

3D STOCKPORT

See Stockport in a New Dimension



Photographed by Mike Cummins



Photographed and Written by
Mike Cummins

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Introduction

As our lifestyles become more hectic we seem to have no time to stop for a moment and consider the towns and cities we live in. Our environment seems to be in a constant state of regeneration, so much so that we hardly notice the change.

It is this change that provides the history of a town. We all love to look at old photographs of our homes to see how things have changes over the years, but how many of us pause to appreciate things as they are now?

The purpose of this book is to encourage us to stop for a moment and look around our hometowns. To look at the wonderful architecture - old and new - that influences our day-to-day lives.

People have been living on the site of Stockport since Saxon times, when the village (as it was then) guarded a strategic crossing point on the River Mersey. In the 13th Century the town began to take form with the appointment of Robert de Stokeport as Baron of the town.

This was the first significant step in the growth of the town. Later, the Industrial Revolution, and especially the hatting industry transformed the town into a busy place of commerce. In turn this led to the establishment shops that enabled Stockport to grow in to the place we know today.

The process of three-dimensional photography has been known since Victorian times. It relies upon fooling our eyes into combining two slightly different images so that our brains then put them together as a single image with depth.

Stockport is constantly evolving. In a few years' time we will be able to look back on the 3D images in this book as historical documents and we will actually be there.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Cummins', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mike Cummins. Stockport. October 2005



Stockport Town Hall

Central Stockport

Despite the size of Stockport as a town, it did not acquire its town hall until the early 20th century. Work on the building, designed by Sir Alfred Brumwell Thomas commenced in 1904 and it took a little over two years to lay the last stone on top of its 'wedding cake' clock tower.

The ballroom is as popular as ever, holding events as diverse as collectors' fairs, elections, talks, wrestling and, of course, tea dances.





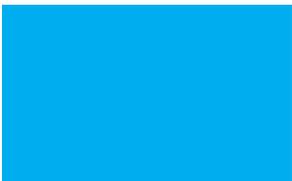
St Mary's Church

Marketplace

Central Stockport

Worship has taken place on the site of St Mary's for over a thousand years. Originally built of wood, the church was rebuilt in sandstone sometime after the Norman Conquest. After centuries of alterations and additions, the steeple finally collapsed in 1714 and was not replaced until the church was rebuilt, yet again, in the early 19th century.

The rebuild was designed by Lewis Wyatt who decided to retain the sandstone chancel of the old church. To this day visitors can see the change in architectural styles and building methods by walking around the outside of the chancel, which currently overlooks the Peel Shopping Centre.





Bramhall Hall

Bramhall Park

Bramhall

Regarded as one of the finest black and white timbered buildings in the North, if not the country, is Bramhall Hall. It was built from the 15th century onwards as a home for the influential Davenport family.

Today the Hall and its 64 acres of grounds are open to the public, who can enjoy gardens inspired by the work of famous landscape gardener Capability Brown.





Stockport Art Gallery

Greek Street

Central Stockport

Over 2200 men from Stockport were killed in combat during the First World War. As a monument to their sacrifice it was proposed that a memorial should be erected. It was decided by the town's elders that the monument should be combined with an Art Gallery.

Opened in 1925 on the site of the old Grammar School, the memorial contains all the names of those who lost their lives. Further names were added after the Second World War and subsequent conflicts. The entrance steps are used annually for Remembrance Day ceremonies.

The neo-classical building houses Stockport's Art Gallery that has exhibitions all year round. These range from works from their permanent collection, to displays from the town's lively artistic community, and even a summer-long open exhibition into which anyone can submit their work for consideration. There is also the facility for locals to borrow artwork for their home or office.





Stockport College

Wellington Road South

Central Stockport

The site of Stockport College has been a seat of learning since Stockport Grammar School moved to the corner of Greek Street in 1832. The Grammar School was complimented by the addition of a Technical School in 1888, which was located a little further along Wellington Road.

The Grammar School moved to Mile End in 1923 and the old school was demolished and replaced with the Art Gallery. The Technical School buildings survived until the 1970's when they were demolished and replaced with the now familiar glass fronted college buildings.

Plans are now afoot to rebuild the entire campus to ensure that the tradition of learning continues on the site well into the 21st Century.





Lyme Hall

Lyme Park

Disley

On the outskirts of Stockport lies the 1400 acre Lyme Park estate. The centre piece of the estate is the magnificent Lyme Hall, built in 18th Century by the Italian architect Giacomo Leoni for the Legh family on the site of a previous Tudor house. A substantial folly, Lyme Cage stands atop the hillside to the north-east of the Hall and can be seen for miles around. A second smaller folly, The Lantern is hidden to the south of the Hall and was built from the stone of the earlier house.

