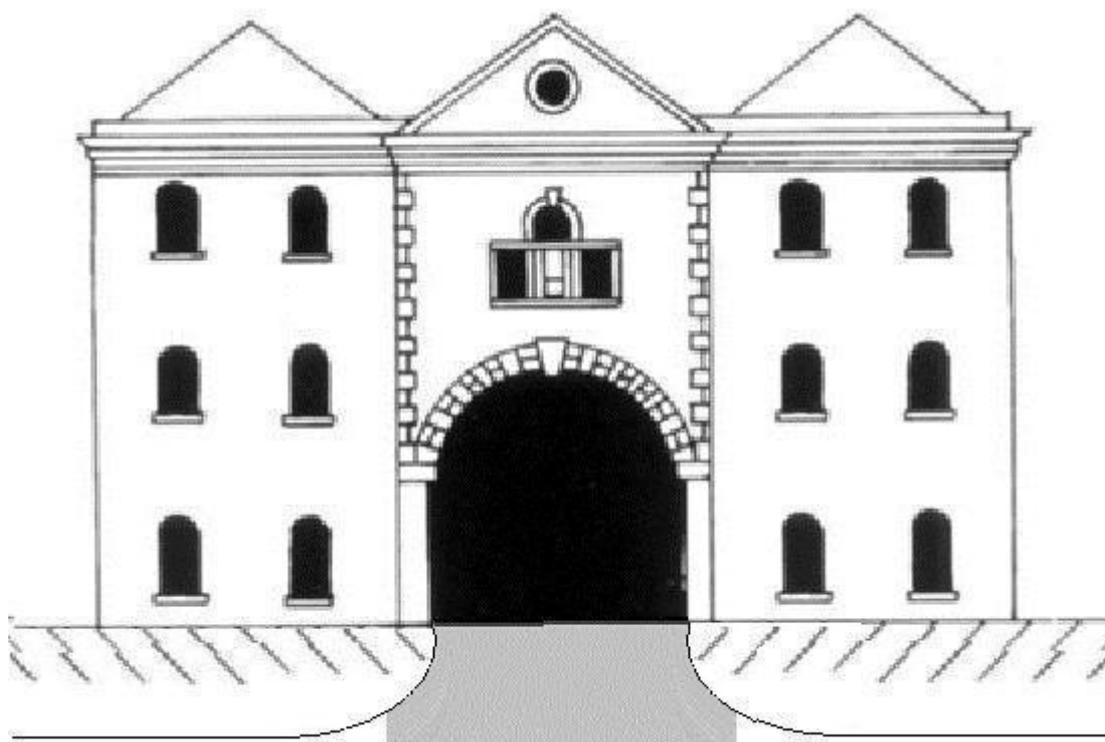


Heritage at Risk



Broadheath Canal Warehouse 1833

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Report prepared by **Altrincham & Bowdon Civic Society**

June 2020

<https://altrinchamandbowdoncs.com/>

Introduction

Altrincham, Broadheath and Timperley have 48 listed buildings. The Broadheath Canal Warehouse is Grade II listed. It has been allowed to deteriorate to the point where unless remedial action is taken it may become lost for ever. It is our heritage and if we want future generation to understand and be in touch their history, action is required.

The Bridgewater Canal was the first contour canals built in the Britain necessitating not a single lock throughout its 39½ mile length. The initial length of the canal, Worsley to Castlefield, was opened in 1761 with permission to build the extension from Stretford to Broadheath allowing that section to open in 1767. The further extension through to Runcorn was opened in 1769 allowing the link up with the Trent and Mersey Canal at Preston Brook. The Duke of Bridgewater had been smart enough to also purchase the land at Broadheath where the turnpike road from Chester to Manchester would cross the canal. Here he established many wharfs along the canal bank to handle goods going into Manchester, principally vegetables from the new market gardens which sprang up around Broadheath. On the return journey the boats brought back coal from the Duke's mines in Worsley which was used to heat local homes and power small industries. The wharfs at Broadheath handled timber, sand, slates, bricks, limestone to make mortar, raw cotton and flax, and finished good. It was also a boarding point on the Packet Boat route from Manchester to Runcorn.

Broadheath Canal Warehouse was built in 1833 by the Bridgewater Navigation Company. It was part of a larger transshipment point for general goods and coal to and from the canal to horse and cart. As higher value goods, like finished cloth, were being carried they needed to be kept dry and safe.

