

Oxton Road Names

Who are the people whose names appear as road names on the letters and parcels delivered in Oxton? Who were for instance Fairclough, Cearns, Willan and Newburn? Why Ingestre Road, Mill Hill, Palm Hill and Claughton Firs?

Many of Oxton's roads seem old and settled, their names almost timeless. But just over 170 years ago there were few road names and none whatsoever were recorded in the census of 1841. The population of some 250 people, mostly living in small, basic agricultural cottages simply had the address "Oxton", though there were already some notable large houses or mansions established or under construction.

The roads that were recorded in a map of 1846 included Village Road. This was the road that led to the old Village around St Saviours and the Caernarvon Castle – the pub and the church - where there were also the post and telegraph office, shops and houses.

Soon after, the roads were given names and we can see familiar names appearing all over Oxton. Many were named after the builders who undertook the development work or the rich, successful merchants and landowners who inhabited the houses. Williams Lane for instance was named after the builder who built and lived in cottages at the back of the Queens Arms. This was later renamed Birch Road. Hughes Lane was named after Thomas Hughes an agricultural labourer from Bidston, who became the popular licensee of the Queens Arms in the mid nineteenth century – in fact it was known locally as the Hughes Hotel. Talbot Road was Dawburns Road after the farmer of that name who lived there. Naming roads after the people who lived there was a simple means of identifying them, for the post office would otherwise have found it difficult or impossible for postmen to know where they were delivering letters, postcards and parcels.

Other road names were named after local dignitaries, local politicians and landowners. Samuel Cearns was a successful wine and spirit merchant, who was also a member of the Local Board – the local government council. He lived in South Hill Grove, off Fairview Road. He gave his name to Cearns Road. Edward Willan was a Liverpool, Bold Street bookshop proprietor, who occupied one of the stone built houses in Willan Street, John Newburn, a land and quarry owner gave his name to Newburns Lane. From Newburns Lane, and the Arno, the road that extended along what is now called Rose Mount to the junction with Mount Pleasant was at one time called Park Road. Fairclough Lane has changed its name three times - from Butlers Lane to Staceys Lane and finally to Fairclough Lane, all three families resident there at one time. Prices Lane was dedicated to Thomas Price, a builder, and you can see his initials on a wall plaque set into the sandstone terrace, which he built on the corner with Claughton Firs – it reads TP 1845.

Other roads were named after important features such as the availability of water. So Oxton had Well Lane, which became Gerald Road, Spring Villas, and Well Cottages off Rose Mount. Mount Pleasant, Fairview Road and Rich

View speak for themselves, as do South Bank and East Bank (off Woodchurch Road). Mill Hill was clearly (somewhere) the site of a wind mill. And running down towards Woodchurch was an important thoroughfare, long before Woodchurch Road developed, called Holm Lane. The "Ho" part of the name meaning a piece of raised ground probably with muddy land on either side. Townfield Lane was just what it says, a lane down to the "town field", common land on which the poor people of Oxton could freely use a field of pasture to feed their livestock.

The origins of some road names is currently not known. Glenmore, Templemore, Kylemore and Rathmore are all places on the Irish mainland, so one might guess that the builder of the houses there had Irish connections perhaps. Palm Hill runs down to Palm Grove we know, but what we don't know is where the "Palm" was. There was at one time a Palm House in Birkenhead Park but it seems the road was named before the Palm House was erected. The road was at one time also named Balls Lane, an extension of Balls Road.

The biggest influence on Oxton's road names is of course the Shrewsbury family, who owned the land in Oxton before the leases were put up for sale. In "celebration" of this family, who owned most of Oxton we have...Shrewsbury Road (which was the original name of Claughton Firs), Talbot Road (part of the Shrewsbury family), Alton Road (the family seat), Ingestre Road (another grand family residence), Beresford Road (Sarah Elizabeth Beresford married the 18th Earl), Waterford and Wexford Roads (family Irish titles), Gerald Road (a family member) and Chetwynd Road.

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