The estate is now managed by the National Trust. The stables have been converted in to a tea room, and tours are conducted around the Hall. Open air plays are often performed in the grounds and the estate has featured in many a film and TV drama, most recently in the BBC's production of Pride and Prejudice.





Stockport Market Hall

Marketplace

Central Stockport

There has been a market in Stockport since 1260, when Robert de Stokeport granted a charter. The market consisted of traders selling their wares from carts and stalls. It was not until 1861 that the now familiar iron and glass market hall, that now forms the centre of the market, was constructed.

The Produce Hall, which faces the Market Hall, had already been open nine years by this time. However it was only one storey high at this time. In 1875 it was decided to add an extra level to the building to house Stockport's first public library.

The Market Hall is now restored to its full glory thanks to a much-needed restoration in the 1980's. More recently, the Produce Hall has also received improvements. What was the library is now a first floor café with views over the market place.





Mersey Square

Central Stockport

At the turn of the 20th century Mersey Square was home to Stockport's Central Fire Station, the tram depot, and the Mersey Hotel. Of these only the hotel survives, now known to drinkers as the Chestergate Tavern.

It is easy to forget that much of the square is actually a bridge that spans across the River Mersey.

As far back as medieval times, before it became known as Mersey Square, the area was used for the sport of bear-baiting, a barbaric activity that involved leashing a live bear to a pole and then attacking the poor animal with a pack of vicious dogs. The bear-pit remains in Mersey Square to this day, although it is now a small garden that overlooks the River Mersey.





Plaza Super-Cinema

Mersey Square

Central Stockport

Recent generations remember the Plaza as a run-down bingo hall; a blight on Stockport's town centre. It was not always this way...

Opened in 1932, the Plaza was a Super-Cinema meaning that it was both a cinema and a variety hall. Much of the building is underground and new visitors are often surprised at the spectacular size of the Art-Deco auditorium which is capable of seating nearly 2000 patrons.

Sadly, as cinema audiences declined during the 1960s, it became clear that a cinema as vast as the Plaza was no longer financially sustainable. It was converted to a bingo hall in 1966 and thus began its slow decay.

A building as splendid as the Plaza would not die easily and is now in the hands of the Stockport Plaza Trust which has done a fantastic job of restoring the building to its former Super-Cinema glory.





Merseyway Shopping Precinct

Central Stockport

The area we now know as the Merseyway Precinct is in fact a 400 metre long bridge which covers over the River Mersey. Even today, the bridge is still considered an engineering marvel. Up until 1930s the river ran in the open, with road crossings at Mersey Square and Bridge Street, and an iron footbridge which crossed the river roughly between the sites where Woolworths and WHSmiths now have stores.

The first phase in the Merseyway project was built in 1940 when an elevated road was constructed over the river. This now functions as the central pedestrian walkway along the shopping precinct. Indeed, the current precinct entrances to Marks & Spencer, Woolworths and BHS originally led out onto the Merseyway road.

The precinct as we now know it was built during the mid-late sixties and integrated many of the existing buildings, including the Co-op (now Sunwins) Department Store into its design.





Staircase House

Marketplace

Central Stockport

Staircase house is a further example of how Stockport is rediscovering its past.

Originally built as a home for the wealthy Shallcross family in medieval times. Staircase House takes its name from the splendid Cage Newel staircase that was added during a 17th Century rebuild.

The house has survived for centuries and was used as recently as the 1980s as a cafe. A few years later a fire almost destroyed this important historical building. It was due to the hard work of the Stockport Heritage Trust that the building and, perhaps more importantly, the staircase were preserved.

Recent grants mean that Staircase house has now been restored into incorporate The Stockport Story, a new museum looking at the town's past, present and future.





Robinson's Brewery

Lower Hillgate

Central Stockport

If any company has become synonymous with Stockport it is Frederick Robinson's Brewery, more correctly known as the Unicorn Brewery. Established in 1838, when William Robinson purchased the Unicorn Inn, the brewery has kept Stockport's tipplers happy for generations.

The brewery is still under the control of the Robinson family, which provides continuity with the past. But they are not the only link to earlier years, the brewery still uses the same yeast that it introduced in the 1920s. The water for the beer comes from a well situated 400 feet below the brewery.

The brewery is still pumping out the barrels, as the rich smell of hops that waft over the market place will testify. Although the company has modernised it has not totally abandoned its past, and still maintains a stables and shire horses.





Stockport County FC

Edgeley Park

Edgeley

The home of Stockport County Football Club since 1902. Originally, the ground was shared with Stockport Rugby Club until it disbanded in 1905.

