

# A Short History of *Garstang*

Garstang is an attractive, popular market town situated on the banks of the River Wyre and close to the Forest of Bowland, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty from where the river springs.

Garstang was recorded in the Domesday Book as Cherestanc and received a Royal Charter to hold an annual fair in 1288 and a market from 1314. The weekly street market continues to this day every Thursday. In 2001 Garstang became the world's first Fairtrade Town.

The town has a population of 5,000 and is a true mixture of the old and the new with historic buildings and medieval weinds (passage ways) alongside contemporary shops and services.

Until 1926, when the first by-pass was built, the main A6 road from north to south went through the town and over the River Wyre at the Stone Bridge. It formed the Drove Road for the Highland Cattle being walked from Scotland to markets in London and the Midlands. Robert the Bruce, Bonnie Prince Charlie and Oliver Cromwell all brought their armies through the town, and when travel was mainly by horse drawn coach, up to twenty-four a day stopped here to change horses.

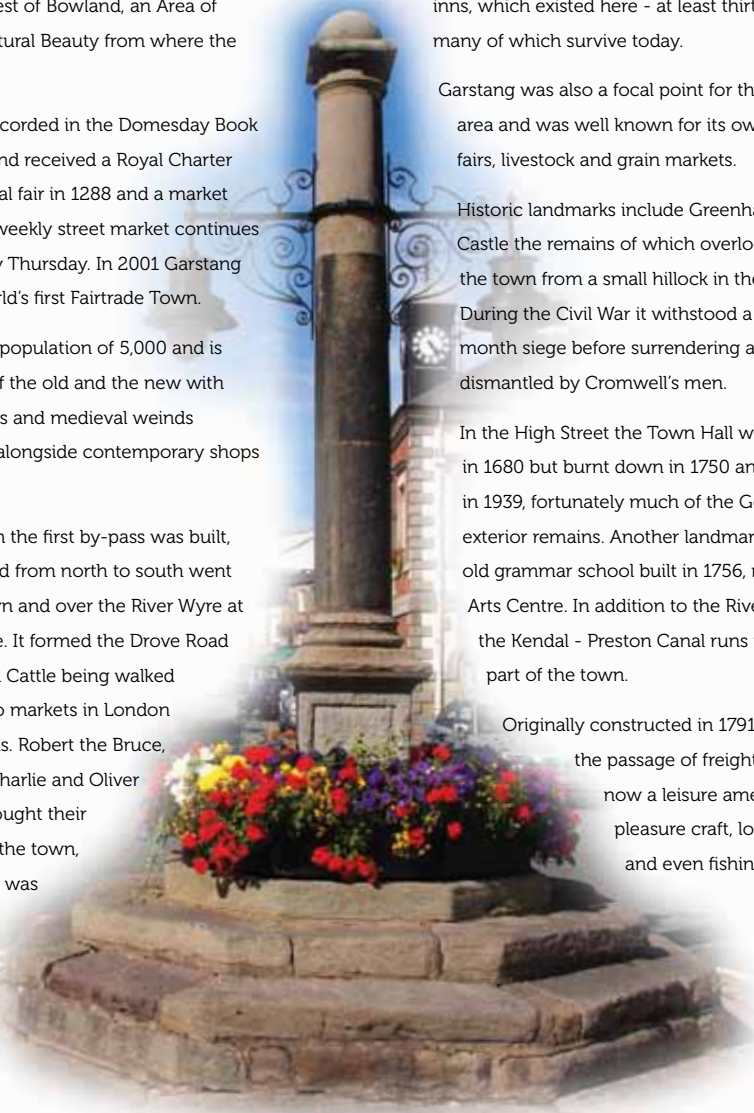
All these animals and people needing rest, food and drink accounts for the large number of inns, which existed here - at least thirteen, many of which survive today.

Garstang was also a focal point for the local area and was well known for its own horse fairs, livestock and grain markets.

Historic landmarks include Greenhalgh Castle the remains of which overlook the town from a small hillock in the east. During the Civil War it withstood a twelve month siege before surrendering and being dismantled by Cromwell's men.

In the High Street the Town Hall was built in 1680 but burnt down in 1750 and again in 1939, fortunately much of the Georgian exterior remains. Another landmark is the old grammar school built in 1756, now the Arts Centre. In addition to the River Wyre, the Kendal - Preston Canal runs through part of the town.