Technical Description of the building

The warehouse, with an opening containing a branch of the Bridgewater Canal, is in brick on a stone plinth, with stone dressings, an eaves cornice, a parapet, and roofs of slate and asbestos. It has a square plan with three storeys and five bays. The central bay projects, and has a pediment with a circular opening and a moulded surround, rusticated quoins and voussoirs, and a keystone, above which is a Venetian window with a dated keystone. Elsewhere there are semicircular-headed openings and loading bays with hoist canopies.

Location  [53.39756°N 2.35418°W](#)

(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Listed_buildings_in_Altrincham)

Alternative Technical Description

Canal warehouse on the Bridgewater Canal. 1833 on keystone. Brick with stone dressings and asbestos and slate roofs. 3-storey block, square in plan with an opening into which a branch of the canal passes. There are C20 additions to right, left and rear which are not of special interest. Five bays with stone plinth, eaves cornice and parapet. The central bay is advanced and has a pediment with circular opening (now blocked) and moulded surround, rusticated quoins as well as rusticated voussoirs and keystone to the 2-storey high barge entry (now blocked) and a Venetian window with dated keystone. There were a total of six semi-circular-headed brick arched openings with stone sills to either side of the central bay none of which retain original glazing and two of which on the left hand side have been removed to facilitate the addition of a cast iron stair. The 6-bay left side elevation retains seven similar arched openings and formerly had two full-height loading bays with hoist canopies (one blocked up). The rear has a pediment to the central two bays and retains six arched openings to the top floor only.

(Source: <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101067956-former-canal-warehouse-adjacent-to-coal-wharf-altrincham-ward>)

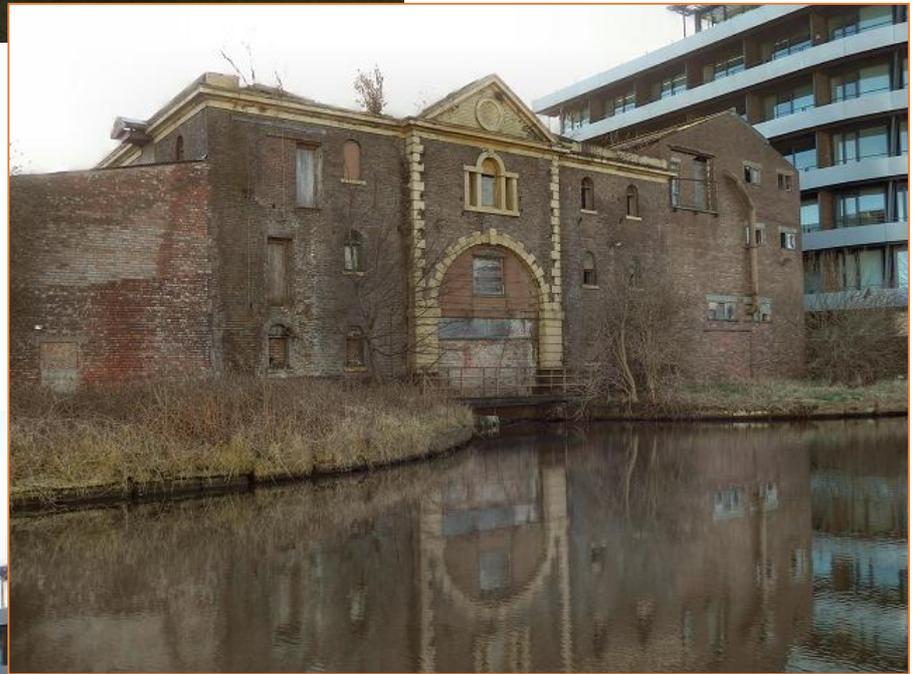
Note – In preparing this report the premises were not entered. All photographs used were either taken in public accessible areas or sourced from the worldwide web.

