

Christleton Parish Heritage Walk 2 (6km)

Historical features are highlighted in italics.



The Cavaliers Tale (Christleton & Rowton Townships). Long Version Start at the Village Green facing the church.

1. *The Five townships of Christleton Parish are;*

Christleton, Little Christleton - Littleton, Rogh Christleton Rowton, Cotton Edmunds, Cotton Abbotts. *This walk takes in the Christleton & Rowton Townships.*

Turn left past the **Parish Hall** onto Pepper Street and walk to the **Trooper Bridge**. Go down the steps onto the canal towpath, go under the bridge towards Rowton and in 50m stand facing the rear of the former Trooper Inn.

2. The Trooper *was the name given to a Civil War horse soldier. The **Battle of Rowton Moor** took place in and around the townships of Rowton and Christleton on September 24th 1645. The Parliamentarians had control of Christleton and King Charles 1st was within the city walls in Chester.*



Now walk along the towpath east towards Quarry Bridge and “The Cheshire Cat Inn”. In 200m stop at the former Butlers Mill.

3. Butlers Mill *now residential accommodation was a mill built in the 1850's and producing agricultural foodstuffs and products for local farms. It also had a small shop and bakery. The mill owned by the Butler Family was in operation until the 1970s. The mill was supplied with grain by “Mersey Flats” which were horse drawn and these double width boats could be turned around in the “winding hole” basin just beyond Quarry Bridge. **The Shropshire Union Canal** was originally constructed as the **Chester Canal in 1772**. Its designer was **James Brindley**. The section from Chester to Nantwich via Beeston was completed in three years. It was built to carry agricultural cargo such as oats, wheat, corn etc. It was then connected to the Ellesmere & Montgomery Canals, and later amalgamated further to form part of the **Shropshire Union Canal Company** taking goods from the Midlands but primarily from **Ellesmere in Shropshire to the village of Netherpool on the River Mersey, later to become the town of Ellesmere Port.***

Walk along the canal until you can see the Sewerage pipe (dovecot!) on the A41. New housing here might prevent a clear view

4. *This unique pipe was part of the village sewerage system and was the vent pipe for sewage being pumped uphill towards Chester. Just beyond and below you is a small pumping station. **Christleton Grange** a grand house built in the 19C was once the home of **Dr Fleming MD**. The farms here are very productive.*

*Continue walking until you reach the **Cheshire Cat Inn** with the slipway opposite on your left.*

5. The Cheshire Cat.

*The Georgian style house now "**The Cheshire Cat Inn**" was built for Mr Heywood, a wealthy wool merchant from Manchester, someone who contributed a great deal to the local community of Christleton and to the City of Chester. This site was also a productive market garden until the 1980s and was also used as a Headquarters by the Military in WWII*



Boatbuilding in Christleton.

*On your left just beyond the Inn you will see a slipway, which was once used to launch pleasure boats by **John Dean's & Sons**. This was just one of three boat building yards in the area, with **Wain's and Luxton's** yards sited just beyond Rowton Bridge. This was a hive of activity in the 1930s producing boats for the canal leisure industry and the **Inland Waterways Association** was believed to have been founded here. Over 100 small wooden pleasure craft were built on these three sites, and were inspired by the exploits of **LTC Rolt** who created a new enthusiasm for the canal industry in the 1930s. His grand mother Annie who lived at what is now Birch Heath Lodge was the sister of Canon Lionel Garnett.*

Walk up to the gate at Rowton Bridge and turn right towards the A41. Go down the slope towards the A41. Carefully cross the A41 to Rowton Lane. Look back across the road to a line of old cottages on Whitchurch Road.

Several men who served in WWI lived here and a passageway through the middle of the houses takes you to "the backs" outside toilets that would have been quite modern when built by Thomas Butler. "Netherwood", the late Victorian House now a peaceful caravan park just beyond these houses was built for Thomas Butler of Christleton Mill.

6. Now walk the length of Rowton Lane until you reach the small Village Green beyond the second entrance to Rowton Hall Hotel. (This is a long lane, but take great care as the lane is the main route to Rowton Hall Hotel and can be busy at times). Stand in front of the red sandstone boulder with a plaque that commemorates the Battle of Rowton Moor.



Battle Plaque

7. The Battle of Rowton Moor between the Parliamentarians and Royalist Forces was one of the last great battles of this tumultuous event in our countries history. It is recorded that 24,000 troops were involved with about 800 dead, and thousands injured. The battle lasted less than a day, and a day that started with a success for the Royalists, ended with a catastrophic defeat with the remnants of the Royalist army scurrying through Christleton & Hoole to get to the safety of the city walls. The King, Charles I was watching from the walls, said "hold out for 3 days to let me escape" but the city refused to give in and remained under siege for over 5 months until being forced to surrender by lack of food. The Salmon Family and others have farmed this area for centuries with dairying the main occupation, but arable farming is now the norm after the decline of the dairy industry in the county. Many of the pits in the area provided marl for brick making.

From the Village Green, go towards the entrance to Rowton Hall Hotel and take the lane going right northeast towards the A41. Take care along this narrow lane. Notice the village pond on the left, and continue until you reach the main road.

