

ORIGINS OF PRESCOT

The ancient ecclesiastical parish of Prescott was one of the most extensive in south-west Lancashire an area of 36,554 statute acres. When the boundaries of Lichfield diocese were redefined, Prescott became part of the diocese of Chester and the Archdeaconry of Liverpool (before the latter became a separate diocese) and was a Deanery in its own right.

The name derives from the Saxon 'Preost' – a priest, and 'Cote, Coit and Cot' a building of wood. An earlier name by which the place was known was Churchley. A ley or leigh denoted a clearing in the forest. This clearing was made by the inhabitants and on it a church was erected. In the course of time the name Churchley was abandoned, except in such connections as plots of land e.g. Churchley Fields which surrounded the newly erected building. The present church is the fourth on this site. New Priestcote, or in the latinised form Prestacota, became Prescott, by which the place is known to the present day.

In Volume Two of Baines History of the County of Lancashire we find a clear account of the extent of the parish, and the boundaries on all points of the compass.

On the south lay the river Mersey, whilst on the west and north-west it abutted on the parishes of Huyton and Walton. To the north lay the parish of Ormskirk. Wigan was its neighbour in the north-north-east, and on the east it was bounded by the parishes of Winwick and Warrington.

The extreme length of the parish of Prescott was twelve miles from Ditton in the south to Rainford in the north. Its breadth, from the town of Prescott in the west to Great Sankey in the east, was eight miles. This gives some idea of the size and importance, in earlier times, of a parish which had the township of Prescott as its centre.

The ancient manor of Prescott was presided over by the lord who delegated the duties of oversight to the rector. Although close links existed between this man and the church, not all rectors were men in holy orders. The abode of the rector was Prescott Hall.

In the reign of Henry VI, in the 15th Century, the rectory was transferred to the college in Cambridge, which we know as King's College, and from 1448 onwards vicars were appointed. The first of these was Ralph Duckworth and since his day, twenty-nine men have held the post. The present occupant is the Rev. Robert Sturman.

A favourite schoolboy translated of the adopted King's College coat of arms and motto, as applied to the old badge of Prescott Grammar School, "FLOREAT PRESCOTIA", was 'Let Prescott flourish'

Although we acknowledge that we are an integral part of the Metropolitan Borough of Knowsley, we natives of the old town treasure the hope that, as an entity, we may no longer continue to flourish.