Dilapidation in Progress

15th June 2002



2012



2016 Approx Rear View when grounds were used as a builders compound for a new block of flats behind the camera.



East side



May 2020

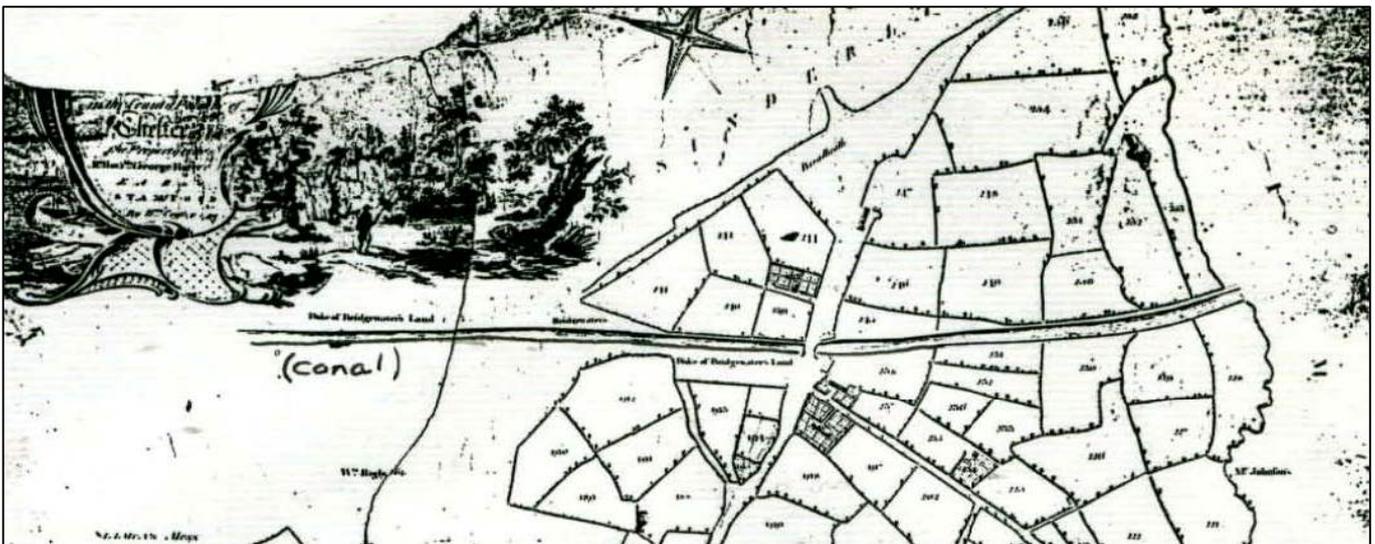




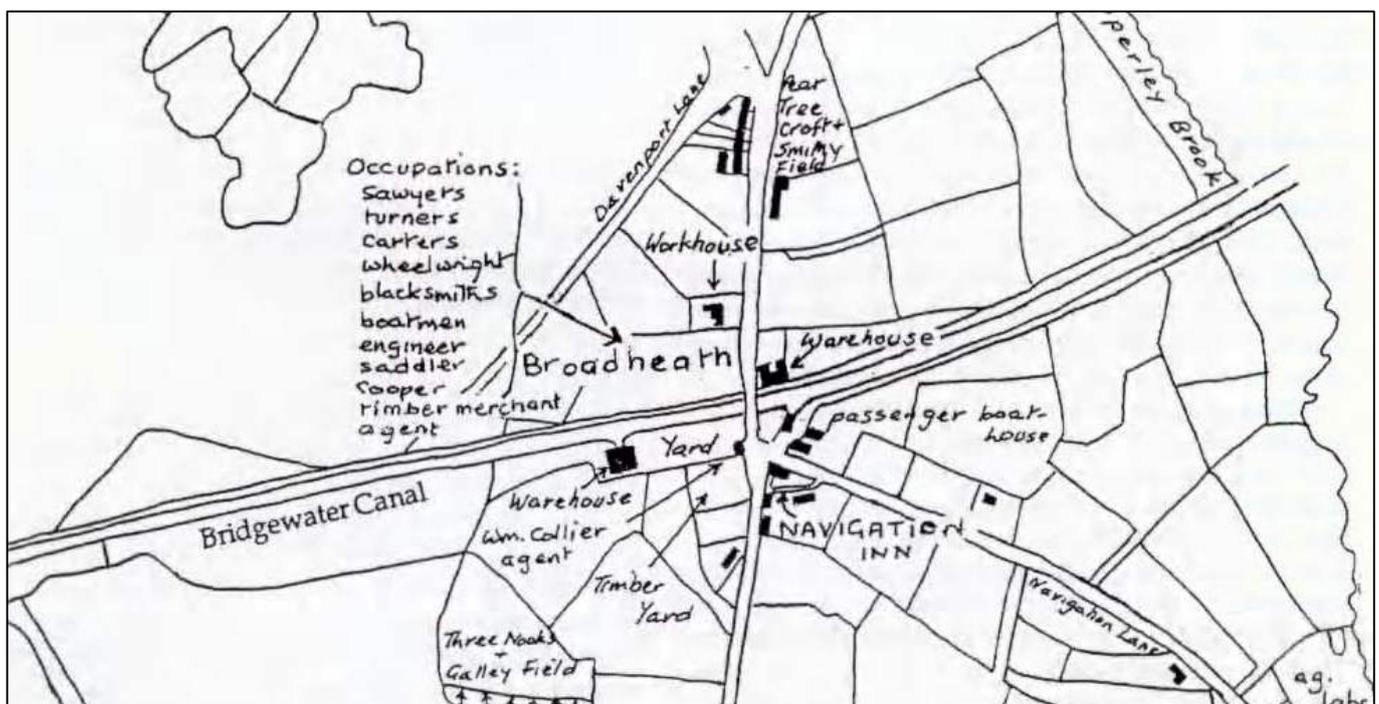
History

The quay at Broadheath was in operation from the 3rd October 1767, when daily passenger services to Manchester began. Arthur Young noted in 1769 that 'at Altrincham Bridge the Duke has a large warehouse on the side of the canal, several stories high' and described a coal wharf with cranes. Once the canal was fully opened in 1776 two boats plied