**Trail Two Astley - Leigh / Coal and Cotton by Canal**

**An approximately 2.5 hour\* circular walking/cycling route of 7.5 miles / 12 km involving some off road footpaths. \*Allow extra time for sharing information at points of interest.**

**For shorter route take Option A (Red Route) an approximately 2 hour\* circular walking/cycling route of 5.6 miles / 9 km involving some off road footpaths. \*Allow extra time for sharing information at points of interest.**

**START**

1. **Lancashire Mining Museum/Astley Green Colliery** (1908-70) The Clifton and Kearsley Coal Company sank the two new shafts off Higher Green Lane using the German Drop-shaft method, the first to do so in England, because of the water and quicksands encountered. The Drop-shaft or Sinking Drum Process involved forcing a cylinder through the heavily watered peat and loose layers to the rockhead and excavating within it. The seams went under Chat Moss which meant water was continually dripping down, making work very wet and hot. The standing Headgear, one of two formerly here, is the last surviving of the former South Lancashire coalfield. A colliery railway moved coal from the screens to the Liverpool and Manchester Railway but some coal was transported to power stations at Trafford Park and Stretford using the Bridgewater Canal. Sadly, there was a mining accident at Astley Green on 6th June 1939 when five men, including the manager, died in an explosion of firedamp. But in 1956, 36 year old deputy, Alf Hughes received The Daily Herald Order of Industrial Heroism (or ‘Workers V.C.’) for rescuing 30 year old electrician, Brian Walker when he was being dragged into a mechanical coal cutting and conveying machine. Alf was presented with his medal at Astley & Tyldesley Miners’ Welfare Institute (Gin Pit Club). Outside of the Museum, now a village green, once stood the pithead baths, canteen and medical centre designed for the Miners' Welfare Committee by architect C. Kemp. They were built in 1935–36 at a cost of over £24,000.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://lancashireminingmuseum.org/old-astley-green-photos/#jp-carousel-437>

<https://lancashireminingmuseum.org/old-astley-green-photos/#jp-carousel-335>

<https://lancashireminingmuseum.org/old-astley-green-photos/#jp-carousel-475>

*Leave the museum, walk up the road and turn left onto Higher Green Lane. Stop outside ‘Bambu’.*

2. No 128, currently ‘Bambu’, was the former home of local historian, **John Lunn.** It was also a ‘fish and chipped potato dealer’ run by his mother. Lunn studied at Manchester University and Cambridge then returned to Astley and became a teacher in local schools. His *A Short History of the Township of Astley* was published in 1931. Nos 130-130C used to be the **Ross’s Arms**. When it was first licensed in 1855, it was named the Astley Arms but it was later renamed in honour of Colonel Malcolm Nugent Ross of the 5th Regiment of the Royal Lancashire Militia, the second husband of Sarah Durie of Damhouse. The original Astley Green Pit Whistle was on display here for many years.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://ifthosewallscouldtalk.wordpress.com/2016/03/02/hidden-histories-the-homes-of-dr-john-lunn-astley/> <https://www.flickr.com/photos/garstonian/4012527360>

[https://archives.wigan.gov.uk/archive/photograph-collections/astley/153063-pc20101657?](https://archives.wigan.gov.uk/archive/photograph-collections/astley/153063-pc20101657)

*Cross Boatmans Row and continue towards the canal bridge.*

3. **The Old Boat House** was formerly The Boathouse and, before that The Hope and Anchor Inn*,* which was originally built with stabling for horses that pulled the barges but has since been extended. The original building is the section next to the canal. Its beer garden is a good place to be a **Gongoozler,** a person who enjoys watching activities on the canal, particularly at locks.

Visit for refreshments & WC.

*Continue along Higher Green Lane over the canal bridge.*

*Stop at the bottom of the bridge.*

4. **Astley Bridge,** (Bridge no. 58), was built in 1920 and is made of iron, so it can be raised to counter the effects of mining subsidence. It replaced two earlier canal bridges built to connect Lower and Higher Green. Over the bridge, you can see the former Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School and Church, off Lower Green Lane which has now been transformed into Chapel Apartments. The original chapel opened in 1806 on a piece of land donated by Benjamin Kniveton, a tunneller on the Bridgewater Canal who lived at Whitehead Hall. When that building caught fire a new chapel was built, and a Sunday School building was added which later became the chapel. When this building became too difficult to maintain it closed and its congregation became part of the Methodist Churches in Astley and Tyldesley.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://www.theboltonnews.co.uk/news/14829930.time-capsule-from-1906-found-at-former-chapel-site/>

*Cross Lower Green Lane and follow the path to the canal towpath.*

*Stop next to the base of the bridge.*

5. The land that runs alongside the canal is calledthe **towpath** as it was originally used by horses to tow or pull boats along the canal. The inns and wharfs along the canal used to offer stables to accommodate the horses when boats moored up though not everyone could afford the fee for overnight stabling. Steam and diesel engines gradually replaced ‘horsepower’ but the last working horse boat only finished in 1960. The opposite side to the towpath is known as the **offside** bank**,** where**Astley Cotton Mills** used to stand on Peel Lane. James and Robert Arrowsmith built the mills in 1833. They also built cottages for their workers. The mills were four storeys high and by 1892 had 10,000 spindles and 500 looms weaving fustians, velvets, angolas and twills. They were powered by steam produced by burning coal. In 1919, a new engine house and weaving sheds were built around the old structure but, ironically, mining subsidence from Astley Green Colliery damaged the foundations of the old mills and they closed in 1955. There used to be housing along the towpath side of the canal but subsidence caused the canal to sink by more than 18 feet and it had to be banked up with colliery refuse and concrete. Here and there, the surface was then level with the roofs of nearby cottages making them uninhabitable, and they had to be pulled down. **The Bridgewater Canal** was built by Francis Egerton, the 3rd Duke of Bridgewater to transport coal from his Lancashire collieries. This section, the Leigh branch, was opened in 1795 to transport coal from the new Leigh collieries. Locally, it was known as ‘The Duke’s Cut’, a cut being a boater’s term for canals because they were literally cut out of the land. Following the Duke’s death in 1803, the Earl of Ellesmere inherited his estates. By 1923, the estates and collieries were owned by Bridgewater Collieries, a subsidiary of Bridgewater Estates which later became part of Manchester Collieries. The Bridgewater Canal was sold to the Manchester Ship Canal Company, now a subsidiary of The Peel Group. You are now following the ‘**Bridgewater Way**’.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://britainfromabove.org.uk/image/epw019658>

<https://ifthosewallscouldtalk.wordpress.com/2018/10/31/hidden-histories-the-lingards-astley/>

*Continue along the towpath towards Leigh.*

*Stop at the next ‘pinch point’ where the canal narrows and a pipe bridge crosses it.*

6. You can see the brick supports of the former**Peel Hall Bridge** which was an ‘occupation bridge’ for workers to get to Peel Hall Farm. The former bridge supports now carry the Peel Hall Pipe Bridge which carries gas across the canal. The Bridgewater Canal cut straight through the Peel Hall estate, coming close to the house's south facade. A little further along where the canal widens is Peel Hall Winding Hole where boats can turn round.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1360412924134666&type=3>

