

## A Brief History of Woolston

The name of the district of Woolston first appears in a charter dated about 1180. It is derived from two Old English elements – a personal name “Wulfes” of “Wulfsiges” followed by the word “tun”. In 1292 one Robert de Woolston was a witness to charter granted to the people of Warrington by William le Boteler. A family called Woolston lived in a manor there until it passed by marriage into the family of Hawarden of Flintshire in the fifteenth century, and by marriage in 1575 to the Standish family. The manor was now called Woolston Hall and stood in the vicinity of Hall Road. It had a domestic chapel from where Benedictine priests administered to the spiritual needs of the people of Woolston and Warrington, from the latter part of the seventeenth century to about 1771. In 1835 the Catholic Church of St Peter was opened, followed in 1840 by a school for 120 children. Records show that in 1895, 64 children were attending. A Wesleyan chapel had been erected in the neighbouring district of Martinscroft in 1827. The Church of England school – the Mission – was opened in 1885.

For many centuries after the Norman Conquest, Woolston remained a quiet backwater. It was connected to its nearest neighbour Warrington by an early, primitive road and to Thelwall across the River Mersey by a ferry, a service which continued until a few years ago. By the seventeenth century a high road between Warrington and Manchester existed, one of the four roads shown in Ogilby's Britannia of 1675. Early in the eighteenth century this became a turnpike road. At the same time a short canal, the first Woolston Cut was constructed as part of an early navigation scheme designed to eliminate the long bends in the river in its course eastwards from Warrington. Less than a century later a second canal, The New Cut was opened, Woolston remained essentially a small farming community, separated by fields from its neighbours.

In the last thirty or so years, major changes have taken place in Woolston. The opening of the motorway network, together with the development of Manchester airport have led to a period of expansion in Woolston and the surrounding area. Industrial estate have been built allowing businesses easy access to all major traffic routes. This has led in turn to a large house building programme and most the green fields of thirty years ago have disappeared. New schools, shops, doctor's surgeries and churches have been built to accommodate the influx of people to the area.