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# Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire

## Historic Area Assessment

Chris Curtis, Clare Howard and Lucy Jessop



Architectural Investigation

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## Summary

As its name suggests, Sowerby Bridge, approximately 4.8km (2.3 miles) south-west of Halifax in the county of West Yorkshire, developed as a small hamlet around the crossing of the river Calder, particularly on its north bank. Documentary evidence suggests that the settlement started with a fulling mill and chapel located beside the bridge in the medieval period, although the river crossing may have been earlier. Much of Sowerby Bridge's architectural legacy relates to massive and rapid industrial growth in the 18th and 19th centuries which led to the settlement becoming a town by the mid-19th century.

The Sowerby Bridge Historic Area Assessment (HAA) was undertaken in support of the Sowerby Bridge High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ), a government-backed scheme aimed at using the historic environment to drive growth in historic places. This report focuses on the main thoroughfare and historic town core, including County Bridge, the south-east end of Hollins Mill Lane, the southern end of Tower Hill, Town Hall Street, Wharf Street and Old Cawsey, as far as the canal basin. It provides an overview of the town's history, development, character and value in order to inform key decisions about its future.

## Contributors

The project was overseen by Lucy Jessop and Clare Howard. The draft HAA was investigated, researched and written by Chris Curtis and Lucy Jessop, then substantially revised with additional material by Clare Howard. Photographs were taken by the authors and by Alun Bull and James Davies, and aerial photographs were taken by Damien Grady. The report was edited by Lucy Jessop and reviewed by other external specialists and interested parties.

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Front cover image: Sowerby Bridge Mills with the river Calder in the foreground [Alun Bull © Historic England, DP372733].

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# Abbreviations

ASWYAS	Archaeological Services West Yorkshire Advisory Service.
BM	British Museum.
CL	Calderdale Libraries.
HAA	Historic Area Assessment.
HEA	Historic England Archive, Swindon.
HSHAZ	High Street Heritage Action Zone.
NHLE	National Heritage List for England.
OS	Ordnance Survey.
RCHME	Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England.
WYAS	West Yorkshire Archive Service.





# Introduction

The historic town of Sowerby Bridge, located approximately 4.8km (2.3 miles) south-west of the centre of Halifax, has a long-established history which is reflected in its rich archaeological and architectural legacy. The bridge, from which the settlement received its name, remains a key gateway into the town's commercial core, leading to the main thoroughfare of Town Hall Street and Wharf Street, which is a realignment of the original late 18th-century turnpike road linking Rochdale and Halifax. The original medieval routeway from the bridge, however, roughly followed the line of Old Cawsey, providing transport between the fulling mills located along the riverbank and the markets beyond. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the town was dominated by the textile industry, two canals and the railway which fuelled its growth.

Today the main thoroughfare of Town Hall Street and Wharf Street, running parallel to the river Calder, make up the town's retail heart, while beyond this are some remaining manufacturers intermixed with residential and office space, often accommodated in older industrial buildings. The Sowerby Bridge Conservation Area was first designated on 5 June 1984. It covers the central part of the town stretching from Bridge Street to the south-west, across County Bridge as far as (and encompassing) the canal basin (see Figure 1). Conservation Area status means that demolition requires permission, trees are protected and change is carefully managed. A new conservation area appraisal is due to be written as part of and following on from the HSHAZ project which completed in March 2024.

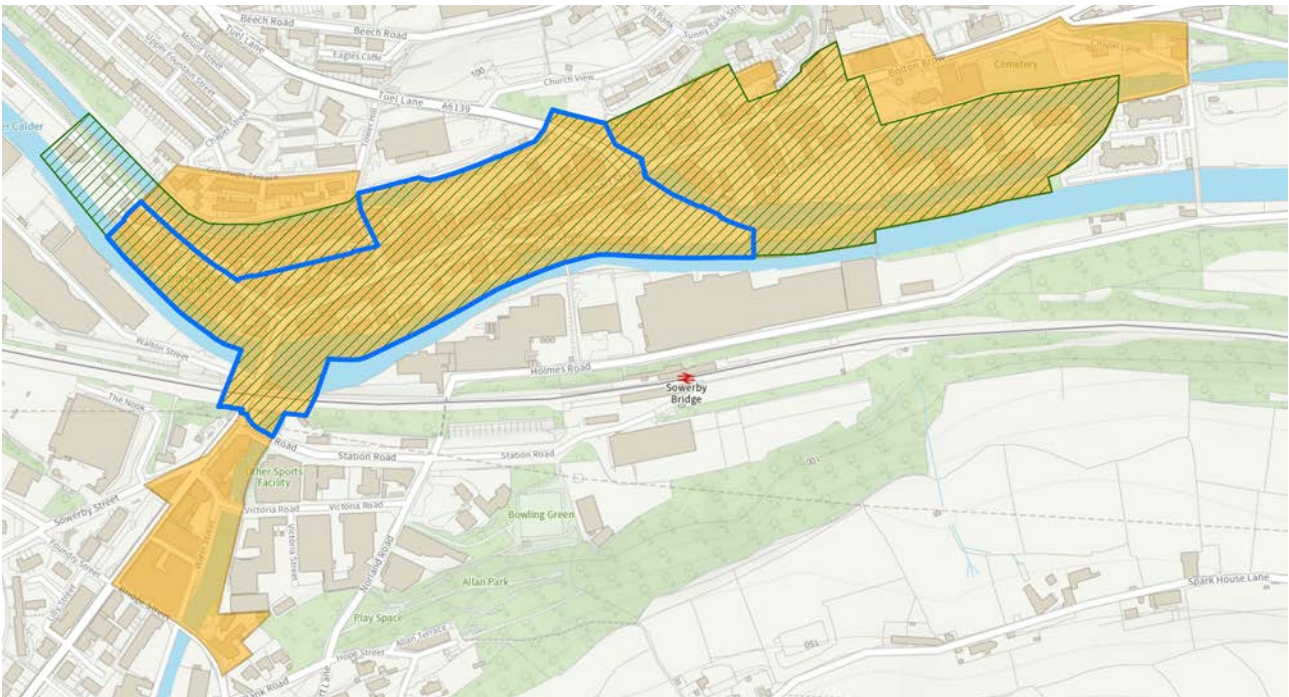


Figure 1: Map of Sowerby Bridge showing extent of the Historic Area Assessment study area (hatched green), the HSHAZ boundary (blue outline) and the Conservation Area (shaded orange). [Crown Copyright and database rights 2024. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900].

