

Macclesfield Heritage Trail

Take a walk through a thousand years of history – from Royal hunting ground to world renowned silk town.

Discover Macclesfield's historic treasures, including:

- Thirteen Grade II* listed buildings and a wealth of others listed as properties of architectural interest.
- Six significant churches.
- One award winning museum, over three sites.

So take a walk and enjoy the stories of the characters who helped shape Macclesfield's destiny.



Market Place



Park Green



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Macclesfield in Pictures and Poems

Past Time of Macclesfield, volume I-III

A Georgian Gent. & Co. The Life and Times of Charles Roe



Macclesfield Town Hall.

Macclesfield Heritage Trail ~ A Brief History

Welcome to historic Macclesfield, for centuries a thriving market town.



*'The Cattle Market' c1930,
oil painting by Chas. Tunnicliffe RA, West Park Museum*

Mentioned in Domesday as Maclesfeld, it stood along important salt routes for traders and their packhorses from Northwich and Middlewich in Cheshire, to today's areas of Sheffield, Buxton and Chesterfield in Yorkshire and Derbyshire. This suggests its name, 'mackler' an old Germanic or Anglo Saxon word for trader, and 'feld(e)' for field; the field of the trader.

The survey records a hall and mill, with a small population of 20; a township of little worth, although of greater value earlier. Perhaps because of Norman reprisals in nearby Yorkshire, or extremely bad weather in the late 11th century, creating ruined harvest, plague and famine, it had fallen into 'decay' as people left the area. The Normans, however, were great forest administrators, and Macclesfield forest became of vital importance to the Crown and to the development of the township. The long bowmen, who practised their skills within the forest, later proved their worth at the battles of Crécy, Poitiers and Agincourt.

The foresters held significant positions, building lodges in their particular jurisdiction of the forest. Over the centuries, these developed into superb ancestral homes, some of which remain today within easy distance of the town, and attract hundreds of visitors.

Henry III, in arranging an important marriage for his son Prince Edward – later Edward I, 'acquired' the then wealthy Macclesfield Manor and Forest, to add to his son's bargaining powers as Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall and Earl of Chester. He succeeded, and in 1254, as part of Edward's marriage settlement with Eleanor of Castile, she became Lady of the Manor and Forest.

In 1261 Edward granted Macclesfield its first charter, probably with Eleanor's approval and encouragement, and the borough was created. The aldermen and burgesses were obliged to own property, known as burgages, within its boundaries and pay an annual due. Over time a mayor was elected, and the foresters such as the Legh family, became town officials by purchasing burgages, these were rebuilt over time or 'modernised', referred to later as town houses.

Having returned from Crusade in the Holy Land, Edward, now king, and Eleanor began a tour of England, eventually visiting the area. And so it was that in 1278, Eleanor gained permission to establish a chapelry for the borough, but priority remained with the mother church of Prestbury. Parts of the original building are still incorporated within the Parish Church of St. Michael's today.

During the 14th century the Black Prince had a hunting lodge in the forest, and his son, Richard II, was provided with a superb banquet on his visit early in 1399 to one of his court officials, John of Macclesfield. John had been busy building himself a small castle, and buying property near the King's Highway (Mill Street) to establish his somewhat grand residential estate.

With Royal favour the town rapidly developed, and its trading likewise. From wool in earlier centuries, the influx of Spanish silk buttons in Tudor times dictated a change of direction, and by the mid-16th century the Cromwellian years produced the beginnings of an extremely lucrative trade, as mohair, silk and linen buttons were made in their thousands. This in turn created a class of wealthy merchants and prosperous mercers, who became more involved with the silk trade in general.

In 1744 Charles Roe, son of a Church of England vicar, built the first small spinning mill, and a larger version in 1748 complete with Italian machinery. Later still he created a nationally important brass and copper company, which undertook the production of copper sheathing for naval ships not long after his death.