Originally constructed in 1791 for the passage of freight it is now a leisure amenity for pleasure craft, long walks and even fishing.



Market Cross

**24. Th' Owd Tithebarn.** This is a restored 18th century building. A tithebarn was used to store the tithes or taxes which everyone paid to the church, originally 10% of everything they grew, raised or made, later they paid the equivalent in money. Th' Owd Tithebarn is now a popular restaurant and stands on the side of Garstang's canal basin, where in the canal's heyday, goods were unloaded. Today, it provides moorings for many pleasure craft and a home for ducks and swans.

*The Short Walk ends here - retrace your steps back to the High St. Car Park. For the Longer Walks walk back from the Th' Owd Tithebarn to the road. Carefully cross over and walk left to Kepple Lane Bridge. Using the pedestrian bridge on the right hand side cross over the canal and turn right to go down to the tow path - turn right again to walk along the path.*

**25. Kepple Lane Canal Bridge.** Note the bridge number 62 to one side of the arch. All the bridges are numbered in this way.

**26. Lancaster Canal.** The canal, originally constructed for the passage of freight, was first opened in 1791. Originally intended to carry coal and limestone, by 1820 the Canal Company was operating its 'fly' passenger service, which travelled at 8 m.p.h. Preston to Kendal via Garstang, taking 14 hours to complete the journey, the fare cost three shillings. In its heyday it carried 30,000 passengers per year. *Continue along the towpath until you arrive at the Wyre Aqueduct.*

**27. Wyre Aqueduct.** This single span aqueduct, designed by John Rennie, dates from 1797. It is 110 feet long and carries the canal 34 feet above the River Wyre, which winds its way to the sea at Fleetwood.

*For the Long Walk go to the back of the leaflet (after item 33) for full directions. For the Medium Length Walk go down the steep steps on your right hand side down to the river. At the bottom of these steps turn right under the aqueduct following the River Wyre. Looking back at the aqueduct you can see what a marvellous piece of engineering and architecture it is.*

Walking along this path you will soon notice a deep, dry channel on your left, separate from the river. This is the old mill race (leat) that returned the water to the river from the Corn Mill that you are now approaching. A large weir, breached in 1961, raised the level of the River Wyre to 9 feet channelling water to the thundering mill wheel, which powered the millstones. With the weir destroyed, the river has returned to its original level. There was also a salmon ladder on the other side.

**28. Corn Mill.** A Fulling Mill existed here in the 13th Century to process cloth from Cockersand's Abbey Estate. There has been a corn mill here for over 300 years. Unusually the mill wheel was housed in a tunnel under the building. Note the hoist mechanism above the windows on the front. The Corn Mill is now a nursing home. *After walking under the arch between the three buildings of the Corn Mill you will find yourself at Wyre Bridge, which takes road traffic over the river.*

**29. Wyre Bridge.** The original Stone Bridge was built by the 1st Earl of Derby in 1492, the present bridge was built in 1629 and widened in 1829 and 1929. Its architecture is of the highest quality, constructed in fine stone with two large sweeping arches. Note the passing places halfway across the bridge.

**30. Sion House.** Turn right and the first house you come to, fronting the road, has been the site of a house for 700 years. Both the house and the Corn Mill were once owned by Cockersand Abbey 1246-1540. *A little further up the road is a church, cross the main road carefully here. (Access to the church is by ramp or steps from the main road.)*

**31. Saint Mary and Saint Michael's Roman Catholic Church and School.** Saint Mary and Saint Michael's Roman Catholic Church was built in 1858 and the Church grounds incorporate a school and the priest's house. This Catholic Church was built to replace the smaller church on Back Lane, now Park Hill Road. James Carr is depicted on a carving on the far side of the church. *For the Medium Length Walk go back to the bridge and staying on the same side, cross over the bridge. Walk up Bridge Street to the large red brick building, the Liberal Club.*

**32. Liberal Club.** When the former Catholic Church moved to Bonds in 1858, their premises off Back Lane became a Reading Room and Entertainment Centre. Controversy arose when the Liberal Party booked a room in the centre for a political meeting and the Trustees (mainly Tories) stated that the centre was not to be used for political meetings. This persuaded the Liberals to build their own premises, which were opened in 1889 in Bridge Street. It had a large assembly room upstairs and a reading room and billiard room on the ground floor. It was a very popular location for local dances. The building is now used as office accommodation.

