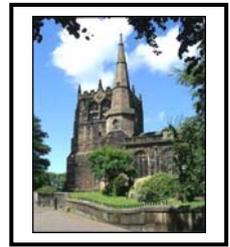


WEST LANCASHIRE

Ormskirk



Ormskirk is a lively market town which combines history and character with excellent shopping and thriving local industry. It is a popular destination for shoppers with the bustling Charter Market a magnet each Thursday and Saturday.

The market town serves a mainly agricultural area of very high quality land and the town, which has excellent rail links, has increasingly become home to people who work in nearby Liverpool.

Ormskirk is the civic heart of West Lancashire and is home of the district council offices and the area's general hospital. Edge Hill University is also renowned as a higher education centre.

Ormskirk's history through the centuries...



One of the roads the Romans constructed through Britain nearly 2000 years ago ran northwards from the Cheshire salt towns, over the Mersey, through Wigan to Preston and Lancaster. Another of these roads has been partly traced from Wigan to a Roman port on the west coast, passing through Ormskirk around Otters head Farm where Roman coins were found. Other Roman relics include a quern discovered at Slack Farm and are now in the museum at Wigan.

The derivation of the name of Ormskirk is undoubtedly Scandinavian. The Vikings are known to have landed on the coast in the 9th century and they penetrated inland, possibly along the disused Roman road, to settle at Ormskirk and places round about. Ormskirk might signify the place where Ormskirk founded a settlement and built a church - but there are other theories.

Although Ormskirk is not included in the Domesday survey of 1086, it was an important town and was the administrative centre of the Hundred of West Derby.

The scanty remains of Burscough Priory which still stand in Abbey lane just off the A59 between Ormskirk are now scheduled as an ancient monument. It was founded for the Black Canons (Augustinian Order) in the early 12th century by Robert de Lathom and became one of the most important religious houses in Lancashire. After the Priory had been surrendered to the Crown at the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536, the property was granted by Henry VIII to Sir William Padget, KG, who was the principal secretary of state.

By Tudor times, many of the nobility had residences at Ormskirk, including Lord Stanley, descendant of the ancient sovereigns of the Isle of Man who was Lord of the manor and lived at the Mansion House in St Helen's Road. Another family of ancient lineage, the Lathoms, lived at Lathom Hall. William Shakespeare is said to have played here in 1587 and in 1588 he is reputed to have appeared in a theatre which stood behind the Ship Inn (now a shop) on Moor Street in Ormskirk, as well as Rufford Old Hall.

During the Civil War of the 17th century, Ormskirk became the scene of much activity. A skirmish occurred in 1644 between the Royalists and Parliamentary forces at Aughton Moor, and the parish church of Ormskirk was later bombarded. The siege of Lathom House in 1644 is remembered as an outstanding historical event; for when most of Lancashire stood wholeheartedly for Parliament, this was the only fortified residence held for the king. A Parliamentary assault was withstood for seven months but the house eventually surrendered in 1645 and orders were issued for this fortified family residence to be completely destroyed.

During the coaching era Ormskirk and its numerous inns were busy with travellers passing through town. It is recorded that in the mid-19th century some 30 coaches left Ormskirk each day, proceeding northwards to Preston and Lancaster, and southwards to Cheshire and London. However, with the advent of railways the coach traffic declined. The railway line from Liverpool through Ormskirk to Preston was opened in 1849 and Liverpool had by then become an important town and port with the result that instead of criminals being brought from Liverpool for trial at Ormskirk, the Quarter Sessions were transferred to Liverpool.

Ormskirk is a lovely place to inspire pupils and old people to enjoy life...

Sources:

- <http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/~wiredue/ormskirk/market.gif> (24-09-06)
- <http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/~wiredue/ormskirk/history.htm> (24-09-06)
- http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/ORC_PAI/ORMSKIRK.html (24-09-06)