There are 22 listed buildings within the Historic Area Assessment (HAA) study area, all listed at Grade II with the exception of the Wet Dock at the canal basin which is listed at Grade II\* (NHLE 1313744). The listings cover a range of buildings from the Town Hall to smaller terraced houses and from mills to shops. The earliest building within the study area to be listed was Christ Church in 1966, followed by the warehouses around the canal basin in 1975. Some of the mills were listed in 1980 while Sowerby Bridge Mills (Greenups Mill) remained unlisted until 1987. The majority of the listed buildings were, however, protected in 1988.

Despite some investment in recent years, such as the Riverside Development and the Wharf restoration projects undertaken in the 1990s and early 2000s, many of the premises, particularly shops, remain vacant and the consequent lack of maintenance affects their historic character. While the Conservation Area is not currently identified as being at risk, some of its listed buildings are not in good condition and it is dominated by traffic on the A58.

Sowerby Bridge was identified as a High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) in 2020 as part of a national, government-sponsored programme of targeted support to encourage growth in historic places. The HSHAZ was a four-year programme encompassing a number of targeted projects carried out in partnership with Historic England, Calderdale Council, Fire and Water and local people. It aimed to support the regeneration of the town centre through strategic action, grant aid, specialist advice and public engagement.

The Historic Area Assessment (HAA) is a key component of the delivery programme, designed to enhance the understanding of the significance of the town in order to help increase footfall and investment, and to underpin key decisions about its future. It does not encompass the entire Conservation Area, but contains a large part of it – the extents of the HAA study area will be discussed further below (see Figures 1 and 2). The report considers the history and development of the town followed by a discussion of the character of three different areas, known as character areas. An assessment of heritage conservation and some of the issues and opportunities facing the town's heritage is provided, along with an exploration of what makes Sowerby Bridge distinctive and special.

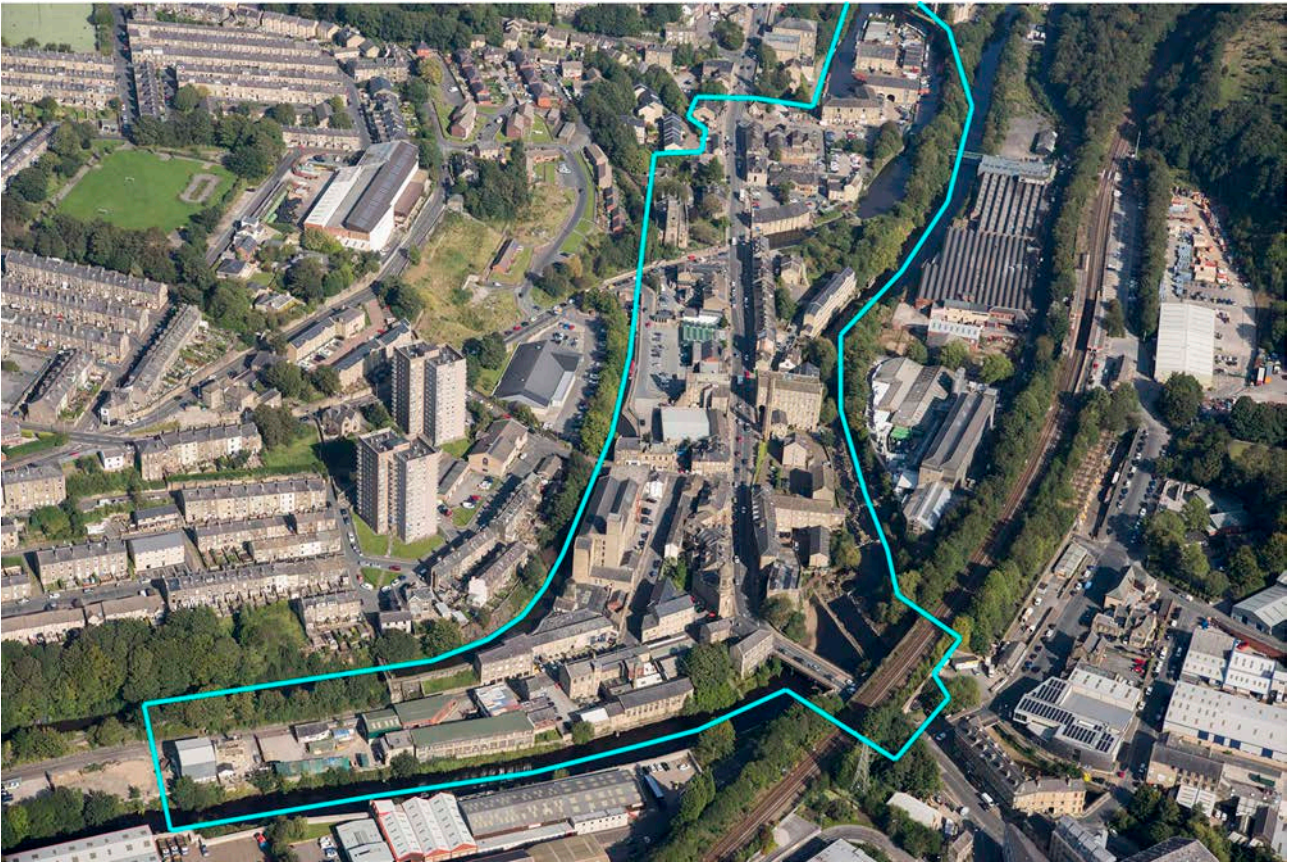


Figure 2: Aerial view of Sowerby Bridge, taken from the west with the extent of the Historic Area Assessment outlined. [Damian Grady, September 2021 © Historic England, 33928\_037].