the waterway from the canal basins at Manchester and Runcorn each day. In 1788 the down boat was scheduled to leave Manchester at 8am, reaching Altrincham at 10am, Lymm at 11.30am, Stockton Quay at 1pm, Preston Brook at 2.30pm and Runcorn at 4pm.

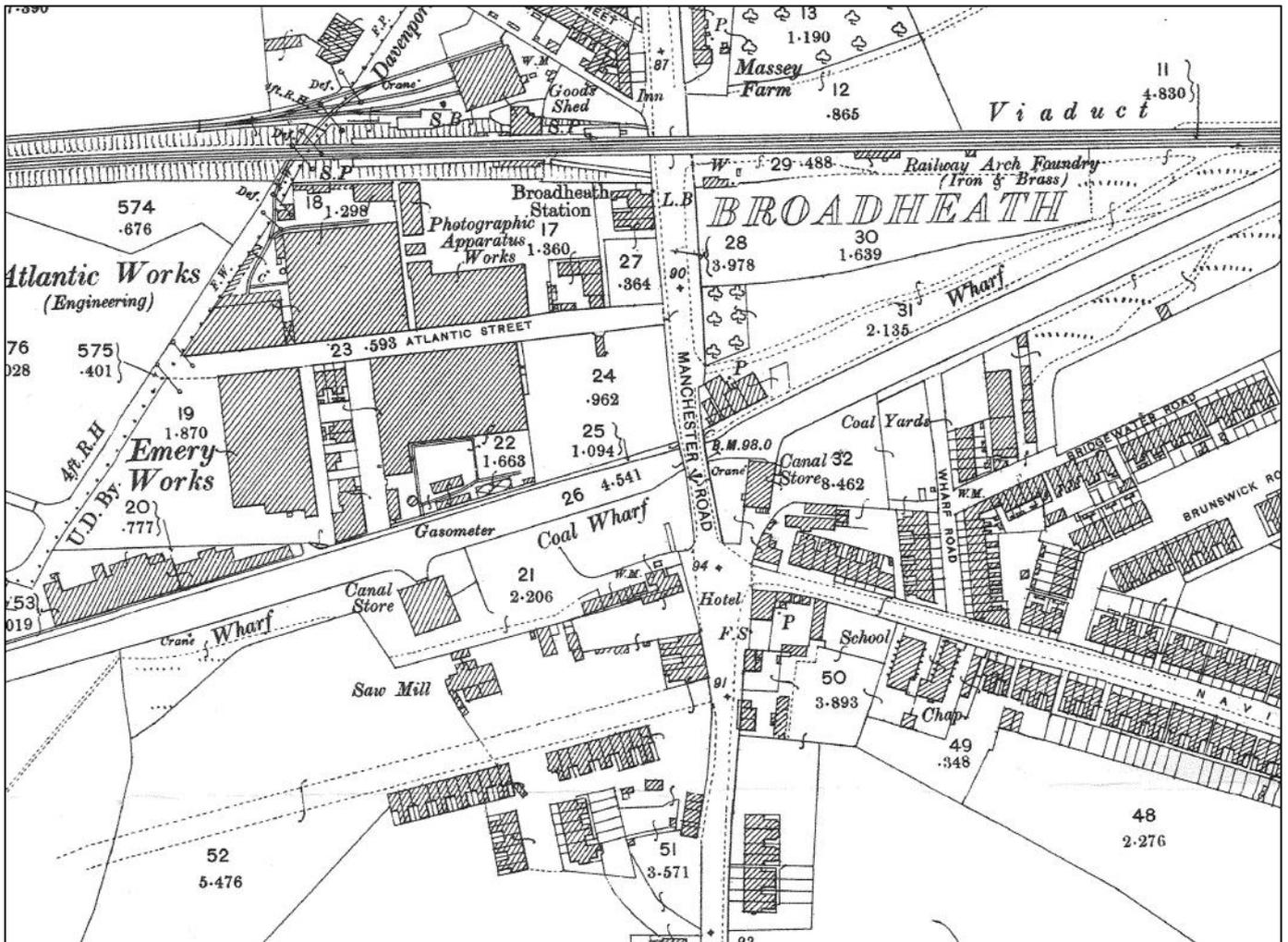
Broadheath's real role, however, was as a transhipment point for agricultural produce from the surrounding lands and from the Earl of Stamford's estates in particular. In 1770 the annual tonnage of 'market goods' (such as cheese, grain and vegetables) leaving the Broadheath quay was 2,730 tons, a figure which had risen to 7,060 tons in 1849.