<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/lancs/vol3/pp445-449>

<http://astleytyldesleyandleighhistory.blogspot.com/2016/02/peel-hall-astley-riches-to-ruin.html>

*Continue along the towpath towards Leigh.*

*Stop at Lingard’s Bridge.*

7. **Lingard’s Bridge** is a relatively modern step/footbridge, which replaced an older bridge named after the Lingard family, who farmed the surrounding land. There used to be a boat yard here but it ceased operating in the 1930s after almost 100 years. Some bridges on the canal have been adapted to act as a support for water or sewerage pipes and, in this case, three steel water pipes have been used to form an arch that supports the deck of the footbridge. If you listen closely you can hear the water flowing through the pipes.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

[https://www.flickr.com/photos/35604059@N03/5624157991](https://www.flickr.com/photos/35604059%40N03/5624157991)

*Continue along the towpath towards Leigh.*

*Stop at Morleys Bridge.*

8. **Morleys Bridge** was an ‘occupation bridge’ for workers to get to Morleys Hall Farm, a grade II listed building on the edge of Astley Moss. The original moated building has since been converted into two houses. When owned by the Catholic Tyldesley family, the Hall hosted secret Catholic services. In 1641 a priest called Edward Ambrose Barlow was arrested at such a service and subsequently executed and later canonised as St. Ambrose Barlow. The bridge was replaced by a new one in 1932 to carry the Liverpool-East Lancashire Road or ‘East Lancs Road’ (A580), which was opened by George V on July 18, 1934. It was designed to connect Manchester and East Lancashire to the Port of Liverpool and was the UK's first purpose-built intercity highway.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://www.britainfromabove.org.uk/en/image/EPW038568>

[https://ancientmonuments.uk/107555-morleys-hall-moated-site-astley-mosley-common-ward#.Y9ewVC2cZ-U](https://ancientmonuments.uk/107555-morleys-hall-moated-site-astley-mosley-common-ward%23.Y9ewVC2cZ-U)

<https://www.wiganbuildings.co.uk/building.php?id=359>

*Continue along the towpath towards Leigh.*

*Stop at Marsland Green Bridge.*

9. **Marsland Green Bridge**. Note the wooden posts at either side of the bridge to protect it against wear and tear from towropes, and the **narrows***,*a short length of canal with width room for only one narrowboat, beyond the bridge. **Images & video clips &/or further info.:** <https://www.canalwalking.co.uk/photograph.php?opt=worsley&photo=24>

*Leave the towpath and walk up to the top of the bridge.*

10. **A Coal Tipping Wharf** used to stand on the offside bank, which served the Tyldesley Pit Complex of Gin Pit, Nook and St George’s collieries. The wharf was cut into the north bank and extended behind the houses along Marsland Green Lane. There was also a coal tipper and a boatyard with many of the boatmen who worked the canal living in nearby houses or on the boats. The large house on the south towpath by the bridge served the area as The Bridge Inn pub. It was the extension of the Bridgewater Canal to Leigh that triggered the development of mining around Tyldesley by providing an efficient means of transporting the coal. John Darlington, owner of Gin Pit colliery, built a narrow-gauge tramway worked by horses, to transport coal from the pit. The wharf also served the Hindley Smithy. There is a winding hole here for boats to turn around in.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://archives.wigan.gov.uk/archive/photograph-collections/astley/152991-pc200971>

*Continue over the bridge and walk down Marsland Green Lane.*

*At the bottom, turn left onto Manchester Road.*

*Cross Manchester Road and Lodge Lane then enter Leigh Cemetery.*

Or visit the Manchester Road Cafe & Sandwich Bar opposite, for refreshments & WC.

11. **Leigh Cemetery** opened in 1856, funded by Westleigh, Pennington, Bedford, and Astley townships.

*Follow the central path until you reach the crossroads in area 11 where you will see a tall grey monument on your right.*

The **Bedford Colliery Monument** is dedicated to those who lost their lives in an explosion on Monday 13th August 1888. At 11.30am that morning the news spread that there was a fire at Speakman’s Colliery or ‘Wood End’ and crowds gathered waiting for news. An explosion had taken place in no. 2 Pit near to Lion’s Bridge, off The Avenue. Several miners had felt the effects and gone to the ‘pit eye’ (base of the shaft). The colliery owner, John Speakman was confined to bed so his son, Ernest withdrew the men from the mine and led the rescue party. They put up brattice cloths to restore ventilation and extinguish the flames. Among the first brought up wasJohn Wooley who was burned about the face and hands and had a badly cut forehead. Wooley was a day wageman who had only started at the pit the previous Saturday. He had been a watch repairer, but trade was bad and his wife was too ill to work so he went back to work as a collier. The night before, he had a dream that he and his mate would be killed. He and Henry Parsonage were drawing props and William Brown and Alfred Mort were filling tubs. Brown put his lamp between his legs to pick up a spade when there was a blaze that went into his lamp. He threw his spade down and started blowing out his lamp but it wasn’t ‘buried’ so he shook it about and it burst the gauze. A flash came out of the gauze and there was an explosion and all the lamps went out. The afterdamp knocked Wooley down, but he managed to scramble over some tubs then ran as hard as he could until saw a rescuer’s light. It took a week to recover all the bodies. 38 died, most of them under 30 years old from the Bedford area. St.Thomas’ brass band played at the head of a parade that formed at Leigh Liberal Club, processed along Church Street, Market Street, Lord Street, Chapel Street and ended at the cemetery. John’s Speakman’s grave can be found in area 11 too if you follow the right-hand fork of the path round to the left.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Docs/PDF/Resident/Births-Marriage-Deaths/Cemeteries/Leigh.pdf>

<https://www.nmrs.org.uk/mines-map/accidents-disasters/lancashire/bedford-colliery-wood-end-pits-explosion-leigh-1886/>

<https://engole.info/bedford-colliery/>

*Return to the crossroads and take the right-hand path.*

*Look for no.1 section on your left for the grave of* **Alfred Wilkinson VC***.*

12. **Alfred Wilkinson** won his V.C. (Victoria Cross) for an act of bravery in WW1 when he ran, under shellfire, to deliver an important message about reinforcements. Sadly, he later died whilst working in the surveyor’s laboratory at Bickershaw Colliery, killed by carbon monoxide fumes from a blocked chimney. On the morning of his death he’d received a letter informing him that he had been granted a commission in the Pioneer Corps during WW2. He was buried with full military honours.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

[https://archives.wigan.gov.uk/archive/world-war-records/victoria-cross-winner/lieutenant-alfred-wilkinson-1896-1940?](https://archives.wigan.gov.uk/archive/world-war-records/victoria-cross-winner/lieutenant-alfred-wilkinson-1896-1940)

*Return to the path and continue to area 6.*

*On your right you will see a tall polished granite monument to* ***Samuel Short.***