8. At this point (now hidden by the hedge) there is a ruined building which was described as a field hospital during the civil war. The story is very unlikely to be true, as there were huge numbers of casualties, but it was a house for workers from Rowton Hall when it was a country house. Carefully cross the main road at this point onto Moor Lane, and then walk along the narrow footpath until you reach the Rowton Methodist Chapel.

9. Rowton Methodist Chapel recently celebrated its 150th Anniversary, and existed before the chapel in Christleton. It is a delightful building with tiered seating in the chapel itself, and has recently been modernised for everyday use by the community.

Walk along **Moor Lane** until you reach the cross roads opposite the Primary School and then turn left **towards Egg Bridge** and the canal. Continue over the bridge for a short distance and turn into **Fox Lane**. Walk along this lane for about 200m until you see a footpath to the right onto the **Capesthorpe Road** estate. Notice the **Christleton-Rowton** and **Waverton/Rowton boundary** stones on your right. The shrubs here sometimes hide the stones from view.

10. Beating of the Bounds of a Parish was one of the ancient traditions carried out by villagers to lay claim to their boundaries. This tradition is still carried out by local Churches at Christleton & Waverton. The **Christleton Parish boundary** is 14 miles long and the perambulation takes place every 10 years. The next will be in May 2021.

Continue to walk through this small estate until you reach Brown Heath road. At this point turn left for a short distance until you see the footpath sign (Bakers Way) and then follow this track, carefully keeping to the right edge of the field towards the canal, going through several stiles. In a further 400m or so there are more stiles and you pass a small ditch taking a stream under the canal before climbing up onto the canal bank. Keep going on towards Christleton, with the canal on your left, until you reach a small path leading into Skips Lane. There is a small mound on your left. Listen out for the sound of running water!!

11. This mound contains a pumping station taking water in a pipeline from the **River Dee at Huntington to Liverpool**. **Skip's Lane**, was a hive of industry in the early 1900s with two boatbuilding yards, farm, and several merchant's yards. (See Point 5 above for boat building)

Walk along Skips lane until you reach Rowton Bridge Road.

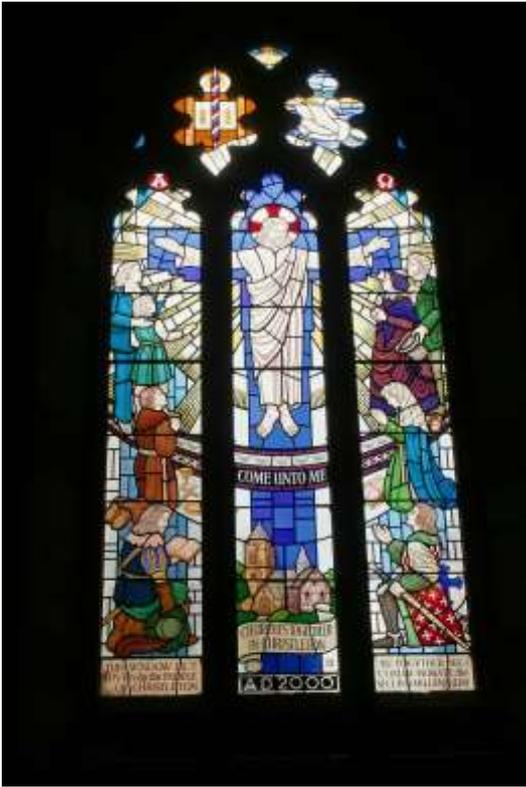
12. You will turn right here but look opposite to the small cottages near **Rowton Bridge**. The middle one belonged to **George "The Salt Man"** where you could purchase your salt for every purpose including salting your meat for winter storage in the village ice house.

Now walk carefully along Rowton Bridge Road and onto Village Road. Stop near the entrance to Christleton High School.

13. The High School was opened in 1958 and remains an exciting place to study. Just to the right of the school entrance between three large trees stood an ice house. This was maintained by the Rector for villagers use before the era of refrigeration. Just to the right of this was an old tavern called the "**Bottom of the Wood**". This was a popular local inn, but above it in a small annexe still visible from the road was a **Dame School**. The school mistress was **Catherine Mayers** sister of **George Mayers** the Headteacher of the Boys School. You can see the old **Girls and Infants School** on the corner of Quarry Lane and Rowton Bridge Road. (Now 5 apartments) and just beyond along Plough Lane was one of the 2 village smithies. **Mr Crump** was the last **Blacksmith** working here in the 1980s.

The area around the crossroads was the site of a large village pond where slurry from farms and excess water accumulated in the 1800s before the advent of a sewerage system. Even that hasn't solved the problem because after a severe storm the flood water can build up to create a large pond on this site.

The old highway from **Chester to London** once ran through this area. The road leaving Chester came through **Boughton** and along **Whitchurch Road** until it ran into **Quarry Lane, Plough Lane** and over the ancient pack horse bridges at **Hockenhull**. We learn that through history Kings and Queens have travelled this route. **The Black Prince** maintains the bridges in 1353, and travellers such as **Celia Fiennes** the "**Lady on the White Horse from Banbury Cross**" describes the route in her travel diary.



Millennium Window



The Royal Arms of Charles II 1665

Now walk through the village until you reach the Village Green where the walk finishes.