Map Broadheath 1799 showing turnpike road crossing the Bridgewater Canal and the Duke's Wharf



Map Broadheath 1841 showing the growth of the Broadheath area based around the canal. The new Broadheath Warehouse is shown



By 1897 the area around Broadheath was a thriving economic hub. Despite the coming of the railway the wharfs on the canal were still in active use.

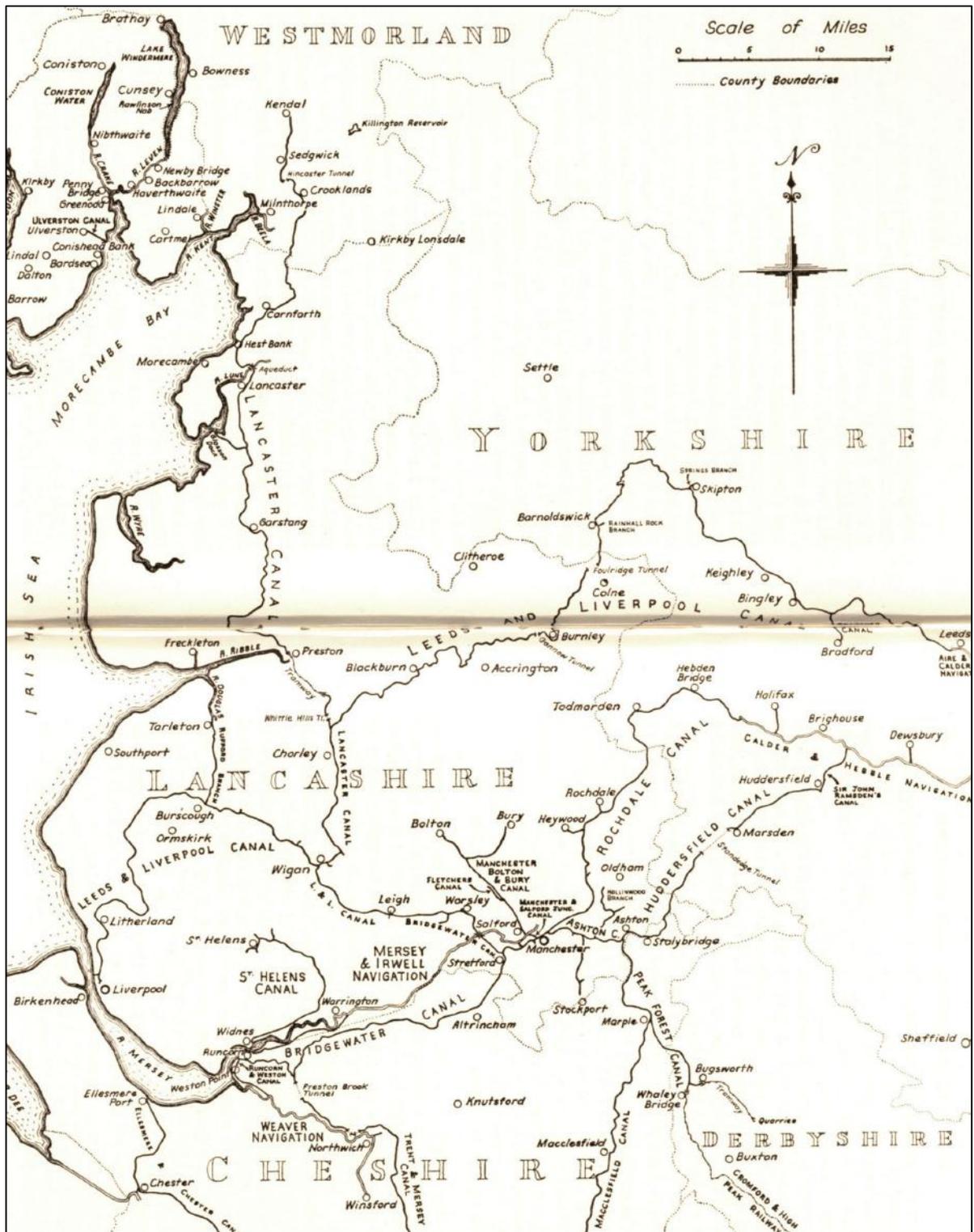
This section from a 1922 aerial photograph shows the Canal Warehouse in its context on the south bank of the canal. The coal staithes can be seen between the three-story warehouse and the A56.