13. **Samuel Short** was an engineer at St George’s Colliery in Tyldesley and had worked for Astley and Tyldesley Collieries Ltd. for 30 years. On 12th September 1902, he was lowering 24 workmen into the mine when he was suddenly overcome by a fatal seizure. But, incredibly, he managed to apply the brake before he died. He was only 52. A fund raised £75 6s 11d. The monument cost £45 and the remainder was given to his widow along with £50 from Astley and Tyldesley Collieries Ltd. The story of his act of bravery went around the world in the international press.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

[https://www.flickr.com/photos/28709338@N04/28807756170](https://www.flickr.com/photos/28709338%40N04/28807756170)

*Retrace your steps along the path towards the junction.*

*Walk back up the central walkway and leave Leigh Cemetery.*

*Turn right onto Manchester Road and walk to Sutton Park, home of* **Leigh Miners Rangers***.*

14. **Leigh Miners Rangers Club** was formed in 1978 to fill a gap left by the demise of Senior School Rugby. The club has produced over 100 professional players, including Dennis Betts, Darren Wright, Tommy Martyn, Simon Booth, Scott Naylor, Steven Blakeley, Mickey Higham, Paul Rowley, Stuart Donlan and Stuart Littler. The Senior Club play at Leigh Miner’s Welfare Institute off Twist Lane. Rugby was first played at Rugby Public School in 1823 but gradually spread throughout the country. Like mining, it was tough, physically demanding and relied heavily on teamwork, so it isn’t surprising that so many mining areas produced teams. Leigh Rugby Club started up at Bucks Farm, Pennington in 1878. In 1883, a team from Thorne Colliery in Wakefield won the Yorkshire Cup which upset many of the RFU who didn’t like being beaten by working-class players. It was the refusal to allow such players to receive financial compensation for taking time off work that led to rugby splitting in two in 1895. Leigh was one of the breakaway clubs that formed the Northern Union and had many miners in its ranks. They had to be very disciplined and safety conscious underground which perhaps explains why the referees in Rugby League have always received more respect than their counterparts in football. And why so many miners enjoyed the controlled aggression of Rugby League after a shift.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://tony-collins.squarespace.com/rugbyreloaded/2015/8/2/miners-and-rugby-league-at-the-national-coal-mining-museum>

*Look across the road at the school opposite.*

15. Opposite stands **Bedford High School**. The senior school building set back on the left used to be Leigh Grammar School from 1932-1976, when it closed and ‘went comprehensive’. The school had a proud history of producing engineering students, many of whom went on to work in the later, more mechanised, years of the mining industry.

**SEE OPTION A (RED ROUTE) FOR SHORTER ROUTE**

*Cross Manchester Road at the Pelican Crossing then continue towards Leigh.*

*Turn left at* **The****Bowling Green Pub** *to continue along Manchester Road.*

Or visit The Bowling Green for refreshments & WC.

*Cross Greendale Crescent and White Street then turn left into Park Lane.*

16. **Leigh Spinners’** two mills were constructed and opened between 1911-1923 making the No.2 Mill one of the last spinning mills to be built in Lancashire. Designed by Bradshaw, Gas & Hope, the Grade II listed double spinning mill, with its intact engines, is one of the most complete of its type. When the No.1 Mill opened in 1915 it had a mainly female work force.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://www.leighspinnersmill.co.uk>

Visit The Millage Canteen for refreshments & WC.

*Retrace your steps along Park Lane then turn left onto Manchester Road.*

17. **Butts Park** opened in 1912 on a gift of six acres of land donated by Leigh Spinners Ltd. The park was laid out at the expense of the Leigh Corporation. It is believed that the land was originally an Edwardian tip which had been capped off. The entrance on Manchester Road is located by the original or Higher Butts Bridge (hence the name) but there is also an entrance on Sandersons Croft.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://leigh.life/index.php?action=media;sa=item;in=31953>

*Continue along Manchester Road.*

*Cross Sanderson’s Croft and Bangor Fold.*

18. **Butts Basin and Wharf.** The Leigh Branch Canal Inspector used to live in Canal House at Bangor Fold next to the basin. The last toll house for the Bridgewater canal stands at the side of Butts Basin. It was built in 1949 and is now a private house but is still called the Toll House.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=2449263562014504&set=gm.1419486238200700>

*Continue along Manchester Road and stop outside Marsh Bros Garage.*

19. **Marsh Bros Garage** used to be **Butts Corn Mill** untilthe 1940s. The steam driven mill was built in 1831 by Richard Lawton, who imported North American grain via Liverpool to Butts Basin. In 1833 he built the adjoining cottage and The Wheatsheaf Hotel, (named after the flour he produced), now called **The Canal Turn**.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=2449263562014504&set=gm.1419486238200700>

*Continue past The Canal Turn into Warrington Road and walk over the bridge. Stop at the bottom.* Or *v*isit The Canal Turn for refreshments & WC.

20. **Butts Bridge** may be named after the ‘butts’, an area for practicing with a bow and arrow, or the Lancashire word ‘butts’ which were small ridges with shallow ditches in between, common on wet land. Until the canal arrived in 1795, Bedford was largely a rural township with just a small settlement around The Butts area. From then on there was a steady growth in the town’s population from 11,025 in 1841, to 16,004 in 1861. Bedford was incorporated into the Leigh Local Board in 1874. The canal also provided Bedford with the raw materials and steam power to stimulate the growth of the textile industry.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0cWYOfkLI4E>

*Walk down to the towpath on your left, and turn left under the bridge towards Leigh town centre.*

*Stop at Pendle Court on your left.*

21. **Leigh Manufacturing No.2 Weaving Sheds (Pendle Mills)** once stood here but ceased weaving in the mid-1960s when mills were closing across Lancashire at a rate of almost one a week. Despite the Cotton Industry Act of 1959, which was intended to help modernise and amalgamate the industry, the UK could no longer compete with cheaper imported cotton. Pendle Mill was used by other industries for a while but was eventually demolished to make way for apartments. Note how the architects have replicated the contrasting red and yellow colours of brickwork, and how the tops of the railings are shaped like the roof of a weaving shed. Maximum daylight was achieved through the use of north-facing roof lights which let the light in but didn’t dry out the cotton. Notice the information board here. Next door, the Grade II**Butts Mill** was built in 1907 by Stott and Sons, one of the most prolific firms of mill architects of the 19th and early 20th-centuries. The firm patented several new construction methods which enabled them to incorporate larger windows and wider bays. The lower carding floors have large rectangular windows while those of the upper spinning floors are narrower. The ornate tower has terracotta Arts and Crafts details and is topped by a copper dome and filial or crowning ornament. Ironically, a lot more time and money was spent on the building than the comfort of the people who worked in it. It was designed as a double mill, but the mirror half was never built. The mill had 150,000 mule spindles in its heyday, but ceased spinning in 1960. It was later sold to Ward and Goldstone. On the offside bank stood the **Bedford Iron Foundry,** where, from 1845,Messrs. John Picksley, Ruben Sims and Co. Ltd. manufactured domestic items, such as household fireplaces, grates and trap grids, then moved on to agricultural machinery. They were well known for their ‘Standard Mower’, which gave its name to a local public house. They used the canal to bring in timber by barge and to transport their goods, but they couldn’t compete with the more successful Albion Iron Works and went bankrupt in 1902. The **Leigh Manufacturing Company** erected their No.1 Weaving Sheds on the site in 1908, also built by Stott and Sons. The mill later became Tillie & Henderson's Clothing Manufacturing Company, Peter Blond Clothing Manufacturers and Townsends Cycles, but was demolished and **Stott Wharf** apartment block built on the site. Note how the architects have matched up the false ‘dummy' windows to follow the design of the original bottom section of the building.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