## Aims of the Historic Area Assessment

This report has been prepared according to Historic England's guidance document, *Understanding Place*, which defines the Historic Area Assessment (HAA) process as a 'practical tool to understand and explain the heritage interest of an area' which helps to reveal the character of an area and define its historical significance.<sup>1</sup> This is a level-2 (rapid) assessment, based on fieldwork and archival research, in order to inform activities relating to the HSHAZ, including a review by the Historic England Listing Team.

The principal aim of the Sowerby Bridge HAA is to enhance the current understanding of the history, character and significance of the town and its setting through an investigation of its historic buildings and the historic built environment. It examines a wide selection of buildings and features from varying dates and, together with documentary and archaeological evidence, provides an account of the varied character of the town, identifying distinctive aspects of the historic environment which make Sowerby Bridge important. A consideration of these aspects will in turn help to shape the town's future, particularly regarding issues of restoration and reuse, heritage protection, engagement and interpretation.

# Methodology

## Study area

The extent of this HAA encompasses the area of the High Street Heritage Action Zone, including the historic County Bridge, the south-east end of Hollins Mill Lane, the south end of Tower Hill, and Town Hall Street, Wharf Street and Old Cawsey, as far as the canal basin (see Figure 1). It is thus defined by the canal basin to the east, the Calder to the south, and the Rochdale Canal to the north. Other adjacent areas – the canal basin, the housing north of the Rochdale Canal, and the industrial complexes and around the railway station south of the Calder – were also considered for context and to provide a wider understanding of the settlement as a whole.

Although the study area is relatively constrained in size and the fabric of the town has limited time depth, subtle differences in building type and appearance suggested the need for smaller character areas to aid description and understanding. The assessment area has therefore been divided into three areas, each based on commonality of historic development and present appearance (Figure 3).

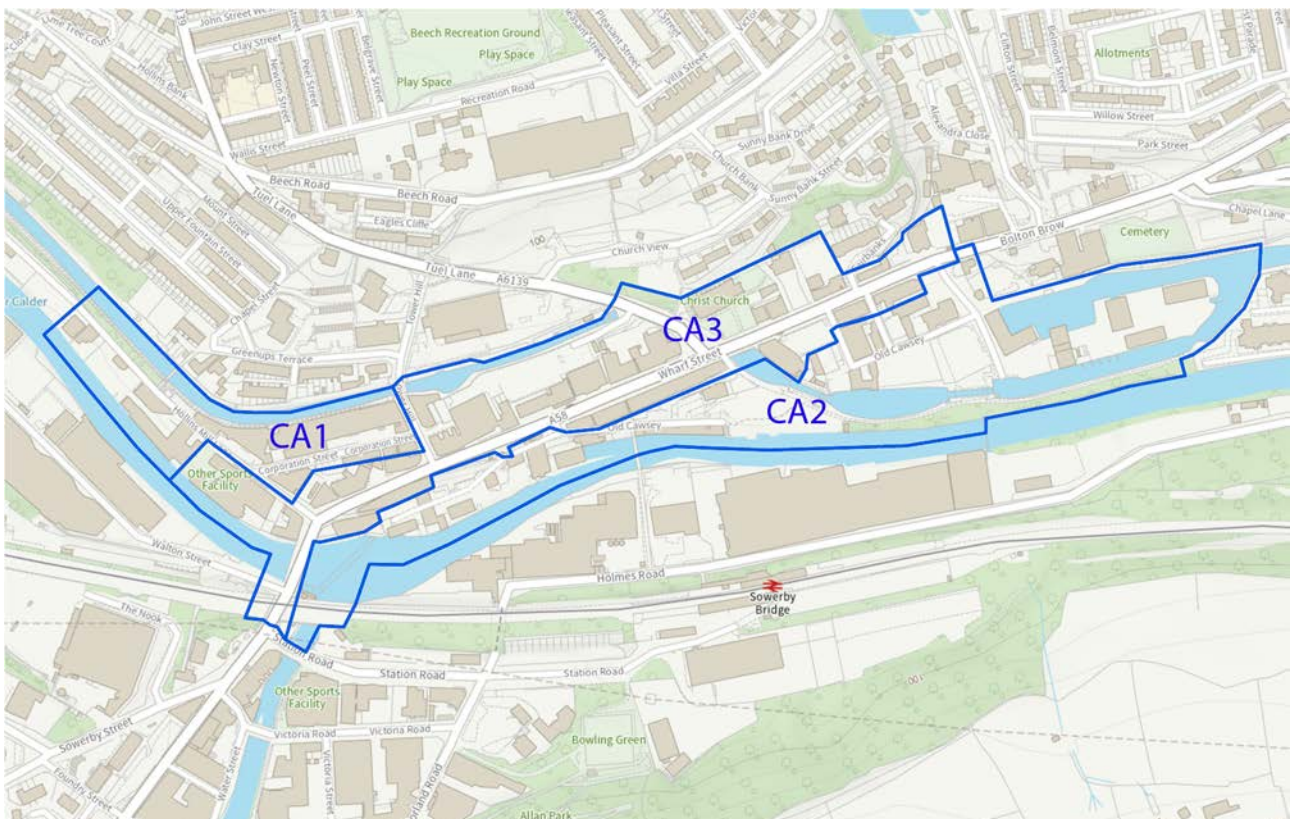


Figure 3: Map showing the extent of the Historic Area Assessment study area and its character areas. [Crown Copyright and database rights 2024. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900].

These are:

- Character Area 1 (CA1): Hollins Mill Lane and Corporation Street;
- Character Area 2 (CA2): Old Cawsey;
- Character Area 3 (CA3): Town Hall Street, Wharf Street and Tower Hill.

## Previous work

Published works relating to the history and architecture of Sowerby Bridge tend to focus on particular buildings or specific themes of interest. The *Transactions of the Halifax Antiquarian Society* have been an excellent source, with detailed and well-referenced accounts relating to the bridge and Sowerby Bridge Mills, although generally focused on documentary material rather than the buildings themselves. Sowerby Bridge Mills was surveyed by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME), including the now demolished Longbottom's Mill, and featured in Giles and Goodall's RCHME publication, *Yorkshire Textile Mills*.