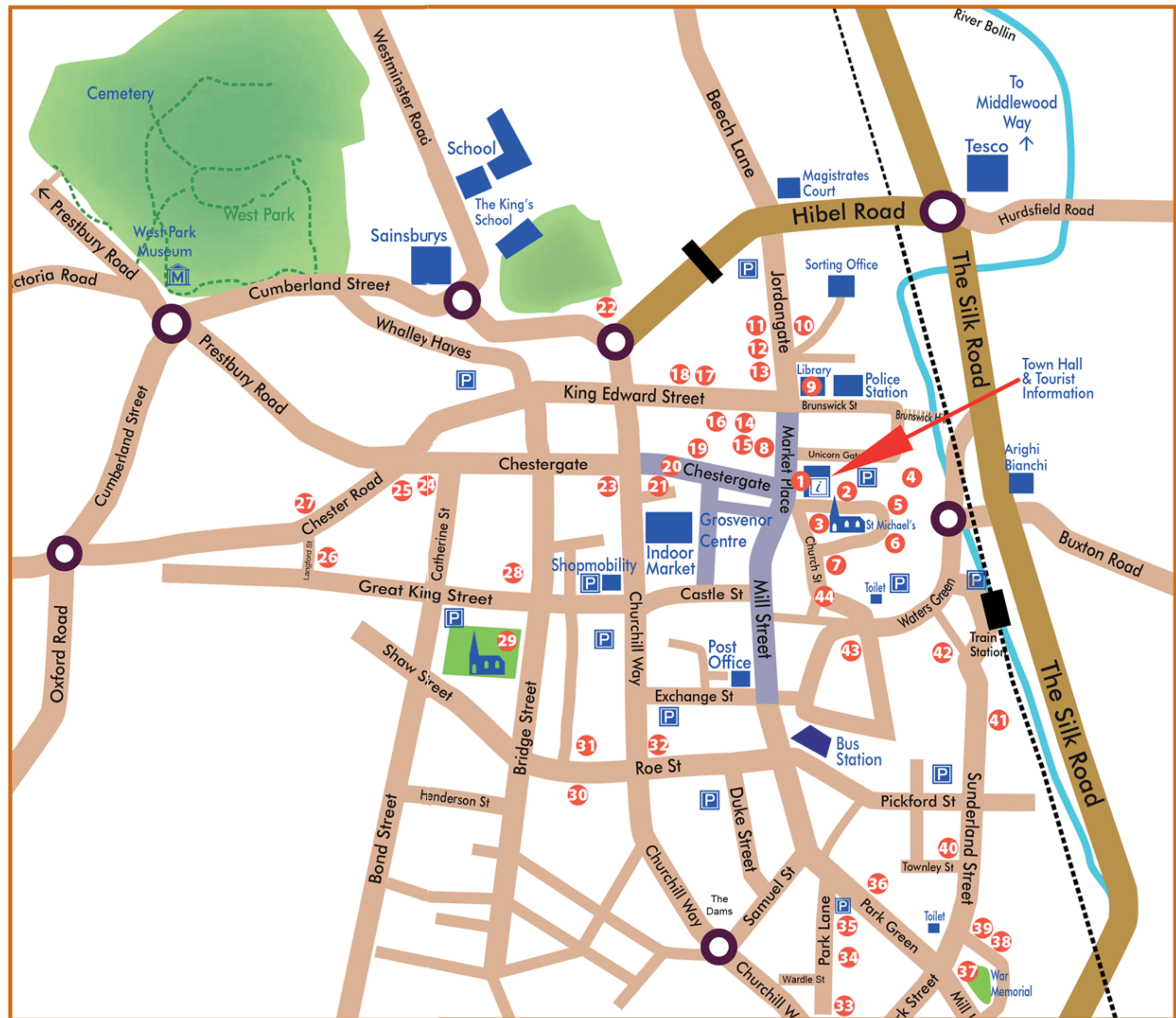
His silk venture saw the town's population increase from about four to seven thousand in the mid to late 18th century, and with further development by the Brocklehurst family and others, become world famous during the 19th. From a population of almost 9,000 in 1801, it had quadrupled by 1851!

Macclesfield's success has been its ability to adapt to change, and today with the enthusiasm and interest in its once renowned silk industry; wonderful collections in its three silk museums, together with further excellent exhibits such as paintings, sculptures, curios, and even a famous Egyptian collection in its former Brocklehurst Museum, now known as West Park Museum, it has plenty to offer as it increases its tourist attractions.

There is also much of historic interest still to be seen around the town itself, so please enjoy your walk.

Dorothy Bentley Smith

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1 Town Hall. The town hall extension, which houses the Tourist Information, was completed

in November 1992. The main part of the building, with its grandiose Ionic columns, was originally built in 1823-24.