[https://archives.wigan.gov.uk/archive/photograph-collections/leigh/760401-pc201511431?](https://archives.wigan.gov.uk/archive/photograph-collections/leigh/760401-pc201511431)

[https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Picksley,\_Sims\_and\_Co](https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Picksley%2C_Sims_and_Co)

[https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101253426-butts-mill-leigh-south-ward#.Y90zGi2cYdU](https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101253426-butts-mill-leigh-south-ward%23.Y90zGi2cYdU) [https://www.facebook.com/groups/178876512261685/search/?q=pendle%20mill](https://www.facebook.com/groups/178876512261685/search/?q=pendle%2520mill) <https://www.webbaviation.co.uk/aerial/picture.php?/31429>

<https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Docs/PDF/Resident/Planning-and-Building-Control/Conservation-areas/Bridgewater-Canal.pdf>

*Continue along the towpath.*

*As the canal bends to the right, you will see the end of Picksley Street on the offside bank.*

*There used to be a coal yard next to it which would have powered the adjacent mill.*

22. **Bedford Mill** was built by Bedford Spinning Company on the offside bank on the site of the Recreation Ground in 1911. The company was led by Sir John Holden, Mayor of Leigh. It became part of Combined Egyptian Mills in 1921 and was later taken over by Courtaulds. It closed in 1982 after fire destroyed much of the building. **Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

[https://archives.wigan.gov.uk/archive/photograph-collections/bedford/153546-pc20102906?](https://archives.wigan.gov.uk/archive/photograph-collections/bedford/153546-pc20102906)

23. Next door was **Stanley Mill** at the bottom of Duke Street. Built in 1891, it had 1,464 looms weaving muslins and shirtings (a material for making shirts, especially a fine cotton in plain colours or incorporating a traditional woven stripe). One of its surviving low buildings later became St Joseph’s Scout Hut. Look closely at the offside bank and you will see, just above the water line, arches that survive from the foundations of the old mill buildings.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

[https://archives.wigan.gov.uk/archive/photograph-collections/leigh/760405-pc201511432?](https://archives.wigan.gov.uk/archive/photograph-collections/leigh/760405-pc201511432)

*Continue along the canal towpath.*

*Stop at Brooklands Mill on the towpath side.*

24. **Mather No.3 Mill (Brooklands Mill)** opened in 1891. Notice the name of the mill on the Leigh Pipe Bridge which crosses the canal. There used to be a footbridge between this and the other Mather Mills on the offside bank, known locally as the ‘Tin Lizzie’. The mill was powered by a 1,200 h.p. cross-compound steam engine supplied by J&E Wood of Bolton. In the 1920s the company was merged into Combined Egyptian Mills Ltd. No. 3 Mill later became Willie Corbett’s Paper and Cardboard factory. Local people remember swimming in the canal near the bridge in the warm discharge out of Mather 2 Mill. A little further along in what is now English Street, once stood **Hall Lane Mill**. This mule spinning mill had 100,000 mule spindles supplied by Richard Threlfall of Bolton. Opposite, on the offside bank, stands **Mather No.2 Mill,** a cotton mill, which was built in 1882. The Grade II listed building was renovated and converted into the Loom Wharf apartments in 2020. Originally it was a double mill, with the earliest part (later Mather No.1 Mill) adjacent to the boiler house, built in 1873 by Bradshaw, Gas & Hope of Bolton. The same firm also built the warehouse on the other side of Mather Lane bridge with a tunnel joining the two buildings.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://www.britainfromabove.org.uk/image/epw031117>

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=3138784429729077&set=gm.2168229813326335&idorvanity=178876512261685>

*Continue along the canal towpath until you reach the bridge.*

25. **Mather Lane Bridge no. 65** was originally known as ‘Dick Mather Bridge’. Legend has it that it is named after a local 18th-century school teacher called Richard Mather, who drowned in a pond down the lane. However, no record has ever been found to support this theory. The original humpback bridge was an ‘occupation bridge’ enabling farmers, workers and travellers to continue to use the old tracks from their farms to main roads, which the canal had severed. The bridge’s blind approach made it perilous for motor vehicles, even with the addition of traffic lights, so a separate ‘cage like’ footbridge was built for pedestrians. Local people remember going over the bridge in a car when they were children and ‘leaving your stomach behind’ like being on a funfair ride. Both the road bridge and the footbridge were demolished and replaced with the new bridge in 1986.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mather\_Lane\_Bridge\_1976\_-\_geograph.org.uk\_-\_1766348.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AMather_Lane_Bridge_1976_-_geograph.org.uk_-_1766348.jpg)

*Walk under the bridge and stop at the basin on the offside bank.*

26. **Bedford Coal Basin** is 150’ long, 90' wide and 6' deep. It was cut in 1857 and linked to the Howe Bridge Collieries of Fletcher Burrows by a horse drawn tramway, which ran through a tunnel under Leigh’s streets. At first the coal was hoisted down into the boats, but a coal tipper or ‘pier’ was introduced to speed up the loading process. The stump still remains marking the former site of ‘Leigh Pier’. During WW2, coal traffic by boat ceased and in 1952, the track was lifted, the tunnel bricked up, and the cuttings filled. At Bedford Basin there were toll houses on either side of the canal which probably acted as ‘tally’ houses, recording the boats and charging for the amount of coal they carried. On the offside bank, you can see a surviving toll house, restored by the current owners, Lorenz Canal Services. They have also built a modern new house, ‘Bedford Basin House’, in the style of an old Canal Wharf Warehouse, such as stood just East of Leigh Bridge. The Basin is now a marina for leisure boats. **‘**Kebbing’ was popular in this area, using a homemade basket or ‘keb’, to dredge small amounts of coal out of the canal after the tipper truck had been. **Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

[https://archives.wigan.gov.uk/archive/photograph-collections/leigh/760445-pc201511469?](https://archives.wigan.gov.uk/archive/photograph-collections/leigh/760445-pc201511469)