Wider synthetic and narrative studies of the town have been limited and a full historical account looking at the surviving evidence has not been published prior to the preparation of this report. Shorter, unreferenced pieces on aspects of the town's history have been prepared by the former Sowerby Bridge Urban District Council and the Sowerby Bridge Civic Society, as well as others, which mostly appear in visitor guides.

## Archival research

The first stage of the project involved a review of readily available material including historic Ordnance Survey mapping, the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) and the Historic England Archive, alongside published and unpublished secondary texts. This was supplemented across the lifetime of the project with information from online sources such as census records, trade directories and the British Newspaper Archive, focusing on key sites that had been identified through the initial desk-based research, fieldwork and consultation with local historians and local archives.

Primary sources held by West Yorkshire Archives Service (WYAS) in Wakefield and at Halifax Central Library were examined, particularly historic maps, building control plans, sales particulars and historic photographs. Some account rolls, leases, surveys and other documents list the occupants of the town during the 16th and 17th centuries, but detailed investigation of ownership and descent of individual parcels of land is beyond the scope of this assessment.

It is worth noting that Sowerby Bridge was administratively split between the townships of Sowerby, Warley, Skircoat and Norland prior to 1856 and it therefore does not feature as a separate entry in some records. Furthermore, individual numbering of properties does not appear in the trade directories before the 20th century, making it difficult to identify individual properties.

## Fieldwork

The fieldwork was undertaken in August 2021, with subsequent visits between 2022 and 2024. A level-2 assessment was undertaken of the built area of the town, which involved an examination of all individual structures within the study area, where possible. Handwritten notes recorded date, phasing and significance of each building/structure or group of buildings. The buildings were subject to external inspection only, although interiors were visited where access allowed. Photographs of individual buildings, their settings and the general character of the town were taken; some of these have been used to illustrate the report.

## Related research outcomes

The HAA is linked to other research outputs from the HSHAZ programme. In 2021 new oblique photography was taken by the Historic England Aerial Survey team in advance of the commencement of the HSHAZ. These images have been lodged with the Historic England Archive and are now available through the Aerial Photograph Explorer (APEX). They provide excellent illustrative material as well as recording individual buildings and their wider setting.

The HAA is also informing a review by the Historic England Listing team, which will result in updated List entries, as well as minor amendments to existing List descriptions.

# Landscape, geology and topography

The settlement of Sowerby Bridge lies deep within the Calder Valley at the confluence of the River Calder and the River Ryburn. The steep sides of the valley climb to moorland plateaux characterised by peat woodland and rough pasture, typical of this part of the West Yorkshire landscape and the South Pennines. The town itself follows the valley bottom with later development encroaching along the valley sides. Owing to this topography, glimpses of the surrounding green space and trees can be caught between and behind the built environment, offering a contrast to the town's dominant building materials of sandstone and slate (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Aerial photograph of Sowerby Bridge in its landscape setting, looking south-east. [Damian Grady, September 2021 © Historic England, 33929\_019].

The river Calder and its crossing played a key role in the development of the settlement and gives the town its name. A bridge and fulling mill are known to have been located at Sowerby Bridge from at least the early 15th century, the confluence of the rivers at this location offering ample power to drive the water wheels of fulling mills along the northern banks of the river.



The main thoroughfare of Town Hall Street and Wharf Street slopes down to the river on the south side and upwards towards the moorland on the north. The steepness of this escarpment has meant that the buildings on the south side in particular are set at different levels on their north and south sides; street level entry is at ground level on their north side and at basement level on the south.

The underlying geological deposits of Sowerby Bridge are a mixture of sandstones, including Millstone Grit, East Carlton Grit and Midgley Grit; there are mudstone and siltstone with alluvium along the river banks comprising clay, silt, sand and gravel.<sup>2</sup> With the abundance of sandstone bedrock, it is unsurprising that there was once a quarry in the location of the present Corporation Mill (now Joel House), Corporation Street, as shown on the 1854 Ordnance Survey map (see Figure 17). Furthermore, almost all of the buildings within the study area are constructed from local buff-coloured sandstone, giving the town a uniformity of colour palette and character.

# Historical background

## Medieval and post-medieval

Much of the pre-medieval history remains unknown, but the area was clearly a draw for Roman activity with suspected Roman roads passing nearby and a scatter of finds across Calderdale. Before the mid-18th century, most settlements outside towns and villages was focused on the valley sides and upland areas. Here, it took the form of small hamlets, like Warley, and scattered farmsteads such as the late medieval two-storey hall (with 17th and 19th-century additions) at the Hollins, 43, 45 and 47 Hollins Lane.<sup>3</sup> (NHLE 1184346). Certainly, the village of Sowerby, believed to have been founded in the 10th century and from which Sowerby Bridge acquired its name, lies on higher ground above the River Calder about 1.7km (1.05 miles) to the south-west.<sup>4</sup> Until the middle of the 19th century, what is now the town of Sowerby Bridge had no legal or administrative status. While the whole area is encompassed within the large parish of Halifax, the settlement itself lay in four separate townships - Sowerby, Warley, Skircoat and Norland - with the bulk of the historic settlement forming part of Warley. Therefore, many people who may have lived in Sowerby Bridge enter the records as either from Halifax or from Warley.<sup>5</sup>

Following enclosure of the upland areas in the 17th century, most of the inhabitants of the Calder Valley were sheep farmers who also specialised in domestic weaving and dyeing.<sup>6</sup> The scene is conveyed by Daniel Defoe (about 1660 –1731) who travelled through ‘Sorby Bridge’ and the Calder Valley in the early 18th century. He was amazed by the number of small houses spread out on the valley sides, accompanied by tenters, cloth manufactories and fulling mills, with the entire population contributing to the manufacture of cloth:

...some at the Dye-vat, some at the Loom, others dressing  
the Cloths, the Women and Children carding or spinning;  
all employed from the youngest to the oldest.<sup>7</sup>

This remained the case until the late 18th century when various wool processes previously carried out in the home were brought within the growing factory complexes.<sup>8</sup>