The burgeoning industrial area of Broadheath can be seen on the northern canal side.



In 1922 Linotype was in its third decade of operation. The number 37 or 38 street trams from Altrincham to city centre Manchester had entered service and terminated. The manufacture of motor vehicles in the area had fizzled out.

When the Broadheath Warehouse was built in 1833 it was possible to take manufactured goods and bring in raw materials from all around the North West, and from the Midlands using the Trent & Mersey Canal.



Extract from *The Canals of the North West Vol 1*

Passenger carrying also contributed to revenue. This began in October 1767 between Broadheath (Altrincham) and Manchester, in early 1769 was extended to Lymm, and later to Stockton (for Warrington), using converted barges. On 1 September 1774 the Duke was reported just to have built two packet-boats for the same run, one carrying 120 passengers and the other 80. Each had a 'Coffee-room at the Head, from whence Wines &c are sold out by the Captain's Wife. Next to this is the first Cabin, which is 2s 6d, the second Cabin is 1s 6d, and the third Cabin 1s for the Passage'.

They were successful, if sometimes overcrowded: a letter of 4 July 1784 notes that on that day the boat from Manchester carried 152 passengers.

Most of the land around Broadheath, including some on which the wharfs at Broadheath were built, was owned by the Earl of Stamford. In the main it was wet ground which needed improving. As the population of Manchester grew it had a problem with night soil. The lands adjacent to the canal provided a way of disposal and would enrich the ground. This in turn made the land more productive for growing vegetable. It would be spread at a rate of up to 25 tons per acre. It must have been good for the land as Cheshire potatoes were reputed to be the best tasting around. The night soil was carried free as a back load for boats returning after carrying vegetable. Night soil was not transported through Broadheath but it was an important element in the economic merry-go-round which made the canal so important to the growth of the North West.

Significant Dates

1801 Population of England and Wales was 9 million
1801 Population of Altrincham was 1692
1819 Peterloo Massacre
1833 Broadheath Canal Warehouse built
1833 Slavery Abolition Act
1834 New Poor Law passed
1837 Queen Victoria came to the throne
1841 Population of Altrincham 3399
1851 Population of England and Wales was 18 million
1851 Population of Altrincham 4488

The canal was sold in 1885, when the Manchester Ship Canal Company paid the Bridgewater Navigation Company £1,710,000 for all their property. The construction of the Ship Canal forced the removal of historic Barton Aqueduct and the construction of Barton Swing Aqueduct, as the former was too low for the vessels which would use the new canal. The Barton Swing Aqueduct is also a Grade II listed structure within Trafford.

The last known use of the Broadheath Canal Warehouse was as a factory and warehouse for Luxi Coachcraft, a manufacturer of high quality prams. Their business sign is still visible high on the east wall. Their prams still command a high price on the internet.



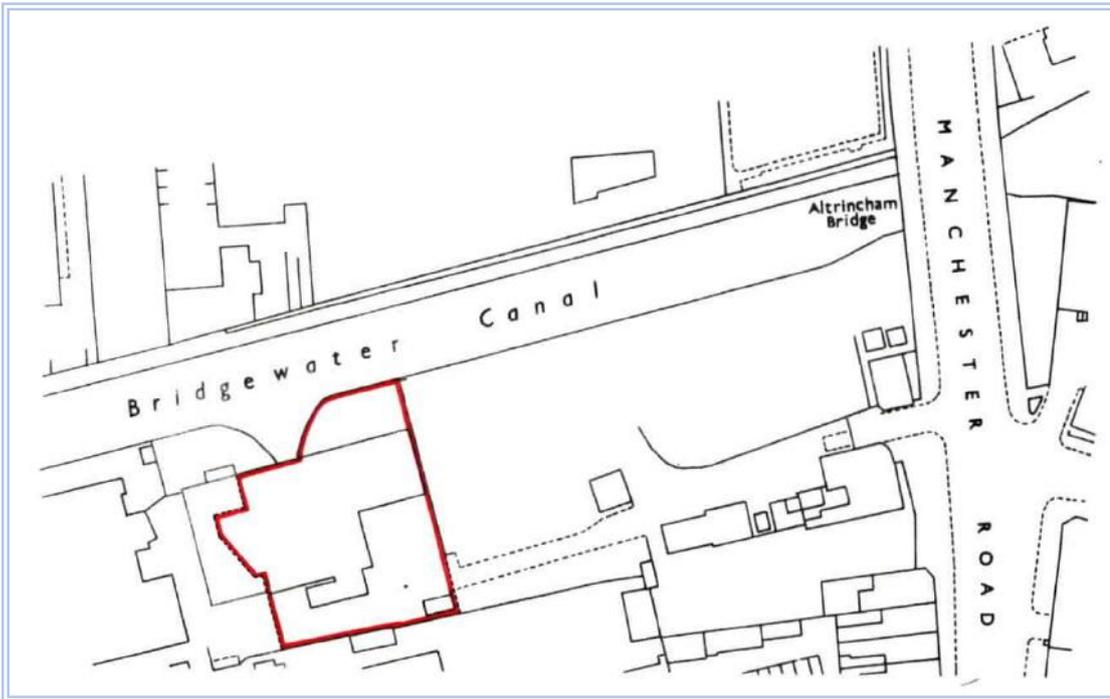
The Canal Warehouse lies just outside the Linotype Conservation Area by some 70 yards as the crow flies. The quality of the Linotype Conservation Area has been substantially depleted by redevelopment to make way for unspectacular but needed housing. In that 70 yards are few buildings of heritage merit with the exception of a row of shops at the Manchester Road end of Woodfield Road.