*Retrace your steps and leave the towpath to walk up to Mather Lane.*

*Walk up and over the bridge and stop next to the car park on the other side.*

27. The building, to which the car park is attached, was**Mather Lane Mill’s warehouse.** Grade II listed, it was built around 1882, with hoists and taking-in bays on the front and canal elevations. Mather Lane used to be a long, residential street with houses. **Thomas (Tommy) Burke, the ‘Lancashire Caruso’ and famous operatic tenor** was born at number 7 in 1890. He was the eldest of nine children. His father was an Irish Catholic miner and in 1893, when Tom was only three, there was a pit strike which lasted for five months. The formation of the Lancashire Miners' Federation in 1881 and the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) in 1888 had improved wages and employment rights, but relations between pitmen and their employers were still poor. A drop in the market price of coal made coal owners decide to reduce wages by 25%. This was opposed by the MFGB and led to an almost total lockout involving around 300,000 coal miners in the Federated District, making it the largest strike in the UK. By October the mine owners had reduced their demand to a 15% wage reduction, but the MFGB refused the offer and demanded no cuts, and the creation of a board of conciliation to mediate future disputes. It was finally agreed that there would be a return to work with no cut in wages, and no further cuts before 1 February 1894. During these months the Burke family, like many other mining families, were fed daily from charity soup kitchens and searched the coal tips for small pieces of coal to keep them warm during the winter. At the age of 12, Tommy left school to work ‘part-time’ at Courtauld’s Silk Mill but at 14 he went down the pit as a ‘lasher-on’, hooking tubs of coal onto an endless steel rope as they were brought from the pit face. He was soon dubbed the ‘Minstrel Boy’ as he relieved the tedium of work by singing. He was also a keen member of Leigh Borough Brass Band, playing the cornet. He left the pit at the age of 17 and became a vegetable salesman with a donkey and cart but, after singing regularly at local venues, went on to train at Manchester College of Music and, later,in Italy. He sang before King George V at the Royal Opera House and toured North America and made extensive recordings. However, he had a weakness for women and alcohol, and died bankrupt in Surrey in 1969. His name lives on in the pub on Leigh Road.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10207708301256926&set=gm.592697757546223>

<http://www.historicaltenors.net/english/burke.html>

*Walk across the car park and into Brunswick Street straight ahead of you (down the side of No.64).*

*Follow Brunswick Street to the right until you come to a footpath between two car parks.*

*Follow the footpath to Henry Street and turn right.*

*Follow Henry Street until you reach Chapel Street.*

*Opposite you will see what remains of Duckinfield Street.*

28. **Bedford Leigh Station** stood at the junction of Duckinfield Street and East Bond Street. It opened in 1864, was renamed **Leigh & Bedford** in 1876 and simply Leigh Station in 1914. Passenger services ended on this line in 1969.
**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=3176343625973157&set=gm.2216300471852602&idorvanity=178876512261685>

<https://www.leighjournal.co.uk/news/17824738.looking-back-former-leigh-railway-station-captured/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leigh\_railway\_station\_(Lancashire)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leigh_railway_station_%28Lancashire%29)

*Walk to the traffic lights and cross Chapel Street. Walk alongside the open green space to your right and stop opposite the grey arched building on your left.*

29. **The Railway Arches** are all that remain of the bridges and embankments that used to take the ‘Leigh Loop’ section of the Kenyon to Manchester Railway Line across the streets and Bridgewater Canal. The bridge was made of ‘Staffordshire Blue’, a strong type of construction brick originally made in Staffordshire. It was made from local red clay, Etruria marl which became deep blue in colour when fired at a high temperature in a low-oxygen reducing atmosphere. This created a very hard, impervious surface with high crushing strength and low water absorption making it perfect for bridges and canal construction.

*Look at the Lidl supermarket building to your left.*

30. Behind the supermarket, at the bottom of Wharf Street, the **Fletcher Burrows’ Mineral Railway Line** emerged from an underground tunnel that travelled beneath Queen Street, Lord Street and Brown Street, until it came out at Gamble Street.The horse drawn tram from Howe Bridge Collieries then crossed Holden Road, The Avenue and Orchard Lane and continued across the fields to Howe Bridge. In 1861 a new, more direct route was created using a standard gauge line, but both the Ellesmere and the Lilford locos had to be specially built to fit the existing tunnel. *Continue along Princess Street until you reach the traffic lights.*

*Cross at the lights to continue along the Guided Busway and follow the footpath that runs parallel to it.*

*At the junction with Pownall Street, take the path that runs past* ***Leigh Bowling Clu****b on your right.*

31. **Leigh Bowling Club** is nicknamed ‘The Subby Club’ because members pay subscriptions to the private bowling green. Originally situated between Bedford Brewery and Mr. Lancashire's Silk Mill, the Brewery leased the club the land from 1871. Sutcliffe Speakman bought the land from the Brewery in 1936 on a 99 year lease and this was purchased by the club in 1998.

Visit for refreshments & WC.

*Continue along Pownall Street, crossing Spinnerette Close, then turn left onto Guest Street.*

*Stop at the top of Guest Street and look at the opposite corner.*

32. This is the site of the former **Coal Wharf and Landsale Yard**. Before Holden Road was built in 1923,the mineral line ended at the top of Guest Street. A **landsale** was the practice of selling coal locally free of tax. This was an industrial part of town with a brickworks and claypit in the fields on the opposite side of Holden Road. Its bricks were probably used to build many local buildings. Holden Road was named after the Holden family who provided Leigh with two mayors.

*Turn left into Holden Road and walk to the traffic lights.*

*Cross the Guided Busway ahead of you, then cross Holden Road at the traffic lights and enter the path alongside the opposite section of the Guided Busway, heading towards Tyldesley.*

33. You are now walking the route of the **Bedford Leigh branch of the London & North Western Railway (LNWR).** The ‘Leigh Loop’ section of the Kenyon to Manchester Railway Line opened in 1831, and became part of the LNWR in 1846. The mineral line from Bedford Colliery ran more or less parallel to the railway line. This area had a long tradition of small coal pits but John Speakman began sinking two shafts south of the railway line in 1874, and by 1876 coal was being produced at the **New** **Bedford Collieries**. Bedford was also known as Wood End - the wood being Bedford or Hough Wood at Lilford Park. Two shafts were sunk to the Crombouke mine. No.1 Pit was the upcast whilst No.2 Pit acted as downcast. No.2 Pit was later deepened to the Seven Feet (or Black & White) mine, and the Trencherbone mine. Different grades of coal were extracted from different seams, e.g. household and manufacturing coal from the Crombouke seam. One local resident remembered the habits of the collier in the 1870s. ‘Wages were paid fortnightly but no work would be done on the following Monday. On this day it was not uncommon for the groups of men to indulge in some sort of spree, which usually lasted till evening. For food during these escapades, the help of mine host and his wife was enlisted, and most willingly given in the provision of potato pies, pasties etc.’ It was here in 1888 that 38 men and boys lost their lives in an explosion on the 13th August. Speakman's Sidings were created between Tyldesley Station and Bedford Leigh Station, along with the private mineral railway line to Guest Street. Bedford Colliery was owned by the Speakman family until it was amalgamated with Manchester Collieries in 1929 and its railway was connected to the [Astley and Tyldesley Collieries](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Astley_and_Tyldesley_Collieries) railway system between [Nook](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Nook_Colliery) and [Gin Pit](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Gin_Pit_Colliery) collieries. The colliery became part of the [National Coal Board](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/National_Coal_Board) in 1947. In 1965 Granada TV filmed scenes at the colliery for *The Daughters of the Vicar* by DH Lawrence, adapted by Leigh born Peter Eckersley. In the same year, Mrs Sheila Barlow, the Bedford Colliery Queen, was crowned the Lancashire Gala Queen. She won £50 and a free holiday in Morecambe. Bedford Colliery was originally scheduled to close in 1963 due to 'exhaustion of supplies’ but its miners built up such a high output rate that it was hailed for setting a good example to the rest of the Lancashire coalfield. However, in 1967 NCB chiefs told representatives of the 700 men that, despite its high production figures, it now had to close to prevent needless subsidence damage, particularly to a new sewerage scheme.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