As its name suggests, Sowerby Bridge grew in importance principally as a result of a crossing point over the river Calder for the strategically important road between Rochdale and Halifax, linking the two sides of the Pennines. One of the earliest known references to the name ‘Sourby-brig’ dates back to 1424 when it was used in a Wakefield Manor court roll to describe offences undertaken by John Schofield of that place.<sup>9</sup> It has been suggested that the bridge was originally built of timber and rebuilt in stone, which was under construction or repair by 1517 when John Dykson bequeathed ‘the fabric of the stone bridge at Sowerby six shillings and eight pence’.<sup>10</sup> This is further corroborated by the will of Robert Browne who left ‘to the making [sic] of Sourbrige [sic] 5 merkes’, and other numerous wills written during the subsequent decades, which indicate that the bridge took many years to complete.<sup>11</sup>

Accompanying the bridge on its north-east side was a small chapel of ease built in about 1526 when a grant of land was given and recorded in the Wakefield Manor court rolls, although it may have replaced an earlier building on the same site.<sup>12</sup> The chapel was 'pulled down', perhaps only partly, and 'raised higher' in 1632.<sup>13</sup> A valuation of the church in 1821 describes oak woodwork, galleries, pews, stone mullions, transoms and 'weathermouldings' (or hood moulds over the windows), glass with a leaded pattern of diamonds and a furnace constructed of brick.<sup>14</sup> The chapel can also be seen in an engraving by John Horner published in *Horner's Views of Building in the Town and Parish of Halifax* in 1835, which shows a single-storey, three-bay building with a bell-cote and a two-light window in the gable beneath it, lying immediately to the right of the bridge on the north-east bank of the Calder (Figure 5).<sup>15</sup> It has large square windows with hood moulds along its south elevation; the glazing is perhaps an 18th-century replacement. The drawing should, however, be viewed with caution since it was published 14 years after the chapel was demolished, replaced by a new church in a different location (see below). However, the illustration may have been prepared much earlier and only published (or republished) in 1835.



Figure 5: Sowerby Bridge Church by John Horner, published by Leyland and Son in 1835. [Reproduced with permission of Calderdale Libraries].

In the grant of 1526, the land for the chapel site is described as lying between Sowerby Bridge and a fulling mill, which suggests that the textile industry was already important in the immediate area at this date.<sup>16</sup> The site of the fulling mill is now occupied by the 18th- and 19th-century buildings of Sowerby Bridge Mills (also known as Greenups Mill) and parts of the early stonework may even form the foundations of the later mill, particularly around the goits or channels which run off the river to the north.<sup>17</sup> This is somewhat corroborated by reference to 'Sowerbie Brigg Mynes' in the will of Christopher Oldfield, dated 1578, who leased two parts of the site from the Manor of Wakefield and in the same year passed his share to George Oldfield and Thomas Bates.<sup>18</sup> Some commentators suggest that – due to the excellent location for exploiting water power at the confluence of the Ryburn and the Calder, and the rising production of woollen cloth in the parish of Halifax in the late middle ages – there was a mill in this location from the 14th century.<sup>19</sup>

No detailed maps of the area predating the mid-18th century have been found. However, the bridge over the river Calder along with a small building on the north side of the river, presumably the mill (there is a circular object attached to the building which may represent a waterwheel, perhaps even two), are labelled as 'Sorby brig' on Saxton's 1577 map (Figure 6). 'Sorby Brigg' is similarly represented on Speed's map of 1611, although the same symbol is used for most settlements across the map without variation (Figure 7). Much of Sowerby Bridge's early layout can be surmised from incidental documentary references (see above), the present morphology of the town, and archaeological evidence. Apart from the mill, chapel and bridge, it is likely that there would have been some housing, at least for the operators of the fulling mill and any other associated trades, probably along the line of the original Rochdale to Halifax road and other packhorse routes.



Figure 6: Extract from Saxton's 1576 County Map of Yorkshire. [Reproduced with permission of Calderdale Libraries, HT2].



Figure 7: Extract from John Speed's Map of *The West Riding of Yorkshyre*, published in 1611. [Reproduced with permission of Calderdale Libraries, HT3A].

The original route through the town corresponded roughly with what is now variously called Old Cawsey (or Causey) or Back Wharf Street, to the south of the present highway, albeit on a slightly different alignment.<sup>20</sup> The name 'causey' was a term that was in use from at least the late 15th century and it was often used to describe Roman paved roads, although any dating evidence for this in Sowerby Bridge is yet to be proved by archaeological investigation.<sup>21</sup> The eastern part of the route was disrupted by the development of the canal basin for the Calder and Hebble Navigation, which was completed in 1770 and eventually led to the construction of the new turnpike road – along the line of the present Wharf Street – in 1791-2.<sup>22</sup> Old Cawsey was further truncated by the Rochdale Canal: the construction of its locks started in 1794-5 and it was completed in 1804 (see below).<sup>23</sup>

There are a few buildings within the HAA study area that may date from the 16th to early 18th centuries. Both Puzzle Hall, in Hollins Mill Lane, and parts of the present Wharf Garage on Old Cawsey have features consistent with this period including stone-mullioned windows and four-centred arch-headed doorways. These buildings were probably gentry dwellings, owned by landowners or farmers. It is also possible that Orrell House also incorporates parts of an earlier house in its rear wing; Cawsey Farmhouse (demolished), which once stood close to the Turk's Head public house, may also have been a similar property. This suggests that, before the mid-18th century, the settlement of Sowerby Bridge was composed of scattered, detached houses located along or close to the main highway, alongside the bridge, and at least one fulling mill.

## Transport, trade and growth, 1750-1820

The transformation of Sowerby Bridge from a handful of buildings into a thriving settlement owes much to technological advances in textile production and to its fortuitous geographical position that allowed it to capitalise on the development of transport networks over the course of the 18th and 19th centuries. During this time, the main road through Sowerby Bridge was turnpiked and the settlement was connected to the canal and railway networks (see below).<sup>24</sup> Each of these improvements linked Yorkshire and Lancashire across the Pennines, with Sowerby Bridge roughly at the centre of several important transport networks.