*Continue to walk up Bridge Street and turn right at Coach House Mews following the path down to the Riverside Walk. This will take you to the High Street car park and the start. As you reach the car park look across the river to the back and to the left you will see Greenhalgh Castle the remains of which overlook the town from a small rise.*

**33. Greenhalgh Castle.** Thomas Stanley, first Earl of Derby, built the Castle in 1490. During the Civil War James, Earl of Derby in support of Charles 1, garrisoned the castle. The Royalists held out against a bitter siege by Parliamentary troops during 1644/45 before eventual surrender. Dismantled around 1650 the castle's stones were used in local buildings. Now only a crumbling corner tower remains. (There is no public access but the remains can be viewed closer by going down Castle Lane opposite the Corn Mill).

*Cross the High Street car park and you are back to the start of your walk*

*For the Long Walk cross the canal aqueduct and continue along the canal towpath passing under the bridges until you reach Bridge Number 60. Take the exit off the canal towpath and turn left on to Byerworth Lane North and continue walking to the main road (Bonds Lane). Turn left and carry on down the road towards Garstang. On the right hand side before the Bridge is Saint Mary and Saint Michael's Roman Catholic Church and School (31). Just further down on the left hand side is Sion House (30) and the Corn Mill (28) and Wyre Bridge (29).*

**34. Old Pilling Pig Railway Line.** The main railway station for Garstang was situated 2 miles out of the town. This branch line connecting the main line with Garstang and Pilling was opened in 1870. In 1872 the train engine stopped, worn out and the line closed until 1875 when a new engine the Pilling Pig was hired. It was given this name because of the noise the engine whistle made. The line was never profitable and closed in the early 1960s.

The complicated engineering works surrounding the concrete bridge forms part of the flood protection system, which has alleviated nearby St Michael's Village from frequent floods.

*Having crossed over the River Wyre, go down the steps, which are on your left, or the ramp further on to your right. Follow the path around the edge of the sports field and back to the High Street car park.*



River Wyre

*At the corner of the bridge and Castle Lane there is a stile marked Public Footpath. Continue over the stile and walk along the riverbank.*

*At the second stile (next to a fine Oak Tree), stop and look to your right and you will have a good view of the remains of Greenhalgh Castle (33). Continue to walk alongside the grassy bank and you will see a stile in the hedgerow. Cross this stile and head straight on along the riverside towards the grass bank and concrete bridge. Cross the next stile and turn left.*

*You are now walking on the old Pilling Pig railway line. Look behind and you can just make out the line disappearing into the distance.*

## THIS IS GARSTANG

This leaflet was updated in association with This is Garstang, part of the Garstang Town Council working Group.

This leaflet also reproduced with kind permission of Lynn Harter.

For further information on the history of Garstang and surrounding area visit: [www.garstangheritagesociety.org](http://www.garstangheritagesociety.org)

We hope you have enjoyed your walk.

### Acknowledgements

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Thanks to the sponsors of this reprint:



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# Garstang

## HERITAGE TRAIL



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A T O W N F O R A L L S E A S O N S

## Garstang Heritage Trail

The Garstang Heritage Trail follows the history of the town. This leaflet will guide you along the route of Garstang's past, via the many historic buildings and landmarks that remain today. There are three options for walks (shown on the map in different colours), varying in distance, all starting from the High St. Car Park.

Firstly a Short Walk, (yellow), down the High Street and Church Street to Th' Owd Tithebarn retracing your steps back to the High St. Car Park.  
**Time, approximately 55 minutes, wheelchair/pushchair friendly.**

Secondly a Medium Length Walk, (light blue), continuing on from the Th'Owd Tithebarn, along the canal and river returning by the Riverside Walk.  
**Time, approximately 1 hour 40 minutes,- steep steps, not suitable for wheelchairs/pushchairs.**

Thirdly a Long Walk, (red), down the High Street, along the canal to Bonds Lane returning by the far side of the river to the Old Railway Station.  
**Time, approximately 2 hours, wheelchair/pushchair friendly to Wyre Bridge. Those not able to climb stiles should follow the instructions for the medium walk from Wyre Bridge to no.32 onwards.**

Start the walks from High St. Car Park.