[https://archives.wigan.gov.uk/archive/photograph-collections/bedford/153508-pc20101829?](https://archives.wigan.gov.uk/archive/photograph-collections/bedford/153508-pc20101829)

<http://www.dmm.org.uk/colliery/b248.htm>

[https://en.artsdot.com/@@/AQUM72-Roger-Hampson-Bedford-Colliery,-Leigh](https://en.artsdot.com/%40%40/AQUM72-Roger-Hampson-Bedford-Colliery%2C-Leigh) <https://www.nmrs.org.uk/mines-map/accidents-disasters/lancashire/bedford-colliery-wood-end-pits-explosion-leigh-1886/>

*Cross the Guided Busway opposite the rear entrance to Lilford Park.*

*Take the path on your right and enter the small wood.*

*Stop just inside.*

34. **Reclaimed land.** This small wood is mostly made up of birch trees which thrive on reclaimed land, and were planted when the slag heaps, or coal rucks, were levelled.

*Follow the path through to Green Lane.*

*Turn right, walk along Green Lane until you see the path on your left leading into the estate.*

*Follow the path.*

*Cross Fairclough Park Drive and continue past the play equipment.*

*Stop on the green.*

35. The **Walmsley Farm Housing Development** is named after the farm and the nearby house, *The Walmsleys,* later inhabited by John Speakman, who sank the New Bedford Colliery. When Bedford Colliery was bought by the Coal Board in 1947, *The Walmsleys* became the Pit Manager’s House. Ten of the housing estate’s streets are named after miners who died in the Bedford Colliery disaster of 1886. Fairclough Park Drive after Thomas Fairclough aged 34, Hadfield Grove after Allen Hadfield, aged 21, Mort Close after Alfred Mort aged 25 and Richard Mort aged 26, Clayton Green after Thomas Clayton aged 25, Daniels Close after Michael Daniels aged 44, Hampson Court after Stephen Hampson aged 61, Cooke Close after John Cooke aged 17, Heaton Green after William Heaton aged 14, Stirrup Close after Thomas, William and Peter Stirrup aged 13, 18 and 43, Worthington Place after Isaac Worthington aged 38.

*Continue along Walmsley Meadow Road, crossing Bowden Green Drive, until you reach Queensway.*

*Cross Queensway then cross the parallel road, Carisbrooke Road and enter Waverley Grove.*

*At the end of Waverley Grove, cross Imperial Drive and follow the footpath across the central green area.*

36.In the middle stands the unmarked**Old Bedford Collieries marker stone**. Richard Pickering Higginson began the Old Bedford Collieries around 1830 between Higher and Lower Fold, and built *The Walmsleys*. At least four pits were accessed by Coal Pit Lane which led off Green Lane. They were bought by W.E. Milner to quarry lime, then sold to Samuel Jackson, a salt merchant who also bought the Astley and Bedford Collieries’ narrow-gauge tramway to the Bridgewater Canal at Marsland Green. In 1850, William Clegg was filling in one of the old shafts when he fell in and died. By 1857, the Collieries were owned by John Speakman, owner of Priestners, Bankfield, and Broadoak collieries in Westleigh. They closed in 1864.

*Follow the footpath across the central green area at the back of the playground and turn right onto Richmond Drive.*

*Cross Coronation Drive and follow the footpath across to Windsor Road.*

*Walk to the end of Windsor Road and turn right onto Royal Drive.*

*Follow Royal Drive, and where it bends to the right, take the footpath across the field to enter Colliers Wood.*

37**. Colliers Wood**, a 130-hectare woodland, was planted as part of the Forestry Commission's Community Forests scheme to create recreation and conservation facilities in the NW. Trees were planted on the site of the former Kermishaw Nook Colliery **(see Tyldesley Trail 1)** and its ‘slag’ heaps to stabilise the surface spoil, improve the soil quality and provide habitats for wildlife. The wood has over 5km of path networks and great views across the borough to Winter Hill.

*At the crossroads of paths, take the path to the right, which leads to Lodge Lane.*

38. **Bedford Lodge Farm** at the top of Lodge Lane was part of the Bedford Township. In 1851, Joseph Darlington was living here and using the property for his offices. In the 1840s, he leased the mineral rights belonging to Astley Hall (Damhouse) and sank Astley Colliery, which later became Gin Pit. His company became known as Astley and Bedford Collieries. He eventually sold his colliery and coal wharf to Samuel Jackson, the owner of Old Bedford Collieries. When he died in 1867, the house became offices for the Astley and Tyldesley Collieries Company and, in later years, a farm. The area at the other end of Lodge Lane was known as Club Common.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://leigh.life/index.php?page=wiki&id=leighlife:lhbedford>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astley_and_Tyldesley_Collieries>

*Follow Lodge Lane, with Leigh Cemetery on your right, until you reach Manchester Road.*

*Turn left and walk along Manchester Road.*

*Stop a little way past the boundary sign on the opposite side of the road. The ‘Welcome to Leigh’ sign features a colliery headgear and the former Abram/Bickershaw Colliery Band.*

39. **Bickershaw Colliery Band.** On ‘Vesting Day’, 1st January 1947 the National Coal Board (NCB) took over 950 pits with their associated buildings, farmland and homes, and brass bands, on behalf of the people. The brass bands were either linked directly to the colliery that employed the musicians or indirectly by name and/or wage deducted contributions. The prizewinning Bickershaw Colliery Band was originally formed as Abram Colliery Band in 1919. In the beginning, both its instruments and playing standards were poor. Abram Coal Company’s Managing Director, Augustus M. Hart was ambitious but the band remained mediocre until his son, Major Ernest Hart M.C. (Military Cross) took over in 1934. A strict disciplinarian who expected high standards of all his employees, including the band members, the more he invested the better he expected the results to be. Before the band competed at Alexandria Palace in 1938, the Major told its members that if they didn’t win they should all jump in the English Channel! When they came 2nd he relented and gave them a £10 bonus each, but repeatedly threatened to close the band if standards didn’t improve. The band went on to win the British Open in 1940, 1943 and 1946, and were in constant demand for public concerts, and recordings by the BBC. Playing a brass instrument put a man at a distinct advantage when it came to getting a job at a colliery and most of the musicians were given surface jobs as it was easier to give them time off for competitions. But when the NCB took over Bickershaw Colliery, they withdrew the musicians’ retaining fees, so Major Hart took the band from the colliery, and arranged for it to rehearse at the Boar’s Head. When the band came 5th at Belle Vue that year Major Hart suspended its activities and temporarily closed it down. He later gave the men their uniforms and instruments as a token of his appreciation. On Saturday 23rd September 1950, Major Hart was killed by an express train on the railway line a few hundred yards from his home at Lowton Grange. He was 59. The coroner’s verdict was ‘Suicide whilst of unsound mind’.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEGam4LMJd4>

[https://leigh.life/index.php?page=wiki&id=leighlife:brassbands#bickershaw\_colliery\_brass\_band](https://leigh.life/index.php?page=wiki&id=leighlife:brassbands%23bickershaw_colliery_brass_band)

*Continue along Manchester Road towards Astley.*

*Stop outside The Archer pub.*

40. **Manchester Road** is the old Medieval trackway to Astley, Boothstown, Salford and Manchester and was originally known as Town Lane. Although there are now fields on this side of the Road, there used to be a limekiln and a brickfield along this stretch.The Archer was formerly the Manchester Road Inn which was in existence from at least the 1880s. On the opposite side of the road there was farmland belonging to the intriguingly named Solomon’s Temple farm.