The earliest known map to show Sowerby Bridge in any detail was a survey of the river Calder from Sowerby Bridge to Halifax, drawn by John Eyes in 1758 (Figure 8).<sup>25</sup> It shows a bridge with two triangular cutwaters on each side, as seen in the stone bridge which stands today, with possibly a third cutwater to the south-east, implying there was one central arch between them and possibly at least one flood arch either side (see Character Area 3 below). To its north-east was the church with its bellcote and two other buildings adjacent to the Calder; a third building stood to the north-west, on the opposite side of the main road. The weir to the east of the bridge is shown in its current location, suggesting that the river was being diverted to provide water power. The two buildings on the north bank of the river may have also been water-powered mills.

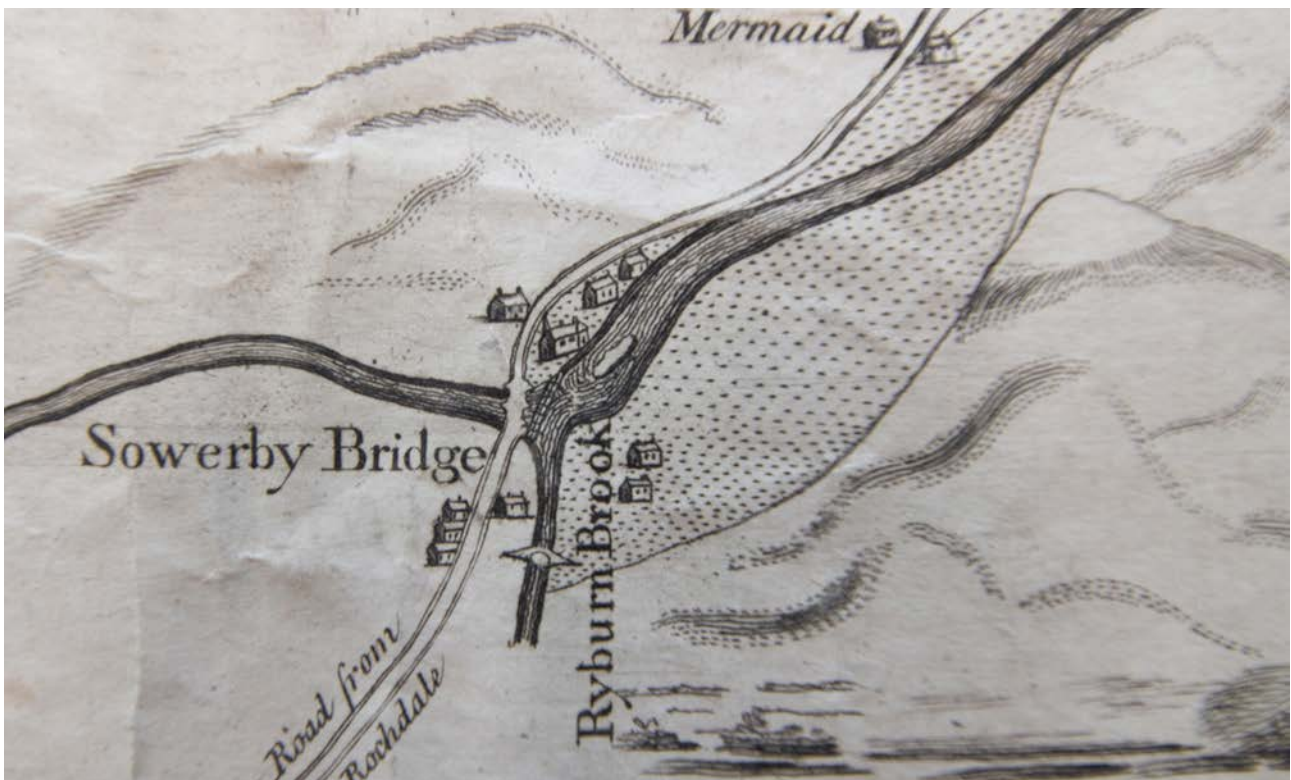


Figure 8: Extract from *A Plan of that part of the river Calder that lies between Sowerby Bridge and Halifax Brooksmouth in the County of York*, surveyed January 1758 by John Eyes. [Reproduced with permission of West Yorkshire Archives Service, Wakefield, WYW 1352/3/3/1/1/19].

A similar map drawn in 1765 to show the proposed route for the Calder and Hebble navigation (work which was never carried out) shows a greater concentration of buildings on the north bank of the Calder, including the chapel and four other fairly large buildings (Figure 9).<sup>26</sup> The water channel or goit which diverted the water through the mill only passes through one of these buildings which is set perpendicular to the river indicating that there was only one mill at this time, although the two buildings to the left of it may have contained related industrial processes. Beyond the mill is a larger two-storey building, which suggests a house with gabled wings; this may be Causeway Farmhouse which was depicted on the 1804 plan of the Rochdale Canal (see Figure 12) and removed by the late 19th century.<sup>27</sup>



Figure 9: Extract from *A Plan of the River Calder from Brooksmouth to Sowerby Bridge in the County of York*, 1765. [Reproduced with permission of Calderdale Libraries, HT7].

Interestingly, both maps show that the settlement coalesced around an open triangular space north of the bridge, as is common in medieval village settlements. The north point of the triangle became the upper part of the road now known as Tower Hill, previously known as Tuel Lane before it changed its name in the mid-20th century and the new Tuel Lane (A6139) was constructed (see below). It is possible that the open ground in front of the Bull's Head (originally an 18th-century house or inn, rebuilt in 1863-5) is a remnant of this early triangular feature (Figure 10).<sup>28</sup>



Figure 10: Photograph of the Old Bull's Head prior to its demolition (or partial demolition) in about 1863. [Reproduced with permission of Calderdale Libraries, 34 077 604].