By 1869 enlargement was necessary and this created a new entrance facing Chestergate, which fortunately conformed to the original classical style with an added portico, supported by a second set of four columns. Turning left at the town hall corner, walk along



Churchside. Immediately on the left is where the entrance to the building of 1823-24 had its entrance. There was a stone external stairway leading down

into a cellar area, which was in use as part of the town hall facilities. Several buildings had been demolished to make way for the edifice, including the old guildhall and 'Old King's Bakehouse'.



2 Borough Police Station. In February 1843 a new post of police superintendent was created to collect borough rates. The cellar, known as 'the

lower room' was partitioned to provide an office for the successful candidate. On the following 1st. January William Harper was appointed, but in May 1845 he submitted a medical certificate, which claimed his accommodation in the town hall was 'unhealthy'. He was rapidly moved upstairs and finally in 1853 the adjoining 'Guild Hall' public house was bought and extensively

renovated to provide a more convenient building. Considerable improvements were carried out in 1874, with a final rebuilding in 1900. Although the force became part of Cheshire Constabulary in 1947, it was not until 1974 they moved into new offices on Brunswick Street.



3 St. Michael's Parish Church. Situated to the right, the church still retains a small part of Queen Eleanor's original 1278 chapel of All Saints and All Hallows. In 1414

Eleanor's chapel was enlarged and a tower and spire added. Still visible on the outside of the tower are several coats of arms of the town's premier medieval families who contributed to the expense. The Legh chapel was added in 1422, and the Savage chapel in 1504. The latter was provided by Thomas Savage, Archbishop of York (1501-1507) whose family owned a burgage in town and held a considerable area of parkland. Many Savage family tombs and effigies remain within the church, including the superb late 17th century monument of Thomas Savage, 3rd Earl Rivers etc. by the famous

Stuart sculptor William Stanton. Two further enlargements took place; one in 1739-40 when the spire was removed, and extension made

on the north and east sides; finally a considerable late Victorian renovation 1896-1901, which encouraged the installation of windows in the Savage Chapel from the William Morris studio.



4 Following Churchside around St. Michael's, look to the left where the old grammar school stood. Created 1504 in the Savage Chapel, with its priest as headmaster, it unfortunately lost its income under Henry VIII's seizure of church properties 1536-40. But in 1552 it was re-established on this site behind the church, where it remained till 1748. The building was then converted into a silk mill, long demolished.



5 Read the plaque at the entrance to the **Brocklehurst Memorial Garden**, known locally

as Sparrow Park. It commemorates the generosity of Francis Dicken Brocklehurst, JP., banker, High Sheriff of Cheshire 1886, and a member of the famous silk family. His gifts to the town include Victoria Park and the beautiful east and west windows of the Parish Church. He never married and devoted himself to the service of the town, being active on many committees and involved in charities.



6 Next to this small park with its superb view, are the renowned **108 steps**. When these were created or named is now lost in the mists of time.

Continuing round Churchside, this final part was once known as Churchyard side. The tiny cul-de-sac at the top of the steps comprises mainly buildings which are at least early 17th century, and probably even earlier. The Union Jack belongs to the one which was



a silk workshop, where ribbons and eventually buttons were made. It has internal access to

the building immediately on the right, whose sidewall with small window and gateway represent a superbly conserved ancient house. Before the building of the 18th century row of Churchyard side cottages, it would have been in full view. In 1643 a London haberdasher had an interest in the property, and it was formerly the burgage of the Legh family of Ridge Hall.



7 This 18th century row of property was once a busy little street, and had at least two public houses, which would have been crowded on market days.

The largest property, with a distinctive Georgian door with columns, was one, with an entry to the stable at the side, now bricked up, but with the archway still clearly visible. For many years it has been a solicitors' office. The property on the corner with Church Street was also an Inn, known finally as the 'Black Horse'. It was originally a much larger building, but part of it was demolished to accommodate the widening of Church Street.

Make your way back across the market place, where the medieval market house once stood. The old market cross was for centuries on the corner with the ancient thoroughfare to Chester, still known as Chestergate. Returning past the town hall extension look across to the interesting row of buildings opposite.



