

Wavertree

Wavertree is one of the oldest villages in the neighbourhood of Liverpool. There is evidence of a Pre-historic settlement in Victoria Park, with the burial urns that were excavated in the mid 1880's in North Drive being deposited at the Liverpool Museum.

It was an Anglo-Saxon Manor and is mentioned in the Domesday Book where reference is made thus, "Levin held Waurtru. There are 2 carucates of land. It was worth 64 pence", and at the time of the Norman Conquest was variously called 'Vautetua', 'Wa've', 'Wavre', 'Watree' and Wavertree. There have been arguments over the meaning of the name, ranging from 'a wavering tree', 'a clearing in the wood' and 'the place by common ground'.

It is suggested that the original agricultural settlement was due to the availability of water. The earliest maps, dating from the 18th century, show that the area where the Picton Clock now stands, was a cross-roads, with a cluster of buildings in Mill Lane, near to the township well. The road continuing east from the High Street lead to Warrington; south along Church Road to Garston and via Olive Mount to West Derby and the north¹. There were properties in the present day Church Road, (north) High Street,, and Cow Lane (now called Prince Alfred Road). What is now Picton Road was a muddy track called Wavertree Lane. This became an important roadway following the growth of the port of Liverpool in the 18th century. At the time it was described as *'A pretty village being situated on a sandstone ridge about 200 feet above sea level, and forms an agreeable contrast to the sea aspects of Liverpool'*. It was famous for its tavern, The Lamb Hotel, built in 1774.

The original boundaries were Binns Road, Priory Road (now Queen's Drive), and Gypsy Lane to the east, Rose Lane to the south and Spofford Road in the west. It was a township in the parish of Childwall, in the Hundred of West Derby² and the county of Lancashire.

In 1731 there were 50 houses, this number increasing to 140 by 1811. In 1801 the population was 860. The famous 'Lock-up' situated on the edge of the then Village Green, was erected in 1796. This is reputed to be linked with the fact that men travelled from Liverpool to drink in the Tavern, The Lamb Hotel, also a coaching inn, who became too inebriated to find their way back to the port leading to them being locked up until morning, when having sobered up, they were 'sent on their way'.

In 1833 a cholera epidemic in the village caused the Lock-up to be used as a mortuary.

In 1835, several years after the famous Rainhill Steam Engine Trials the Directors of the Liverpool – Manchester Railway Company requested permission to make a level crossing on what was Wavertree Lane. The modern day

location of this crossing is on Leigh Road, a route into the Technology Park.

An omnibus was placed on the road about the same time, starting from the Lamb Inn on the High Street, John Bland being the pioneer. The fare was 1/6 inside and 1/- outside. The earliest journey to town was made at 9 o'clock. Passengers could be called for at their houses. It was usual to stop at the principle public houses on the line en route; the horses were put up during the middle of the day, morning and evening being the times when the conveyance could be booked. Two local magnates, Hugh Hornby, of Sandown, and Henry Royds, of Elm House, had seats regularly reserved, if necessary the omnibus would call for them at their offices.

James Redish who ran a coach, every hour, from Woolton, via Wavertree, to Liverpool, undertook the next enterprise. Gradually Wavertree became 'quite a resort' for Liverpool people. The 'Old Thatch' (demolished circa 1900) had pleasure grounds at the rear. The Coffee House and the Lamb both 'laid themselves out' for afternoon visitors. Demand created greater competition and as the century progressed the fares continued to fall, being 6d or 4d at the end of the 19th century.³

In the 1840's there was an exodus of middle classes from Liverpool to the nearby countryside, Wavertree being one of the areas where mansions and villas were built.

The Tithe Award Schedules of Wavertree (1846)⁴ show the area that was to become the Wavertree Recreation Company ground was owned by a Luke Crosley, and occupied by Stewart Gladstone. It was described as a Plantation and measured 1 acre⁵ and 36 perches⁶.

On December 1st 1847 Liverpool adopted Greenwich Meantime falling in line with the rest of the country in respect of time – prior to this 'Liverpool time' was 10 minutes behind the rest of the country!!

- 1847 Street lighting introduced to the village
- 1851 Wavertree Board of Health established – population now 4,000
- 1852 Piped water introduced to the village
- 1853 Sewers installed in the village
- 1856 Wavertree Gas Works constructed
- 1881 Horse Drawn Trams begin to operate between Liverpool and Wavertree providing cheap transport to the city for the villagers. This facility attracted other workers to move out of the city centre to live.
- 1895 Municipality of Liverpool expanded to include Wavertree, West Derby, Walton and Toxteth – Garston included in 1902.⁷
- 1895 Opening of the Wavertree 'Mystery' Park – 109 acres
- 1901 Population now 25,000

Sources

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‘The Life and Times of Wavertree Parish Church of the
Holy Trinity 1794 – 1994’. James H Schroeder 1994, DPU
Press, Runcorn.

‘West Derby, Old Swan and Wavertree’ – James Hoult 1913.
Book Clearance Centre, 27-28 Dawson Way, St John’s
Market, Liverpool L1 1LH

¹ Source – p 67, ‘West Derby, Old Swan and Wavertree’
James Hoult 1913 Book Clearance Centre, St John’s
Shopping Centre L1 1LH

² Hundred – sub-division of a shire or county having it’s
own Court.

³ West Derby, Old Swan and Wavertree p54 op cit

⁴ Tithe Award Schedules Wavertree (1846), Reference
HF912WAV – Liverpool City Public Library Archives
Department.

⁵ An Acre – 4840 square yards

⁶ A Perch – an old English measurement of 5 and a half
yards

⁷ ‘Liverpool, the first 1,000 years’. (2002) Arabella
McIntyre-Brown & Guy Woodland, Garlic press 2