent the link to the town's mill industry.



21



22

In the summer, this area is a riot of colourful wild flowers (22). Take in the community orchard, the allotments and the work of local groups.

*At the end of the path bear right and follow the path to School Street, walk along School Street.*

You will skirt St Michaels Church of England Primary School on the left. The current school has existed in different forms since 1815. Kirkham Grammar was once adjacent to the school.

Continue, and on your right is the imposing **St Michael's Parish Church (23)**.



23

*Come out of the main church gates, turn right along the churchyard wall, and then left onto Remembrance Way.*

**St. Michael's Parish Church.** According to tradition, this church dates from about 680, but the present building, at least the third to serve the parish dates from 1822 when it was largely rebuilt on the site of the previous church. The tower and steeple were built in 1844 and the workings of the clock dating from 1924 can be viewed from the staircase to the balcony if the doors are unlocked. The chancel was added in 1853 and in the church is a brass chandelier dating from 1725, a brass plate dated 1770 on the churchwarden's box pew and a memorial to the Clifton family, including one to Thomas Clifton who died in 1688 - all of which were transferred from the old building. The furniture includes gifts in memory of former church members including the Langtons and the Birleys. Former vicars lie buried in the churchyard where the earliest grave is dated 1672. Amongst other memorials is one to a lady and her infant son who perished when the SS Lusitania was sunk in 1915.

Follow the path for approximately 370m, passing the Waterfall of Poppies and **War Memorial (24)** on the left, and the Peoples' Park on your right. The Memorial Park and Cenotaph were designed by renowned landscape architect Thomas Mawson and opened in 1926.

In the distance on your right is the **South Fylde Railway Line** on an embankment, opened in 1840 as the Preston to Wyre



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Railway. To the right (Flaxfield Way) stood the Birley family's large sailcloth factory. By the first half of the 19th century the sailcloth factories owned by the Birleys, Langtons, Hornbys and Shepherds dominated the town and the families played an integral part in its civic and social life. The development of the steam engine brought an end to the businesses. By about 1900 the mill on the site became a cotton waste processing plant which caught fire in the 1950s and had to be demolished.



25

*Continue along Barnfield and then take the pedestrian route (on the left) across the supermarket car park to come out on Poulton Street and cross the road by the traffic lights to access Moor Street.*

Take in **the garden (25)** featuring a clock, and vine press, a gift from Kirkham's French twin town, Ancenis. A girls' school once stood on this site. This is yet another spot that is a gardener's delight. The original gas works was located close by in Orders Lane.

*Walk up Moor Street for 270m.*

After 50m on the right is the former site of the **Kirkham Children's Home (26)** built by the Fylde Poor Law Guardians as well as Fylde's first Union Workhouse. The area is now occupied by the Health Centre and Pear Tree School. It is marked by a Blue Plaque. Further on you will see Aiken Court, in memory of Cllr Ossie Aiken - past Mayor and Alderman of the town.

*If not taking the optional loop, turn right into Mellor Road and follow directions overleaf.*



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## OPTIONAL EXTENSION – approximately 1.2km

*Continue up Moor Street which later becomes Ribby Road, towards Kirkham Grammar School.*

**Kirkham Grammar School** <sup>(27)</sup> was founded by 1549 although its roots can be traced back to a chantry school attached to St Michael's Church in the 13th century. It moved to its present site in 1910. Famous alumni include TV presenter Ranvir Singh, a number of international rugby union players including England's Alex Sanderson, Dan Bibby, Richard Wigglesworth and Kieran Brookes, Computer Game Designers Karthik and Guha Bala, Royal Mint CEO Anne Jessopp, electrical engineer Eric Laithwaite, who pioneered the use of magnetic levitation in high-speed trains, and sports statistician Tony Lewis MBE who, along with Frank Duckworth, developed the Duckworth–Lewis method of resetting targets in interrupted cricket matches, still in use today.



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*Retrace your steps*

Noting the lovely **St. John the Willows RC Church** <sup>(28)</sup>, (1763) designed by A.W.N Pugin who also designed the Houses of Parliament.

*Turn left into Mellor Road.*

On the right can be seen the new development called **Crown Mews** named to reflect the **bowling green** <sup>(29)</sup> sharing its site. At the end of the road on the left is the entrance to the cricket club adjoining **Kirkham & Wesham Primary school**. The latter housed recuperating soldiers at the end of the First World War.

*Turn left onto Station Road and follow the road back to the station – approximately 350m*



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At the brow of the hill stop and look through the gap where the staircase is and note the **former Railway Hotel** <sup>(30)</sup>, its name is in large letters on the roof.

*Cross the road to the station.*

The Grow Kirkham and Wesham Group look after the platform planters and are due to take over a disused area of station land shortly.



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## Acknowledgements

**Tony Ford**, Chair South Fylde Line Community Rail Partnership

**Adrian Long**, Curator of the Martin Ramsbottom Local History Collection at St Michael's Church

**Martin Ramsbottom**, Local historian

## Reference

**Martin Ramsbottom** – A Town Trail 1992

The late Martin Ramsbottom was a lifelong resident of Kirkham. A passionate enthusiast of local history, he was always keen to share his knowledge and expertise. His meticulous archive of the town, which is open to the public, is in the church and this trail is based on his work.

## Worth a read

**Kirkham Through the Mists of Time Paperback:** 1 Nov. 2018 by Michael Townsend (Author)

**Shield boss:** [www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H\\_1814-0705/36](http://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_1814-0705/36)

**Coat of Arms:** [www.curriers.co.uk/history](http://www.curriers.co.uk/history)

**St Michaels Parish Church, Kirkham: A brief guide for Visitors** (located in the church for a small donation)



## Further Information

### Maps of the Area

- OS Explorer 286 Blackpool & Preston
- OS Landranger 102 Preston & Blackpool
- [www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk](http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk)

An hourly train service runs between Preston and St. Anne's. For more details go to:

Web: [www.northernrailway.co.uk](http://www.northernrailway.co.uk)

[www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk)

Tel: **08457 484950**

For information on local attractions, events, places of interest and accommodation please contact:

Web: [www.discoverfylde.co.uk](http://www.discoverfylde.co.uk)

[www.communityraillancashire.co.uk/lines/south-fylde-line](http://www.communityraillancashire.co.uk/lines/south-fylde-line)

Tel: **01253 725610**