Located some 300 yards west of the canal warehouse is a hand operated crane to lift the boards used to isolate a section of the canal during maintenance work. These were of vital importance when the canal breached on the Dunham stretch in August 1971 – an event which threatened the closure of the canal for good. It is marked with a riveted plate MSC Co (BW Div) which is interpreted to mean Manchester Ship Canal Company (Bridgewater Division). The crane probably dates back to about 1895 when the Bridgewater Navigation Company was taken over by the Manchester Ship Canal Company so they controlled the building work involved in the Bridgewater crossing the ship canal at Barton and also the joining of the Bridgewater and Weaver Navigation to the ship canal at Runcorn.



360° View

Location and Title Deeds Plan (since 2007)



East side east wing towards rear taken about 2016.



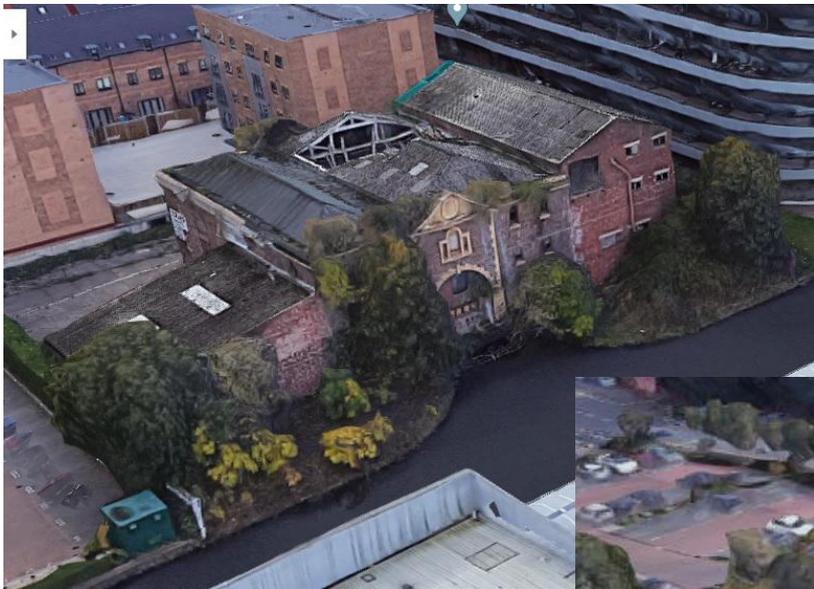
South side east wing. The original window opening can be seen under green paint. Date unknown but thought to be about 2010.



Inside in western extension added around 1954



From Above



Future Uses

There is little point in having a Heritage building unless it has a useful life, even if that usefulness is just a link to our past. The site currently has planning permission for industrial and storage use.

The Canal Warehouse is not currently in a tourist area and so use as a walk-in café would not be appropriate. The towpath on the canal is on the opposite bank and so users would have to walk to the bridge, cross it and walk back. People do not behave like that. It needs to be a destination to attract people.

Trafford does not have a single Museum. What an indictment! The former Altrincham Town Hall basement has local items of historic value in storage. Trafford Local Studies (based in Sale) also has items in storage which can only be viewed by appointment. Exciting children's interest in their past and heritage is just not possible. When the new Altrincham Library was being forced through a museum was strongly requested but TMBC were unwilling to make any space available.