*Continue along Manchester Road and stop opposite The Cart & Horses.*

41. **The Cart & Horses** has been a pub since at least 1835. It originally stood on the opposite corner until 1920, when it moved into *The Farnworths* or *Town Lane House*. The house was named after the wealthy family who lived there. They were descended from a fustian manufacturer-turned-farmer whose son, John founded the Bedford Brewery with Richard Guest of Leigh. Fustian is a thick, hard-wearing twilled cloth with a short nap, usually dyed in dark colours. Two of Guest’s sons, Thomas and Peter, founded the Union Mill in Bedford, Leigh but were in conflict with each other. St Mary’s RC High School stands on the site of two rows of cottages known locally as *Triangle Row*. One brother built the first row, and the other brother built the adjoining row, to deliberately spoil the view! The small cottage, *Farnworth Lodge* to the right of the pub, now separated by the car park entrance, was built by The Farnworths for their coachman and gardener, Edward Shuttleworth and his family.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://ifthosewallscouldtalk.wordpress.com/2019/05/30/hidden-histories-lark-hill-astley/>

*Cross Manchester Road and walk past The Cart & Horses into the small section of Manchester Road which loops around the green area.*

*Stop outside the second house, an older property called* ***The Lingards****.*

42. **The Lingards** was built in the late 1860s or early 1870s by mill owner, Thomas and Mary Farnworth, but was later named after local farmer, John Lingard. The Farnworths were followed by John and Alice Arrowsmith, whose sons built the cotton mill at Astley Green. A later resident was Thomas Smith, who became the managing director of Astley and Tyldesley Collieries Ltd. Then, from the mid-1930s until 1983, it was the home of Leigh’s famous herbalist, Charlie Abbott.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://ifthosewallscouldtalk.wordpress.com/2018/10/31/hidden-histories-the-lingards-astley/>

*Continue past the property along Sandy Lane.*

*At the end of the lane, take the footpath which leads through to the East Lancs Road. Cross the road safely, using the central reservation then take the footpath directly opposite.\**

*Follow the footpath until it meets Peel Lane.*

*Continue along Peel Lane.*

*Stop outside Peel Hall.*

43. **Peel Hall** is a Grade II listed building, parts of which date back to the 16th and 17th centuries, when it had a moat. It was largely rebuilt in the 18th and early 19th-centuries but is now ‘at-risk’ in a very poor condition. In 1908 the then owner of Peel Hall, Thomas Oliver Cross, leased one of his fields to the colliery company to build houses for the miners.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1360412924134666&type=3>

<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/lancs/vol3/pp445-449>

<http://astleytyldesleyandleighhistory.blogspot.com/2016/02/peel-hall-astley-riches-to-ruin.html>

*Continue along Peel Lane.*

*You will pass Third Avenue, Second Avenue and First Avenue which were miner’s cottages.*

*At the end of Peel Lane, turn left into Higher Green Lane and retrace your steps to the* ***Lancashire Mining Museum****.*

*\*If you prefer, you could continue alongside the East Lancs. Road until you reach the traffic lights, cross here, then return to the Lancashire Mining Museum via Higher Green Lane.*

**OPTION A (RED ROUTE)**

*Continue along Manchester Road. Turn right at island next to the Bowling Green into Green Lane.*

Or visit the Bowling Green for refreshments & WC.

*Cross Green Lane and walk until you reach the older detached house, ‘****Woodlawn’*** *on your left.*

**R1.****Woodlawn** was built in 1909 by Alfred Turner, who ran a successful plumbing business on Chapel Street. His only son, Geoffrey who was 6’ 3.5” became the 1927 Northern Counties high-jump champion with a leap of 5’ 11”. He represented his country seven times, and competed at the Amsterdam Olympics in 1928, where he was unplaced. But in 1929 he jumped 6’ 4.5” which took him to the top of the 1929 European high-jump rankings, and to equal 5th in the world. The same year he equalled the British record with a leap of 6’ 5” at Widnes but there were no qualified officials present so it couldn’t stand. In 1932, he bought Fir Tree Farm in Stretton but was taken ill with septic tonsils. Despite desperate attempts to save him, he died aged only 24. He was due to go to the Los Angeles Olympics and his wedding day was only 4 weeks away. His fiancee, Miss Nora Spelman of Earlestown, eventually inherited Woodlawn and never married. Geoffrey was buried at Leigh Cemetery. Turner Way at Leigh Sports Village is named after him.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

[https://archives.wigan.gov.uk/archive/photograph-collections/leigh/154784-pc20102674?](https://archives.wigan.gov.uk/archive/photograph-collections/leigh/154784-pc20102674)

*Continue along Green Lane, cross Thorneycroft and Wash Lane.*

*Where the road divides, take the left branch and cross Rosedale Drive.*

*Where the road divides again, take the left branch and continue along Green Lane until you see the path on your right leading into the estate.*

*Follow the path.*

*Cross Fairclough Park Drive and continue past the play equipment.*

*Stop on the green.*

35*.* This area had a long tradition of small coal pits but John Speakman began sinking two shafts south of the railway line in 1874, and by 1876 coal was being produced at the **New Bedford Collieries**. Bedford was also known as Wood End - the wood being Bedford or Hough Wood at Lilford Park. Two shafts were sunk to the Crombouke Mine. No.1 Pit was the upcast whilst No.2 pit acted as downcast. No.2 pit was later deepened to the Seven Feet (or Black & White) mine, and the Trencherbone mine. Different grades of coal were extracted from different seams, e.g. household and manufacturing coal from the Crombouke seam. One local resident remembered the habits of the collier in the 1870s. ‘Wages were paid fortnightly but no work would be done on the following Monday. On this day it was not uncommon for the groups of men to indulge in some sort of spree, which usually lasted till evening for food during these escapades, the help of mine host and his wife was enlisted, and most willingly given in the provision of potato pies, pasties etc.’ It was here in 1888 that 38 men and boys lost their lives in an explosion on the 13th August. Speakman's Sidings were created between Tyldesley Station and Bedford Leigh Station, along with the private mineral railway line to Guest Street. Bedford Colliery was owned by the Speakman family until it was amalgamated with Manchester Collieries in 1929 and its railway was connected to the [Astley and Tyldesley Collieries](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Astley_and_Tyldesley_Collieries) railway system between [Nook](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Nook_Colliery) and [Gin Pit](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Gin_Pit_Colliery) collieries. The colliery became part of the [National Coal Board](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/National_Coal_Board) in 1947. In 1965 Granada TV filmed scenes at the colliery for *The Daughters of the Vicar* by DH Lawrence, adapted by Leigh born Peter Eckersley. In the same year, Mrs Sheila Barlow, the Bedford Colliery Queen, was crowned the Lancashire Gala Queen. She won £50 and a free holiday in Morecambe. Bedford Colliery was originally scheduled to close in 1963 due to 'exhaustion of supplies’ but its miners built up such a high output rate that it was hailed for setting a good example to the rest of the Lancashire coalfield. However, in 1967 NCB chiefs told representatives of the 700 men that, despite its high production figures, it now had to close to prevent needless subsidence damage, particularly to a new sewerage scheme.