8 This row of buildings was still part of one of the most ancient roads out of Macclesfield, Jordangate, until

the 19th century, when it became part of the Market Place. The large white building was, until not so long ago, the important Bulls Head Inn. It had large stabling facilities at the rear, plenty of accommodation, and as the 18th century progressed, more and more coaches came and went from the expanding cities of London, Birmingham and Manchester. It was originally the burgage of the Savage family, which passed eventually by marriage to the Cholmondeleys, who were the absentee landlords in the 18th century.

The adjoining premises to the right were home to an 18th century solicitor, and the small door between the two led to a first floor office. Here in 1787 one of the partners of the Roe & Co. copper works, Edward Hawkins, opened the first official bank in Macclesfield, although the company itself had acted as a private bank for many years.



9 The Library. This is a very old site, once standing on the border between the ancient borough and the Manor and Forest of Macclesfield. The

present building is of considerable interest and retains many features from its days as a very superior bank. The date of 1881 over the entrance is when the Manchester and Liverpool District Banking Co. became a limited company and built the premises. The cellars

still retain the old Chubb & Co. safes. Call in and pick up a leaflet which describes the brief but interesting history of libraries in Macclesfield. Also view the large superb silk collage representing Macclesfield's connection with the silk trade, which evokes the Silk Road.



10 Jordangate

House. This was known as Pear Tree House when built in 1728 by an important silk merchant called John Glover. He had connections with Manchester, and

in 1748 his son Samuel shared the large silk mill with the Charles Roe partnership. In 1782 the house was sold by Samuel to John Brocklehurst snr. a silk button merchant, whose son John would become Liberal M.P. for the town from 1832 to 1868.



11 Cumberland

House. This very interesting property has a history dating back to at least

the 14th century. Extensive internal restoration work has uncovered the remains of a grange for storing grain, which appears on a deed of 1375. It had a large area of land to the north known as the Pearl Walls, until 19th century development; the name was then retained as Pearl Street. The grange was converted into a large house in the early 17th century, about half the size of the present building and faced south. In 1731 an important lawyer, John Stafford bought the premises and became Deputy Clerk of the Manor and Forest of Macclesfield, and eventually Town Clerk.



It was John who 'modernised' the house when he married into the important Tatton

family, and it was here the famous painter Wright of Derby, painted the family portraits. The house had three storeys, and from an upper window John described the arrival of Bonnie Prince Charlie with his men in 1745, on their way to Derby. Here also the Duke of Cumberland stayed when chasing the prince back to Scotland, hence the house name.

Sadly John met a tragic end, and the property was partly demolished, including the upper storey. An addition was made with an extra entrance, which can be seen round the corner on Cumberland Street. This became a solicitor's office separate from the main house.

Returning back up Jordangate you will pass:-



12 This neat Georgian property was the home of a Macclesfield solicitor, Thomas Grimsditch in the early 19th century. His office stood just around the

corner and was on part of the library site on Brunswick St. He was rather a pompous and arrogant man, a member of the Yeomanry and was engaged in a nationally renowned abduction trial. His beautifully embroidered silk waistcoat is part of the collection held by the Macclesfield Silk Museums.

On the corner with King Edward Street is the next property of note.



13 The Macclesfield Arms. Once a very famous coaching inn,

and still a hotel until recent times, it outrivalled The Bull's Head from when it was built in the early 19th century. It even had a conference room, and gained such a reputation for its catering and fine wines under respective landlords and landladies, that it was used for all important dinners and meetings in the town. In 1832, whilst en route from Eaton Hall in Cheshire to Chatsworth in Derbyshire, Princess Victoria and her mother, the Duchess of Kent, briefly visited whilst the coach horses were changed.

Turning right onto King Edward Street you will see on the left:-



14 Brocklehurst Premises. John Brocklehurst jnr. joined his father's silk enterprise as a mercer in 1808, aged 21 years. His office and premises for storage were

on the right of the passageway leading to the Dissenting Chapel. The office was also used as the Brocklehurst bank from 1816, when the three Brocklehurst brothers and a solicitor called Samuel Bagshaw were granted a licence. On the left of the passageway was the solicitors' practice of the eldest brother, William Brocklehurst and his partner, Samuel Bagshaw, which has remained a legal practice until the present day.

Do not miss looking through the passageway between the two former Brocklehurst premises. This leads to a chapel, and if the gate is open you will be most welcome to look round.