- 1. Old Council Offices.** This large, red brick building was situated at the top of the High Street by the High Street car park. The building was erected in 1913 for the Board of Guardians and Garstang Rural District Council (later absorbed by Wyre Borough Council in 1974). The Old Council Offices were demolished in 2019 and the site has since been redeveloped. The original redbrick facade has been retained.  
*With your back to the Old Council Offices cross the road carefully to the Arts Centre opposite.*
- 2. Arts Centre.** The front part was originally the Boys Grammar School built in 1756 and closed in 1928. The building is now held by Garstang Town Trust and serves the local community supporting numerous interest groups and hosting exhibitions and events. It houses in the old school room memorabilia of old Garstang Corporation which includes two halberds (axes dated 1886), imperial one gallon measure, town crier's bell, town sergeant's truncheon, handcuffs and branding iron. The Centre is open for coffee on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings.
- 3. United Reformed Church.** Further up Croston Road on the right hand side was the Congregational Church, which is now the United Reformed Church. This was the town's first Free Church, built in 1777 and extended in 1876. A few steps further up and you can relax in the peaceful area dedicated to Pat Seed MBE.  
*Return to the High St. Car Park and start to walk down the High Street on the left hand side*

- 4. Barnacre View Cottages.** The first buildings you will see on your left are Barnacre View Cottages, situated near the seating area and bus stop. These early 18th Century cottages formed part of the Common Lodging Houses, and a Drover's Road would have gone down to the river near here to let the cattle drink.

*Staying on the left hand side you will approach The Crown Hotel.*

- 5. Crown Hotel.** This is a red brick public house and changed its name from the Swan (Hotel) when rebuilt in 1912. Like all other inns it would have had stables for horses.

*Now cross to the right hand side of the High Street look for number 42, a small cottage with thick walls.*

- 6. Oldest House on the High Street, Number 42.** This is believed to be the oldest house in the High Street and was originally a thatched, cruck built cottage. It was rebuilt in 1984 and the timbers were carbon dated to 1590. It is situated near the eastern end of the old Rope Walk. The rope was made in front of a long row of stone and thatched buildings, which went roughly from Nickson's Weind and along where Windsor Road now stands.

### Weinds

Leading off the High Street are Garstang's ancient weinds. Weinds are narrow alleyways dating from medieval times. They often changed names to match the adjoining shops. Current names include Stoops Hall, Thomas's, Storey's, Nickson's, Grayston's, Fletcher's, Carrick and Eagle and Child Weind. The bottom of Nickson's Weind was the site of the old Cattle Auction, which was in use until 1923. Note also the number of large archways, originally, to give access for horses and coaches to stables at the back of buildings.