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<http://www.dmm.org.uk/colliery/b248.htm>

[https://en.artsdot.com/@@/AQUM72-Roger-Hampson-Bedford-Colliery,-Leigh](https://en.artsdot.com/%40%40/AQUM72-Roger-Hampson-Bedford-Colliery%2C-Leigh) <https://www.nmrs.org.uk/mines-map/accidents-disasters/lancashire/bedford-colliery-wood-end-pits-explosion-leigh-1886/>

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*At the end of Waverley Grove, cross Imperial Drive and follow the footpath across the central green area.*

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**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://leigh.life/index.php?page=wiki&id=leighlife:lhbedford>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astley_and_Tyldesley_Collieries>

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39. **Bickershaw Colliery Band.** On ‘Vesting Day’, 1st January 1947 the National Coal Board (NCB) took over 950 pits with their associated buildings, farmland and homes, and brass bands, on behalf of the people. The brass bands were either linked directly to the colliery that employed the musicians or indirectly by name and/or wage deducted contributions. The prizewinning Bickershaw Colliery Band was originally formed as Abram Colliery Band in 1919. In the beginning, both its instruments and playing standard were poor. Abram Coal Company’s Managing Director, Augustus M. Hart was ambitious but the band remained mediocre until his son, Major Ernest Hart M.C. (Military Cross) took over in 1934. A strict disciplinarian who expected high standards of all his employees, including the band members, the more he invested the better he expected the results to be. Before the band competed at Alexandria Palace in 1938, the Major told its members that if they didn’t win they should all jump in the English Channel! When they came 2nd he relented and gave them a £10 bonus each, but repeatedly threatened to close the band if standards didn’t improve. The band went on to win the British Open in 1940, 1943 and 1946, and were in constant demand for public concerts, and recordings by the BBC. Playing a brass instrument put a man at a distinct advantage when it came to getting a job at a colliery and most of the musicians were given surface jobs as it was easier to give them time off for competitions. But when the NCB took over Bickershaw Colliery, they withdrew the musicians’ retaining fees, so Major Hart took the band from the colliery, and arranged for it to rehearse at the Boar’s Head. When the band came 5th at Belle Vue that year Major Hart suspended its activities and temporarily closed it down. He later gave the men their uniforms and instruments as a token of his appreciation. On Saturday 23rd September 1950, Major Hart was killed by an express train on the railway line a few hundred yards from his home at Lowton Grange. He was 59. The coroner’s verdict was ‘Suicide whilst of unsound mind’.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEGam4LMJd4>

[https://leigh.life/index.php?page=wiki&id=leighlife:brassbands#bickershaw\_colliery\_brass\_band](https://leigh.life/index.php?page=wiki&id=leighlife:brassbands%23bickershaw_colliery_brass_band)

*Continue along Manchester Road towards Astley.*

*Stop outside ‘The Archer’ pub.*

40. **Manchester Road** is the old Medieval trackway to Astley, Boothstown, Salford and Manchester and was originally known as Town Lane. Although there are now fields on this side of the Road, there used to be a limekiln and a brickfield along this stretch.The Archer was formerly the Manchester Road Inn which was in existence from at least the 1880s. On the opposite side of the road there was farmland belonging to the intriguingly named Solomon’s Temple farm.

*Continue along Manchester Road and stop opposite The Cart & Horses.*

41. **The Cart & Horses** has been a pub since at least 1835. It originally stood on the opposite corner until 1920, when it moved into *The Farnworths* or *Town Lane House*. The house was named after the wealthy family who lived there. They were descended from a fustian manufacturer-turned-farmer whose son, John founded the Bedford Brewery with Richard Guest of Leigh. Fustian is a thick, hard-wearing twilled cloth with a short nap, usually dyed in dark colours. Two of Guest’s sons, Thomas and Peter, founded the Union Mill in Bedford, Leigh but were in conflict with each other. St Mary’s RC High School stands on the site of two rows of cottages known locally as *Triangle Row*. One brother built the first row, and the other brother built the adjoining row, to deliberately spoil the view! The small cottage, *Farnworth Lodge* to the right of the pub, now separated by the car park entrance, was built by The Farnworths for their coachman and gardener, Edward Shuttleworth and his family.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://ifthosewallscouldtalk.wordpress.com/2019/05/30/hidden-histories-lark-hill-astley/>

*Cross Manchester Road and walk past The Cart & Horses into the small section of Manchester Road which loops around the green area.*

*Stop outside the second house, an older property called* ***The Lingards****.*

42. **The Lingards** was built in the late 1860s or early 1870s by mill owner, Thomas and Mary Farnworth, but was later named after local farmer, John Lingard. The Farnworths were followed by John and Alice Arrowsmith, whose sons built the cotton mill at Astley Green. A later resident was Thomas Smith, who became the managing director of Astley and Tyldesley Collieries Ltd. Then, from the mid-1930s until 1983, it was the home of Leigh’s famous herbalist, Charlie Abbott.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://ifthosewallscouldtalk.wordpress.com/2018/10/31/hidden-histories-the-lingards-astley/>

*Continue past the property along Sandy Lane.*

*At the end of the lane, take the footpath which leads through to the East Lancs Road. Cross the road safely, using the central reservation then take the footpath directly opposite.\**

*Follow the footpath until it meets Peel Lane.*

*Continue along Peel Lane.*

*Stop outside Peel Hall.*

43. **Peel Hall** is a Grade II listed building, parts of which date back to the 16th and 17th centuries, when it had a moat. It was largely rebuilt in the 18th and early 19th-centuries but is now ‘at-risk’ in a very poor condition. In 1908 the then owner of Peel Hall, Thomas Oliver Cross, leased one of his fields to the colliery company to build houses for the miners.

**Images & video clips &/or further info.:**

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1360412924134666&type=3>

<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/lancs/vol3/pp445-449>

<http://astleytyldesleyandleighhistory.blogspot.com/2016/02/peel-hall-astley-riches-to-ruin.html>

*Continue along Peel Lane.*

*You will pass Third Avenue, Second Avenue and First Avenue which were miner’s cottages.*

*At the end of Peel Lane, turn left into Higher Green Lane and retrace your steps to the* ***Lancashire Mining Museum****.*

*\*If you prefer, you could continue alongside the East Lancs. Road until you reach the traffic lights, cross here, then return to the Lancashire Mining Museum via Higher Green Lane.*