15 The King Edward Street Chapel. This unique building, one of the earliest Dissenting chapels to be built in 1690, a year after the Toleration Act of

William and Mary's reign, is beautifully conserved. Many of the early congregation were button, twist and ribbon manufacturers, and having left the Parish Church, the grandfather of John Brocklehurst snr. became very much involved with the chapel. It was thanks to the early support of the family that the chapel survived many traumas in the 18th to mid 19th century, and is still thriving today.



16 The former County Police Station. This stands on land originally purchased as

a burgage plot in 1675 by Sir Francis Dashwood, alderman of London, whose grandson created 'The Hell Fire Club' at West Wycombe. The family were the most important importers of mohair and silk in England, and had extensive trading links here and in Chester, hence Sir Francis's desire to be a freeman of the towns which allowed him trading privileges. After his death (1683) his son, then owner, allowed a house to be built in 1691, which later became

the chapel parsonage. The land was eventually bought by John Brocklehurst jnr., the house was demolished, and a small Cheshire Constabulary Office built in 1837. In 1865, desperate for cells in which to lock up dangerous prisoners destined for trial in Chester, the Brocklehursts, as trustees for the chapel leased the land to the county for the erection of a new county police station. In recent times it was used as offices only, and then converted to flats.

On the opposite side of the street are two further properties of interest.



17 The Town House.

In the late 18th century these premises were owned by a branch of the Pickford family. They had an extensive business as carriers by that period, and behind the house was

a coach house and stable with adjoining premises used for the Pickford & Co. wagons. In March 1787 the Manchester mail coach was rerouted through Macclesfield, and Matthew Pickford provided horses and riders. This therefore represents the first central Post Office in the town, and the brightly coloured coaches, complete with post horn and armed guard, would have been a sight to see.

Matthew also provided services to London, which had increased from three a week to one daily from Monday to Saturday. The whole family network was estimated to have involved 1,000 horses by 1817, and the time taken to travel between Manchester and London reduced to one third. This was later transformed into 'Pickford Removals'.



18 Former Rural District Council Building. In 1756/57 Francis Beswick, member of a silk family bought a large plot of land, and

two years later built his mansion. This was the left half of the large building, which still shows his initials on the rainwater heads and the date of 1758. He increased his land on the eastern side by purchase, and then sold it to the Pickfords as part of their business premises; that is now occupied by the other half of the building which at one time was a bank.

Francis on his own site developed an extensive silk business, and when his son died in 1818 there was the house with its plot of land and outbuildings, a silk factory, warehouse and a smaller house etc. and he also owned other parcels of land and a cottage elsewhere on the outskirts of town.

Now turn left opposite the Beswick House and, passing on the right the car park and rear of the Bate Hall Hotel, you will enter Chestergate through a small passageway.



19 The Bate Hall Immediately on the right is the restored façade of the Georgian inn; the building

itself is much older, dating from at least Tudor times. The early history is now lost, but in the 17th century, the Earl of Derby was Steward of the Manor and Forest of Macclesfield on behalf of the king, and owned burgages in town, one

of which was this. Beheaded during the Civil Wars, his properties were seized, and his son, unable to pay a huge fine saw many sold to loyal Puritans. One such important army colonel was James Stopford of Saltersford Hall, in the hills to the east of town. He was allowed to buy the property, became Earl of Courtown for his campaigns in Ireland and settled there, leasing out his local properties. The house became an inn and has remained so ever since.



20 Chestergate The earliest street in the ancient 13th century borough. As the

town prospered, first with wool trading, cattle and horse markets and later the button and silk trades, the most important aldermen and burgesses developed their burgages into grand houses. There was a fever of building in the late 17th century, when properties were extended to mimic 'The Rows' of Chester, but the 18th century saw houses and shop facades 'modernised'. To appreciate the size of those 18th houses, which represent the affluence of the merchants and town councillors at that period, look at the upper storeys. Today, sometimes two, sometimes three ground floor facades of shops occupy what was just one property in the 18th century.

Turning right, away from the direction of the Town Hall, on the left hand side is a door between two shops, leading into a very old passage way. If the door is open, make your way to the far end of the passage where the next property of interest is situated. If not then walk round the block, and view the building from the outside.