This building would make a first class Museum on a par with The Manchester Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI) but on a much smaller scale. It was the coming of the Bridgewater Canal to Altrincham which started the change of the town from being a market town to being an industrial town. The Earl of Stamford had significant foresight in allocating land to industrial use along the side of the canal. Broadheath Industrial Estate was the FIRST industrial estate in Great Britain and predated Trafford Park by ten years. Broadheath had some very significant international employers such as Churchill Machine Tools, Linotype, Wheelabrator, Thornton Pickard, Record Tools, Budenburg, and many similar. In WWI an aerial camera was developed for use in reconnaissance aircraft. In WWII it was a major centre for assembling aircraft dash panels, and the heavy machine tools used in the construction of engines and ships.

The site has historic links with the National Trust' Styal Mill. Raw cotton for the mill and finished cloth were handled at the warehouse. A Packet Boat service operated from near this site to ferry people to city centre Manchester before the railway came to the town (1849). The railway became one of the first in Britain to be Electrified.

These are all things we need to shout about.

The canal is a fantastic leisure resource. This picture shows a pleasure cruise of about 1900. There could again be boats linking Broadheath to Dunham Massey, Preston Brook, or the Waterways Museum at Ellesmere Port and, closer to home, Castlefield Basin in Manchester. Cruises down the Manchester Ship Canal are always sold out many months before the date. Having this area as a leisure destination would lift the profile of the surrounding area as well as providing jobs.



The site has parking for about 30 vehicles. It is within easy walking distance of Navigation Road Metrolink Station. It is within 60 yards of the bus routes which follow the A56 such as the 263, 245 and 19.

Dunham Massey is 2.1 miles away along the tranquil Bridgewater Way. Manchester Airport Viewing Park is four miles away. The Manchester Museum of Science & Industry (MOSI) is 10 miles away.

There has been over development with high density residential blocks surrounding this area. Car parking space alone makes the site valuable.

It would also make a good meeting location for interest groups in the area like Civic Society, the Altrincham Historical Society, the Photographic Society and others but these on their own would not generate sufficient income to make the building viable.

Residential? Buildings which span a canal basin have a unique aroma. It is caused by the organic matter in the canal water which settles in the basin because there is no disturbance to the water. The aroma is a natural decay process but in a confined space. The aroma does stick to clothes over a prolonged period. To cover over or fill in the basin would lose one of the distinguishing features of this very special building. Movement of the water may alleviate some of the aroma but the problem is best avoided. For a museum it might be a plus as the York Viking Museum reputedly waft a smell of manure into their visitor space.

Costs and Future Action

All the self seeded trees and shrubs on the site need to be removed. There are three very large trees which will need rope work to fell. Ropes will be needed to work on the top of the building to remove the trees growing out of the masonry. Given the close proximity of the canal to the front of the building ladders or a cherry picker could not be used. There are about one hundred trees and shrubs across the whole site.

As the roof has been damaged in many areas rainwater is getting into the building. A scaffold cover is needed over the whole building until serious remedial and renovation work can begin. This very urgent action will require about £25,000.

From a distant view it is considered likely that the roof will require total replacement. It is not known how long the large hole has been in the roof but it could be as far back as 2017. It is likely that all timber inside the building may need to be replaced. The brickwork looks to be in good condition given that it is nearly 200 years old, except for the around the roof line. Few of the original slates seem to have survived. The last use was as a factory and so there may have been lots of changes inside. Two of the windows at the canal side have been changed to accommodate a staircase and these will need to be remade. Until access can be gained to the building an estimate of the renovation cost can not be made.

Broadheath is a sought after area by families and developers as there are very good schools in the Altrincham area. It is one of the lower cost areas of the town. Around the warehouse are some significant and impressive commercial buildings which would benefit by having the warehouse in productive use. The owners of one of these commercial buildings has expressed a willingness to work with parties wanting to bringing the Broadheath Canal Warehouse back to being a heritage asset of which the community can be proud.

Trafford MBC has made contact with the building's owners to make them aware of the state of the heritage building. At the start of June 2020 they had not received any response.

Duncan Wilson OBE, Historic England's chief executive, said the register of Heritage at Risk sent a clear message: "Our heritage needs to be saved and investing in heritage pays. It helps to transform the places where we live and work, and which we visit, creating successful places and distinctive places for us and for future generations to enjoy." October 2019

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heritage_at_risk

Local authorities have powers to force a property owner to improve their property if it falls into disrepair. If the property owner does not comply with the improvement order the local authority can make the improvements itself and put a charge on the property, registered at the Land Registry, to recover its costs and interest upon sale of the property.

As always agreement is far better than enforcement. Most property owners will make the improvements if they have the funds available to carry out the work.

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