In the late 1970's Edgeley Park briefly became the home ground of the great George Best. But not even the legendary Best could keep the club from languishing at the bottom of the old Fourth Division. However the revival in football which took place in the 1990's lifted the team to higher divisions and resulted in the building of the new stand at the Cheadle End, that also houses a conference suite, on the site of the old Jacobean Club.

After almost a century away, rugby made a welcome return to Edgeley Park when in 2003 Sale Sharks RUFC moved to the Edgeley stadium.





Stockport Railway Viaduct

Central Stockport

Anybody who has even so much as simply passed through Stockport knows at least one thing: it has an impressive viaduct. Technically however, it is actually two viaducts, built side by side, each a third of a mile long. The earlier of the two viaducts was built in 1840 but soon proved to be inadequate for the amount of rail traffic that needed to use it. In 1887 work began on the second viaduct to widen the route.

The viaduct is almost 34 metres high and contains a staggering 11 million bricks.

The viaduct, with its 27 arches, remains the largest brick built structure in Western Europe. Its fame extends to featuring in paintings by LS Lowry and a blue heritage plaque on the Dane Bank arch celebrates this achievement.

Following a major restoration in the 1980s, the viaduct is now floodlit at night.





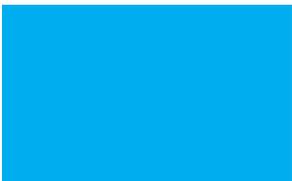
Lancashire Hill Towers

Lancashire Hill

Heaton Norris

So distinctive are the high-rise towers of Lancashire Hill on the Stockport skyline, it is hard to remember that prior to 1967 the hill was a very different place. At its top were the overgrown remains of the Stockport Branch of the Ashton Canal, and at the bottom of the hill was Tiviot Dale railway station. In between was decaying red brick workers' accommodation arranged in courtyards, and - of course - the original Nicholson's Arms public house.

The remains of the canal, which served Nelstrop Mill, can still be seen in the humped bridge on Wharf Street. The Nicholson's Arms was demolished and rebuilt into its current building during the construction of the tower blocks. Tiviot Dale station has vanished completely, but there are hopes that when the Metrolink tram service is extended to Stockport, the old line might be reopened to serve the Marple community.





The Pyramid

King's Valley

After the viaduct, the Pyramid is surely Stockport's most recognised landmark visible as it is to all users of the M60. Opened in 1992 it was intended as the first of several such structures in an industrial development to be called Kings Valley. Unfortunately the economic recession of the late 1980s took grip and the funds to build the other pyramids never materialised. The one that was built remained vacant for many years, its owners unable to find a tenant.

With the upturn in the national economy, the Co-Operative Bank moved into the whole building in the mid 1990s. It is now one of the largest employers in the Stockport area. As a result, the area immediately adjacent to the Pyramid is now back under development as an industrial park, to be named Kings Reach. Sadly, more conventional architecture has replaced the proposed Valley of Pyramids.