21 Stanley Street Warehouse. By the early 1820s. the silk trade was again beginning to thrive, and a large silk mill complex had developed

around a courtyard in this area of town. Fronting Stanley Street, which then ran through what is now the Indoor Market, were two silk mills requiring enlarged warehouse facilities. Behind these, on the other side of the courtyard, was a stone building dating from at least the early 17th century; this would have been only one or two storeys high. Evidently it was partially demolished but then extended in brick to a height of three storeys. About this time it became a button and silk twist warehouse, tenanted by a George J. Moss, who leased two floors in one of the silk mills for his silk twist manufacture. The ground floor is beautifully conserved, if open call in and learn more about the history.

Walk back to the pedestrian crossing at the corner of Chestergate and Churchill Way and look towards the roundabout. In the distance you will see:-



22 Kings School Gates. The school of 1748 stood just in front of

the roundabout, after moving from behind the Parish Church. At that time it had been a house which Bonnie Prince Charlie had commandeered in December 1745, for his short stay in Macclesfield. During the 19th century expansion took place, and with more land purchased, the school built

excellent new premises just to the north of the older building in 1856, which can now be seen through the fine Gateway of Remembrance 1939-1945.



23 Charles Roe House. On the other side of the crossing, but still on Chestergate,

stands the house where Charles Roe lived from 1753, until his death in 1781. Round the corner was his Registered Office of Roe & Co. His early entry into the silk trade was as a button merchant. His original burgage was on Jordangate, just below that of John Stafford, but now long demolished. He move to Chestergate shortly after his second marriage, and had a garden at the rear of the house leading to an orchard, and a large area of land on which he had barns and kept a few cows. His portrait of 1769, painted by Wright of Derby, is in the West Park Museum.

Continue down Chestergate to:-



24 Robert Roe's House. This was built by the eldest son from Charles Roe's second

marriage, after being expelled from his father's house for becoming a Methodist. Charles came from five generations of Church of England ministers; with the death of his father when 8 years old, and his mother when 9 years, there was little money for his education. Instead, when successful he built Christ Church on part of his land, hoping in time Robert would be minister. Robert's adherence to the Methodists, however, made this impossible and broke his father's heart. Robert built his house bordering on his father's land, but suffering from what appears to have been tuberculosis, died the year after his father in 1782.

Continue to the end of the block; this is where Chester Road begins and ahead you will see Pugin's Roman Catholic church.



25 Worth Hall

Continuing towards the church, immediately on the left hand

side you will pass Worth Hall, originally a medieval mansion but modernised in the 18th century, this was the Town House of the Downes family of Pott Shrigley, a village close to Macclesfield. Robert Roe built his house on land then part of Worth Orchard. The row of interesting cottages



at the beginning of Chester Road are at least early 17th century, when part of the area belonged to

another branch of the important Pickford family. Pinfold Street at the side, was originally Pickford Street.



26 Saint Alban's

Dedicated to St Alban on 26th May 1841, the church is unique in two ways; firstly it is the only church built by Pugin in the Shrewsbury

Diocese; secondly, because of the area of land available, it was built north to south, so the altar faces south instead of traditionally east. The large altar window, a gift from the Earl of Shrewsbury, is another unusual feature. It is dominated by the figure of St. Alban, whereas convention dictated portrayal of one of the persons of the Blessed Trinity. Another unusual feature is the tower, which was planned to be much taller, but because of subsidence resulting in a depletion of

funds, and a fear of further problems it was completed prematurely.



27 Priest's House

Immediately opposite the church, on Chester Road, is the house built by Fr. Hall, the first priest from 1821 to 1857. Next to this was the original St. Michael's chapel,

until the building of the church. Fr. Hall became blind in 1860 but remained in the town until his death in 1876. He was so well loved by everyone, that his funeral procession witnessed a great outpouring of respect, with Macclesfield streets crowded with people from every denomination. He has a lovely small marble tomb with columns in Macclesfield cemetery.

Follow the route from behind St. Alban's down Great King Street to the gates of Christ Church, and look at the building on the opposite side of the street



28 This was the Modern Grammar School, built in 1844. It

was erected as a separate unit of the 'Old' Free Grammar School on King Edward Street, which was still dedicated to a classical education system. By Act of Parliament the new school was able to teach writing, arithmetic, mathematics and modern languages, which had been demanded back in the 18th century for the prosperous commercial town. The two schools were finally brought together by extending the 1856 building in 1910, and in 1938 became known as The King's School, a public school. Since then the Great King Street building has served many purposes.



