

LEIGH

Town Centre Trail



Two Guided
Walks in Leigh
Town Centre



Wigan
COUNCIL

Director of Planning and Development
John Sloane BA FRTP

Preface

By Councillor J.E. Hilton J.P.

Chairman of the Planning and Development Committee



I am delighted that the Planning and Development Committee is publishing the Leigh Town Centre Trail at this point in Leigh's history. Last year the Leigh Borough Charter centenary was celebrated and now the new Millennium has begun. The trail consists of two introductory sections 'What to Look for in Leigh' and 'Aspects of Leigh's History' followed by two guided walks covering the majority of Leigh Town Centre. In celebrating Leigh's history, architecture and townscape the trail provides ample evidence that Leigh is a fascinating place with an extensive history, of which, "Leythens" can be proud.

The incorporation of Leigh as a Municipal Borough under its charter of August 1899 emphatically marked Leigh's progress and arrival as an important Lancashire town and its splendid Town Hall completed a few years later symbolised Leigh's civic and commercial pride. During the century since the charter some facets of the town including buildings, streets and industry have altered radically yet other scenes have changed little and occasionally glimpses are available of Leigh's character in the 18th Century and before. As far as architecture and townscape go Leigh has much to commend it and the trail is the first detailed account of Leigh's built environment to be published.

I am particularly pleased that not only the large and grand buildings are covered but also many lesser buildings. I bring readers' attention especially to the role of the Leigh architects J.C. Prestwich and Sons who designed so many of Leigh's distinctive buildings. The success of this practice in architectural competitions beyond Leigh also introduces another notable feature of Leigh's history, namely that it has nurtured or been associated with an extraordinarily large number of people who have enriched our national cultural and technological heritage.

King Street c.1890



Leigh's history from the medieval period has been well served by past publications including those by John Lunn, Thomas Boydell and the Leigh Historical Society and the trail is indebted to these authors and sources. Some of the trail information is, however newly published or, in combining architectural, photographic, map and historical evidence, the trail may freshly illuminate some aspects of Leigh's past. As we enter the Millennium it is useful to be reminded of our past.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J.E. Hilton".

March 2000