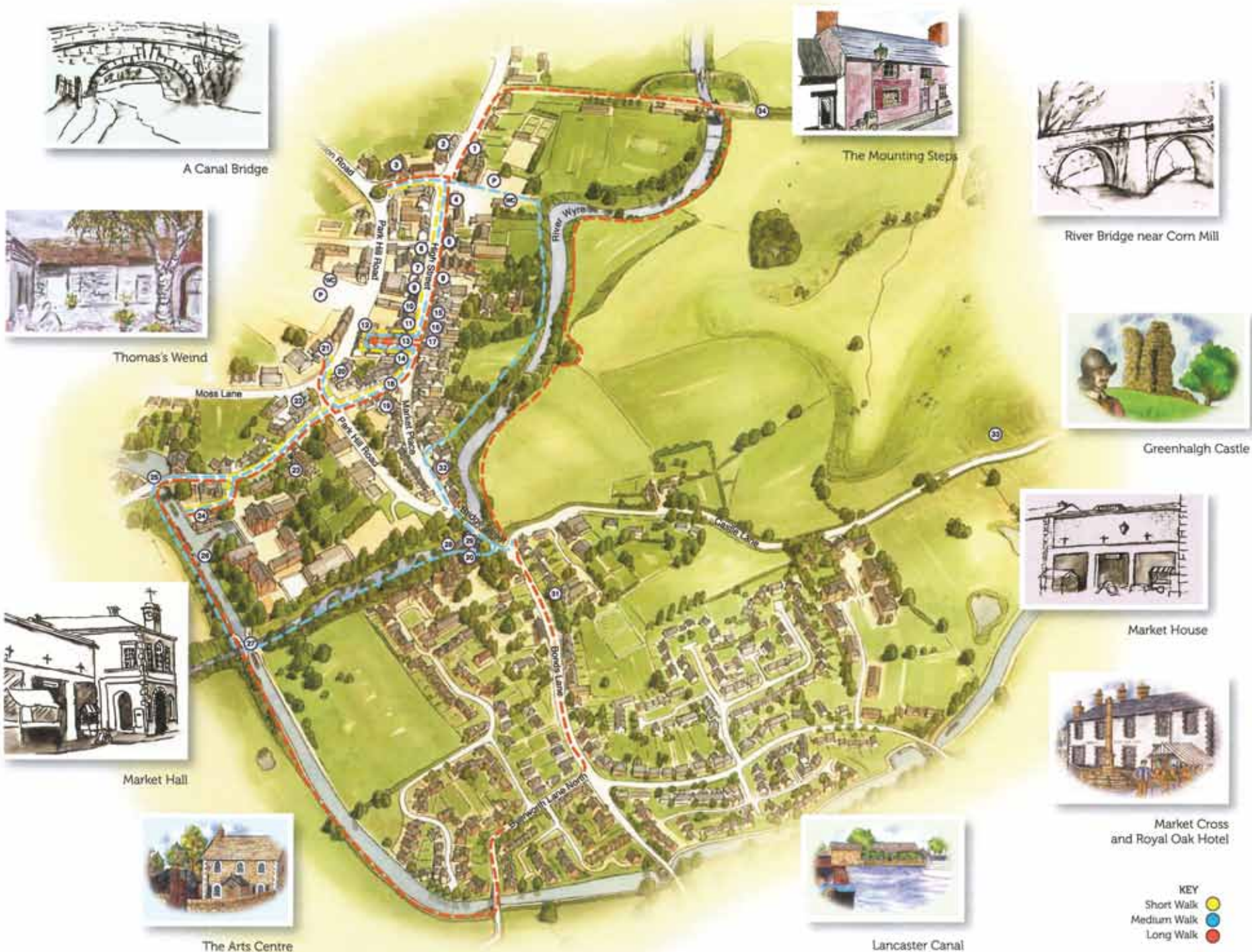
*Further down the High Street are the Mounting Steps.*

- 7. The Mounting Steps.** Outside the retail frontage are three steps. These were used for mounting horses. The steps were particularly useful for ladies riding sidesaddle.

- 8. Laburnum Cottage.** Further down the street is Laburnum Cottage, rebuilt in 1851. Originally part of the house was an alehouse known as the Holy Lamb.



Laburnum Cottage



- 9. Site of the original Pack Horse Inn.** Look across to the left hand side of the High Street to the stonework and chimneys of the retail building. This was originally the Pack Horse Inn, which lost its licence in 1901 and then continued as a Temperance Hotel until 1923. Originally the inn stabled 29 horses and was a stud centre.

- 10. Stoops Hall.** On the right hand side, the building, which houses shops with a weind in between is Stoop's Hall. The current red brick building was built in 1882. It was originally an old building dating back several centuries and was once the headquarters of the Kings Own Royal Lancashire Regiment, 5th Battalion Territorials. The name Stoops Hall originates from a building, which rested on stoops/posts. *Next to Stoops Hall is the Kings Arms.*

- 11. The Kings Arms.** The Kings Arms a building of stone and slate once had the original stables to the rear where the Kings Own Royal Lancashire Regiment stabled their horses. Most inns had stables, piggeries and brew houses at the rear.  
*Go down side of the Kings Arms then turn left at Park Hill Road, to return on the other side of the low car park wall.*

- 12. Chapel House/Weind House.** As you turn, you will see in front of you the arched windows of the first Catholic Church and Priest's House built in 1788, which subsequently became a Reading Room, Social Centre, Cinema and then Law Courts. The Catholic Church moved to its present site on Bonds Lane in 1858. *Return to the High Street under the large arch belonging to the Eagle and Child Inn.*

- 13. Eagle and Child Public House.** The Eagle and Child was one of the town's two Posting Inns, which had to provide not only food and lodging, but also stabling, and fodder for the traveller's horse(s), and fresh horses for the Mail coach. Built of stone and slate it had 8 bedrooms and a brew house. It also had extensive stabling at the rear. The public house was enlarged in the late 18th Century and early 1912. The inn sign refers to the legend of the Eagle and Child, which is attached to Lathom near Ormskirk. When Thomas Stanley, the first Earl of Derby - who built Greenhalgh Castle - acquired the Lathom estate, he incorporated a representation of the Eagle and Child legend into his coat of arms. You will find pubs with this name wherever the Stanleys owned land.