29 Christ Church

The church built by Charles Roe in 1775, with tower added in 1776. The tower of Christ Church seems out of proportion, it is very tall. Roe was a

practical man and the clock faces can be seen from all around the area, essential in the late 18th century. He used profits from his business to complete the building; £6,000 at that time – an enormous sum. His company had discovered, what became the largest copper mine in the world by the 1780s, Parys Mountain on the Isle of Anglesey. The church contains his monument by John Bacon R.A. from which the depiction of Charles Roe's head was later used on Macclesfield copper coinage. The C. of E. minister John Wesley on occasion preached here, but mostly after Charles Roe's death.



On leaving Christ Church follow the route down to Roe Street and turn left.



30 Roe Street

On the right hand side are nos. 63-67, built by Charles Roe's eldest son William

c. 1810, after purchasing the land. The site was originally part of the parkland leased by the Pickford family (not the carriers) from whom Charles Roe subleased. This was because the Dams Brook, now behind the houses, flows down to Park Green, and it was there he built his first small silk mill with water wheel.

On the left hand side of the street you will see a former chapel.



31 Roe Street Chapel.

In July 1834 a chapel, built in the southern part of the town,

was finally consecrated according to the rights of the C. of E., after many months of waiting because of law procedure, much to the chagrin of some of the congregation. This was St. George's, but any religious building, intending to become C. of E. was always considered to be a Dissenting chapel until consecrated. In this instance the dissatisfied group broke away, and having acquired a plot of land on Roe Street, built their own Dissenting chapel. A subscription fund paid for an organ, which was 'opened' for the first time on 24th April 1836, and concerts were also held there. It is now home to the Salvation Army.

Walk along Roe Street to Churchill Way and you will see the Heritage Centre.



32 Heritage Centre.

This was the Roe Street Sunday School built 1813.

Children were vital to the silk industry, because their supple little fingers enabled them to handle the fine silk fibres. At first education for them was at Sunday school where they learnt reading, writing and scripture. Eventually about 1,600 attended Roe Street, which was later used for all sorts of activities such as dancing and adult education. It is now restored as one of the silk museums with many lovely costumes on display, and also acts as a community centre.

On leaving the Silk Heritage Centre continue down into the Dams and cut through Wardle Street to Old Park Lane, there you will see the other two silk museums; to the right is Paradise Mill.



33 Paradise Mill

This houses the working silk mill museum on an upper floor. Here visitors can see an authentic mill with the machinery still in situ, and

witness hand loom weaving on looms still in use until 1981. There is also a delightful Victorian office fortunately conserved. Part of this large mill complex dates from the 1820s with the addition of the adjoining mill in the 1860s.



34 Park Lane Silk Museum.

This fine building began as Macclesfield School of Art, where

students were trained as silk designers from 1877. It contributed greatly in creating Macclesfield's reputation as a producer of richly patterned woven silks until the early 20th century. Surprisingly the school's most well-known graduate was Charles Tunnicliffe (1907-1979), who became famous for his nature studies, many samples of which can be viewed in the town's West Park Museum. The building in recent years became part of the College of Further Education, until purchased to house a significant collection of industrial items etc. collected as the remaining silk mills in town closed down. It is now the heart of the administration for the museums and

the exhibition centre, and also has some very interesting exhibits on display.

Immediately next to the museum is the Old Library Building.



35 Old Library Building.

Libraries were known in Macclesfield from the 14th century,

although private ones. The first so-called public library was in the nearby small village church of Pott Shrigley in the late 15th century, provided by a Fellow of Queen's College Cambridge, a member of the local Downes family whose town house was Worth Hall. The 18th century saw a private library established in town, which moved on at least three occasions. In 1835 the new Useful Knowledge Society soon acquired a vast library, but membership was by subscription. Finally David Chadwick, Liberal M.P. paid for the Public Library himself on Park Green. It opened 27th May 1876, and remained in use till 1994 when the Jordangate premises were provided.



36 Park Green

On the opposite side of Park Green is the area today originally occupied

by Charles Roe's first silk mill. The church is on the site of 17th century Pickford Hall, subsequently leased by Roe which, together with the classical style former bank building site, accommodated the extra buildings required by him for expansion of the business. The modern building on the left, which is separated from the church by the Dam's brook, was the site of the original small Roe silk mill with water wheel from 1744.