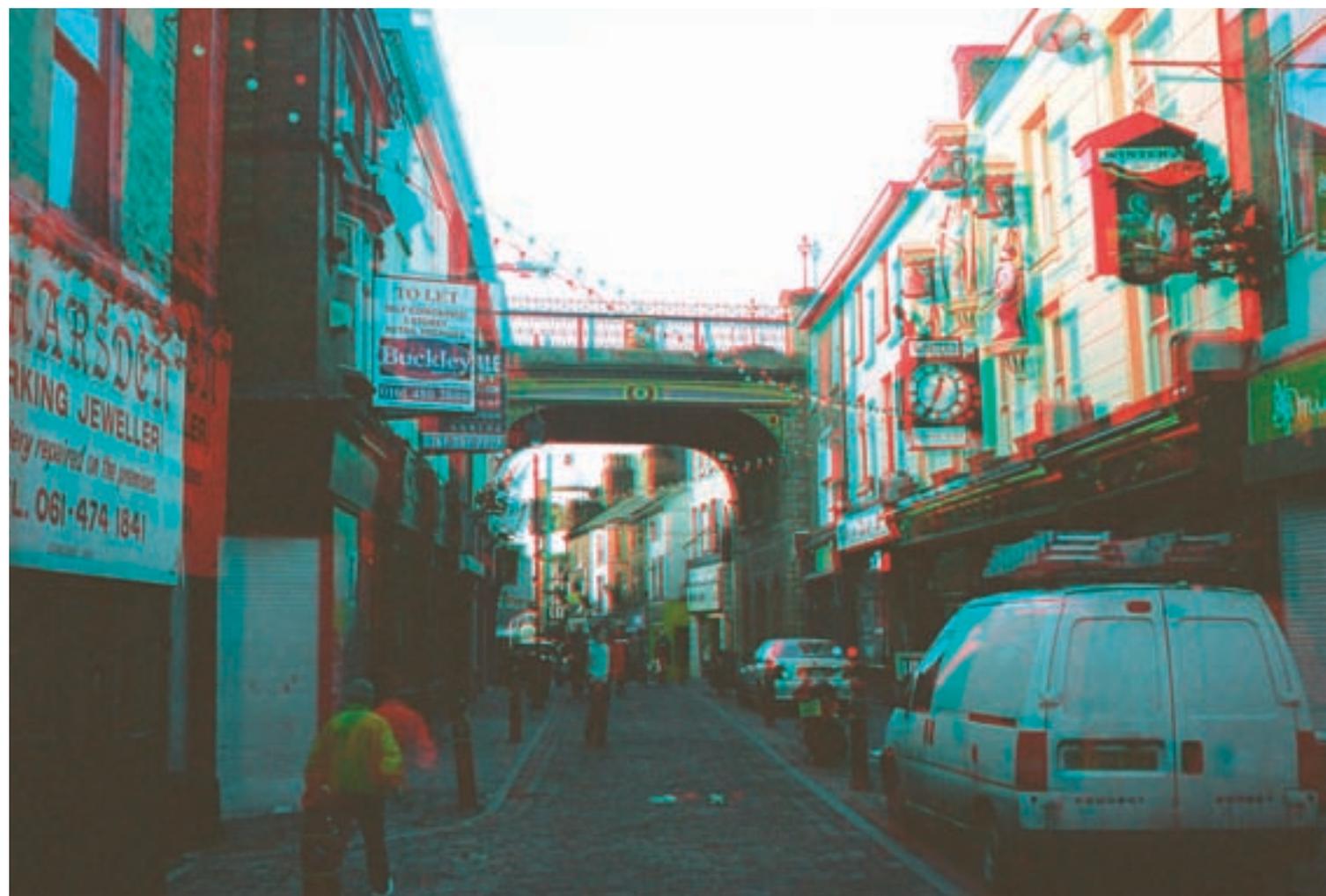
Underbank

Central Stockport

Underbank has always been one of Stockport's most picturesque streets, thanks mainly to St Petersgate Bridge which straddles across it. The bridge was erected in 1866 from a design by Mr R Rawlinson.

Below the bridge is Winter's Clock, so called because it belonged to Winter's jewellers shop which did business below. With the closure of Winter's the clock was preserved and is now a talking point in the wine bar which now occupies the premises.

Opposite the clock is the Queen's Head pub, a cosy pub that is home to the smallest gents' toilet in England. It is also said that a ghost walks the staircase at night





Air Crash Memorial

Hopes Carr
off Middle Hillgate

One of the most scarring incidents in Stockport's history must surely be the crashing of a British Midlands airliner on a Sunday morning in 1967. The Argonaut aircraft crashed on an area off Middle Hillgate called Hopes Carr. Of the 84 people on board only 12 survived. The cause of the crash was later found to be a fuel problem on the aircraft that reduced the plane from four engines to only two.

The events of that day in 1967 did not fade from the memories of the locals many of whom rushed to the aid of the downed airliner. In 1998 a simple poignant stone memorial was unveiled overlooking Hopes Carr. A second memorial was added in 2002 as a tribute to those local rescuers who rushed to help those trapped in the wreck.

There are now plans to redevelop the entire site as a hotel and also modern apartments, bringing new hope to a place too often associated with disaster.





Stockport Railway Station

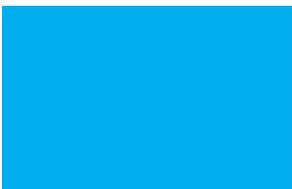
Station Road

Edgeley

Approach the station from the south and you will see a large tiled sign on Shaw Heath roundabout which reads Edgeley Station.

At the start of the 20th Century, central Stockport was served by two railway stations, the other being Tiviot Dale. However it was Edgeley Station, being on the busy West Coast Mainline, which became the bigger of the two, eventually being renamed as Stockport Station.

In recent years the station has undergone a remarkable transformation. At a cost of over £6 million, an airy new concourse has replaced the drab Victorian ticket office, and the station has also gained an extra platform.





M60 Motorway

Cheadle - Central Stockport - Bredbury

In 1986 the M63 Motorway opened to Stockport's motorists for the first time. Superbly designed to slip between two arches of the viaduct, the motorway provided the town with the business transport link that proved so vital to Stockport's prosperity.

Older Stopfordians may recall that the stretch of motorway that passes through the town centre was once a rather ad-hoc car park for shoppers.

A few weeks prior to its opening to traffic, the motorway was opened for local citizens to walk along. Many locals used the opportunity to raise sponsorship money for favorite charities.

In the 1990s it was decided to link the M63 with the M62 and M66 to provide an orbital motorway around Manchester. This new motorway was renamed the M60.