## Improving the roads

Sowerby Bridge is located along an historically important road leading from Rochdale to Halifax, crossing the Pennines over Blackstone Edge and then following the Calder Valley to Halifax. However, prior to the rise of turnpike trusts, most roads in England were the responsibility of individuals and or parishes which often did not have the funds to maintain them. Several travel writers attest to the arduousness of the journey over Blackstone Edge, with John Taylor (1580-1653) writing:

...when I went down the lofty mountain called Blackstone Edge, I thought myself with my boy and horses had been in the land of Breakneck, it was so steep and tedious.<sup>29</sup>

Defoe traversed the route from Rochdale to Halifax in September 1726, experiencing a harrowing descent of Blackstone Edge in blizzard conditions.<sup>30</sup>

An Act of 1735 saw the creation of the Rochdale to Halifax and Elland Turnpike Trust to undertake the improvement and maintenance of the road over Blackstone Edge.<sup>31</sup> This certainly improved communications between Yorkshire and Lancashire whilst providing better opportunities for the sale of Calderdale's products. Bayliss argues that the turnpike road followed the route of Old Cawsey (or Causey), starting at the square outside what is now the Bull's Head and running along the line of the remaining road bearing the same name.<sup>32</sup> Toll booths were placed along its route, including at the corner of Town Hall Street and Tower Hill (formerly named Tuel Lane), since demolished. The causey was widened in 1754; however, the construction of the canal basin of the Calder and Hebble Navigation blocked part of the old route, causing it to be diverted with inadequate provision for traffic.<sup>33</sup> This led to the construction of a new road, the present Wharf Street, on the hillside to the north of the industrial zone along the Calder; it appears to have been completed by 1792 when the turnpike trust sold the old causey on the condition that it remained a right of way for foot traffic (Figure 11).<sup>34</sup> Old Cawsey was finally closed and became a dead end upon the completion of further canal improvements for the Rochdale Canal in 1794-5 (opened 1804), although pedestrians could, as they can today, cross the canal via the lock gate.<sup>35</sup>

The construction of the new road through Sowerby Bridge, combined with the increase in industrialisation and the construction of the canals, led to a boom in the population of the town – with the population of Warley rising from 3,546 in 1801 to 5,685 in 1831 – and viable building land now lay immediately along it.<sup>36</sup> The south side of what is now Wharf Street is lined with a series of stone-built terraced houses, which may have been built soon after the construction of the new road. Some were back-to-backs (as depicted on the 1894 Ordnance Survey map, see Figure 19) and the fenestration of their southern elevations suggests that they may have been built with domestic weaving in mind (see Character Area 2 and 3). At this date, the introduction of mechanised spinning created a demand for factory labour in the mills but weaving was yet to be powered and was thus still largely carried out at home.



Figure 11: A plan showing the line of the proposed Rochdale Canal from Sowerby Bridge Wharf in the County of York, surveyed by William Crossley, 1792. [Reproduced with permission of West Yorkshire Archives Service, Wakefield, QE20/4/35].

## Arrival of the canals

If improved roads enhanced Sowerby Bridge's transport system over the Pennines, so too did the arrival of not one, but two, canals, effectively linking the east and west coasts of England. Whilst the river Calder had been navigable to Sowerby Bridge by small boats since the medieval period, frequent flooding rendered it useless to larger cargo vessels. The Aire and Calder Navigation had already improved the section of the two rivers from Wakefield and Leeds to Knottingley in the early 18th century, but the upper reaches of the Calder were not yet passible.

The first significant improvement constructed was the Calder and Hebble Navigation. An Act to extend the navigation from Wakefield to Sowerby Bridge by essentially canalising the river Calder was passed on 9 June 1758, but severe damage was caused by a series of floods in the late 1760s and the scheme was abandoned by its developers.<sup>37</sup> A new Company of the Proprietors of the Calder and Hebble Navigation obtained a new Act of Parliament on 21 April 1769 and the first part of the navigation was completed in 1770.<sup>38</sup> The navigation terminated in a canal basin (known as the Calder and Hebble Navigation Wharf) which remains to the east of Sowerby Bridge together with many of its associated warehouse buildings (see Figure 59). The completed Navigation and associated basin

are depicted on the 1792 map (see Figure 11), but it is not known when they were completed. The new basin became a focus for development in Sowerby Bridge and other parts of the settlement also expanded accordingly.<sup>39</sup>

The Calder and Hebble Navigation was followed by the construction of a further waterway, the Rochdale Canal, in about 1794, which was fully opened by 1804 (see Figure 11). This canal approached from the west and connects with the Navigation to the east of the earlier wharf. It appears that the Rochdale Canal made use of the main wharf and warehouses there, but a wider section of the new canal to the south side of the main basin was reserved as the Rochdale Canal Wharf (see Figure 17).<sup>40</sup> Hull and Manchester were thus finally linked by water, and Sowerby Bridge was now directly connected to both (Figure 12).<sup>41</sup> The primary economic driver of the canal projects was the sale of coal and other raw materials to the developing industries of Yorkshire and Lancashire. Textile mill owners frequently objected to the construction of the canals for fear that they would not have enough water to power their mills, although they ultimately benefitted from the easier and cheaper transportation for their raw materials, fuel and merchandise that the canals brought.<sup>42</sup>