- 14. Shop.** Next to the Eagle and Child is a shop premises that was originally a large house once occupied by the Horrabin family, who in 1788 leased part of the rear garden for the building of the Catholic Church. In 1850 J.J. Thomas opened as a druggist. The businesses remained in the family for three generations. *Cross to the other side of the High Street and note Carr's Jewellers.*

- 15. Jewellers.** This is the oldest family business in Garstang. James Carr opened a Jewellers in 1820 in the premises next door.

- 16. Market House.** Continue down the High Street to the Market House. The Keppels built this in 1843. It was sold in 1919 to Garstang Parish Council to store a fire engine. In 1928 it was sold to Garstang Town Trust. Between the Market House and the Town Hall was the 'Small Dark Hole' - Garstang's Prison Cell now used as a small office.

- 17. Town Hall.** Next to the Market House stands the attractive red brick and stone Town Hall. This impressive building was opened in 1680, but sadly burnt down in 1750. Following its rebuilding in 1755 the hall once again suffered a fire in 1939, fortunately most of the Georgian stone work remained and was incorporated into the building. However, the last fire resulted in many of the town's old records being lost. The clock tower was added to the building by public subscription in 1847.

- 18. Market Cross.** In the centre of the Market Place stands the Market Cross surrounded by cobblestones. Cobbles once covered all the streets and weinds. The Market Cross, which is a scheduled ancient monument, probably lost its cross around the time of Cromwell. The steps are 17th Century or earlier and the column and pedestal date from 1754. The Market Cross was restored in 1897 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee. It used to be fitted with two ornamental lamps, which were removed in 1954, replicas of these lamps were replaced in 2012. The area surrounding the Cross was the original Market Place. Edward II granted the right to hold a market on Thursday in 1314. Garstang market is still held every Thursday carrying on the tradition to this day. It was also the site for auctions, announcing news and a main coach stop. Our Town Crier still 'cries' from this spot, and can be seen at all our festivals, and is often seen strolling along Garstang High St. on a Market Day.

- 19. Royal Oak Hotel.** The Royal Oak Hotel was Garstang's Principal Posting House on the London to Edinburgh route. Sir Walter Scott and Celia Fiennes are amongst some of the

famous people that have rested there. The block of buildings on the west side was used by Cromwell's troops during the siege of Greenhalgh Castle. The Royal Oak owned much land stretching to beyond St. Thomas's Church and right down to the river. It was used for many community gatherings. At the right hand corner of the Royal Oak Hotel note the marks on the cornerstone where the old coach wheels caught the stonework. To the left of the Royal Oak is Bridge Street. *Walk a little way down Bridge St. and on the left, if you look up, you will see the plaque on the site of The Old Post Office, now a retail shop. Retrace your steps back to the Royal Oak and walk down Church Street. Most of these small shops on the street were thatched well into the 1900's. At the roundabout turn right and walk up Park Hill Road to the Methodist Church.*

- 20. Methodist Church.** The first Methodist Chapel (then Wesleyan Chapel) was built in 1814 and the present chapel was erected in 1879 on the same site. Opposite is the Wheatsheaf Inn.

- 21. The Wheatsheaf Inn.** The inn was built around 1700 from brick, stone and thatch. At cattle fairs the sheep and pigs were sold here. It was refurbished about 1800 and again recently. Where Park Hill Road bends right and narrows it was previously called Back Lane as all the gardens and yards of the High Street buildings extended to it. *Return towards Church Street but cross over the main road to reach the far part of Church Street.*

- 22. The Old Cottages.** To your right is a building formerly called the Shovel and Broom and the Farmer's Arms. Further on you will pass The Old Cottages with pillars and pediments, which were originally around the altar in the first Roman Catholic Church. Cross the road.

- 23. St. Thomas's Church.** On your left you will pass the parish church of Garstang, St. Thomas's. The agent of the Lord of the Manor laid the first foundations of the church in 1770. It was built on part of the Royal Oak Field, which was once the town's playground for football matches. It was rebuilt in 1874 and achieved Parish Church status in 1881. St Helen's in Churchtown was originally the Parish Church for Garstang and is well worth a visit. *Ahead of you the long low building facing back down the street is the original St. Thomas's School now the converted flats. Go left in front of this to reach the canal basin and Th' Owd Tithebarn.*