At this point, by turning left up Mill Street you can shorten the walk; otherwise turn right and walk to the crossing point to continue.



37 Memorial Gardens and Silk Mill. This area is where Victorian hustings for

political meetings were allowed, also public gathering and at one time even John Wesley was heard preaching here. The area has always been public land, confirmed by the Enclosure Act of 1804, but the land surrounding it was for a long period in the 18th and early 19th century owned by a family called Ryle. In 1785 John Ryle snr. a dyer, built a grand Georgian silk mill. His son became M.P. and partner in Daintry and Ryle's bank on the nearby corner of Park Green and Sunderland Street, also in Manchester. Disaster struck in 1841, when the London banking agent stopped payment and bankruptcy was declared, and their considerable estates were auctioned off.



38 Georgian Houses

These properties adjoin what was the

home of John Ryle snr. on the corner with Sunderland Street. One was at one time a library and reading room then a Gentleman's Club. The other on the right was the office of the silk workers' union, The Amalgamated Society of Textile Workers and Kindred Trades. The handloom weavers had combined originally in 1826 to negotiate with the employers, which for a while was

extremely successful.



39 Park Green House. This is a fascinating property both inside and out and beautifully restored. The Flemish gable end is unique in Macclesfield, reminiscent of

William and Mary's reign (1689-1702), it was in fact built in the 1720s by a Robert Nixon on land leased from the Pickford family, tanners and malt suppliers. Soon it passed to Urian Whilton whose daughter married Thomas Ryle; he developed a dyeing business. His grandson, John jnr. moved to the extensive Park Lane Estate, which the family had bought in 1788, having married one of Richard Arkwright's granddaughters, and was M.P. for Macclesfield.



40 Sunderland Street

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries the streets on either side were crowded with small silk mills, some as satellite buildings for the large Brocklehurst family business in Hurdsfield, about half a mile away.



Whilst walking along the street notice the Georgian doorways on the left, which fortunately survived modernisation. Close to the far end of the street, on the right, is the former Wesleyan Chapel.



41 Wesleyan Chapel. As inscribed it was built 1779 and enlarged 1799. At

that period John Ryle snr. was a follower of Methodism, and provided the land for the chapel building; but the family soon chose to worship in Roe's Christ Church. Paradoxically it was Charles Roe's niece, Hester who supported the Methodists and persuaded her cousins, in particular Robert Roe, to follow suit. She and her family were at Wesley's bedside when he died.



42 Waters Green. This was a very boggy area in the medieval period, with

three streams meandering through to join the River Bollin. They created an island in the middle which over time was built up, until today the streams are culverted. In the 18th century it was an important dyeing area. The Dams Brook was diverted to flow around a large plot of land, now occupied by the Queens Hotel and other buildings adjoining. Here in 1748 Charles Roe and partners joined Glover & Co. and built the large silk mill complex, the main building housing Lombe Italian machinery for silk spinning.



43 Wallgate Walking up the hill take the steep street immediately ahead, this

is Wallgate. On the left behind the stone wall stood John of Macclesfield's small castle, built 1391-93. He was

secretary to Richard II, and early in 1399 Richard came to Macclesfield and was entertained, wine and dined in the castle. By that time John was Keeper of the Great Wardrobe, responsible for thousands of pounds worth of equipment. His is a fascinating story, and he did manage to survive after Richard's subsequent fall from power and mysterious death in Pontefract Castle, Yorkshire.

44 The Town Well. Turning right



halfway up Wallgate, originally known as Wellgate, the small street of interesting

buildings became Churchwallgate some three hundred years ago; this is now Church Street. Where the street divides was the location of the Town's Well, and listening carefully you can hear the water rushing down below the stone cobbled road surface on its way to join the River Bollin past the Railway Station. It would have been an open well, a basin shape set into the hillside. It was stopped up in 1736, as people were washing clothes etc. in it, making it unsuitable for drinking or brewing beer; but this had not prevented the inn keepers from washing vessels out in it, or continuing with their ale making! In the early 19th century it was finally removed and the road surface levelled.

This concludes the walk, leaving a choice of direction, as you consider appropriate. We hope you have enjoyed our Heritage Trail.



Heritage Centre
Roe Street
SK11 6UT



The Silk Museum
Park Lane
SK11 6TJ



Paradise Mill
Park Lane
SK11 6TJ



West Park Museum
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