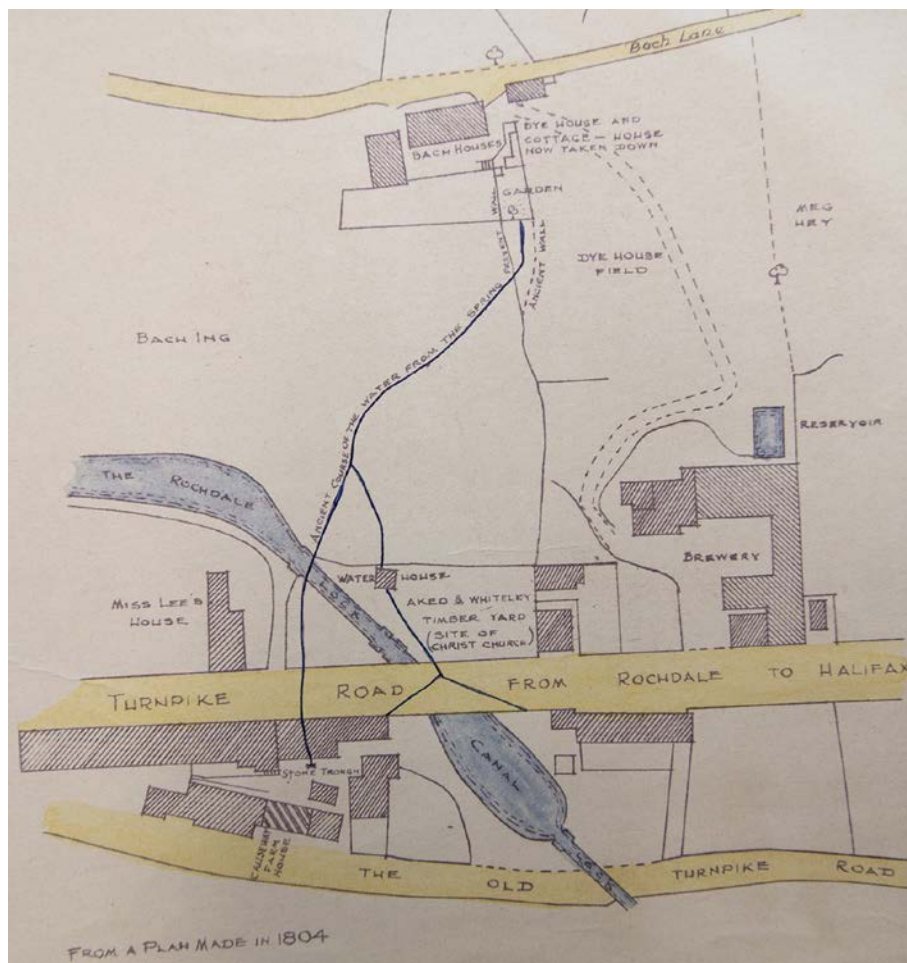


Figure 12: Plan of the Bache Estate and Old Sowerby Bridge, 1804, although this particular plan is a redrawn copy of the original. [Reproduced with permission of West Yorkshire Archives Service, Wakefield and the Parish Church Council of Sowerby Bridge, WDP93/20/1].

## Growing industrialisation

By the middle of the 18th century Sowerby Bridge remained a fairly small settlement. Houses were dispersed across the hillside and the majority of local textile production took place in the home, to be sold in an unfinished state at the Halifax Cloth Hall (later known as the Piece Hall).<sup>43</sup> Changes in textile technology over the second half of the century gradually moved the processes required to produce cloth out of the home and into integrated mills; this intensified over the course of the 19th century.

Kendall claims, though unreferenced, that there were two fulling and or rasping mills known as Sowerby Bridge Mills in 1750 which were accompanied by land known as tentercroft and were owned by Jonathan Laycock.<sup>44</sup> Rasping was the process of grinding dyewood to extract the dye; a dyehouse was added to the complex the following year, though possibly replacing an earlier one.<sup>45</sup> Watson, writing in 1775, also reports that by 1758 there were two mills for rasping and fulling at Sowerby Bridge.<sup>46</sup> These processes were the first to be mechanised, as they required a substantial amount of power. Bayliss argues that there may have been up to four mills, two under the name of Sowerby Bridge Mills, a third known as Goyt Mill and a fourth occupying land known as Tentercroft.<sup>47</sup>

By 1768, Sowerby Bridge Mills was leased to William Greenup (about 1730-83) of Darcey Hey in Skircoat, whose family name has become synonymous with the mills. A second mill was created alongside a house repaired and rebuilt by Timothy Bates (1756-1823) in about 1786.<sup>48</sup> Both the Greenup and Bates families had a lasting impact on the fabric of Sowerby Bridge.<sup>49</sup> Greenup made important changes not only to the technology he used but also in the way he did business. Prior to the late 18th century, roles in the cloth industry were rigidly defined, with individuals undertaking specific roles in each stage of production and post-production sales. Greenup undertook most of the manufacturing processes, sales and transportation within his company, acting as both merchant and manufacturer. Bayliss notes that:

The Greenups' names never occurred in the register of those using the Piece Hall at Halifax, the inference is that the family business was using the turnpikes, the river until 1770 and canals subsequently, to avoid the tolls and restrictions of the Halifax Piece Hall.<sup>50</sup>

It appears that key to the Greenups' success was the gradual improvement and expansion of the area's transport network, allowing them to bypass the wool merchants in Halifax. Furthermore, their investment in new and developing mechanised technology for scribbling, carding, and spinning from the 1760s allowed them to improve and speed up processes. In 1783, following the death of William Greenup, his sons William and George inherited the lease at Sowerby Bridge Mills and described themselves as worsted spinners and merchants.<sup>51</sup> William Greenup purchased the mills in 1787 and applied for a mortgage in 1789 from Francis Ingram of Liverpool and another in 1793 from William Egerton of Tatton Park, Cheshire.<sup>52</sup> The second mortgage probably

related to the construction of the main four-storey mill and this is also the date given by George Greenup at an enquiry of 1834.<sup>53</sup> The water-powered woollen mill incorporated carding, spinning and fulling processes and it is believed to be one of the earliest, if not the earliest, integrated woollen mill in West Yorkshire.<sup>54</sup> William and George Greenup as 'partners in trade' mortgaged the mills in 1815 to William and Christopher Rawson, bankers of Halifax.<sup>55</sup>

Fulling was certainly in decline locally from about 1780 with a move towards yarn preparation (including dyeing) and worsted spinning, previously done elsewhere following the sale of unfinished cloth to other merchants.<sup>56</sup> Bayliss identifies that the now demolished Longbottom's Mill, formerly part of the Sowerby Bridge Mills complex, was originally built in the late 18th century, probably as an unpowered weaving workshop.<sup>57</sup> Investigation prior to its demolition in the 1980s revealed a narrow mill built in the style of weavers' cottages, indicating that the Greenup family were attempting to keep at least some of the manual process of weaving in-house (Figure 13). At the same time a significant number of houses were built along, and to the south of, the new turnpike road along Wharf Street, also taking the form of weavers' cottages. This suggests that much weaving was still domestic and that Sowerby Bridge was attracting not only people who worked in the mills but also independent weavers who may have seen it as advantageous to live adjacent to them.

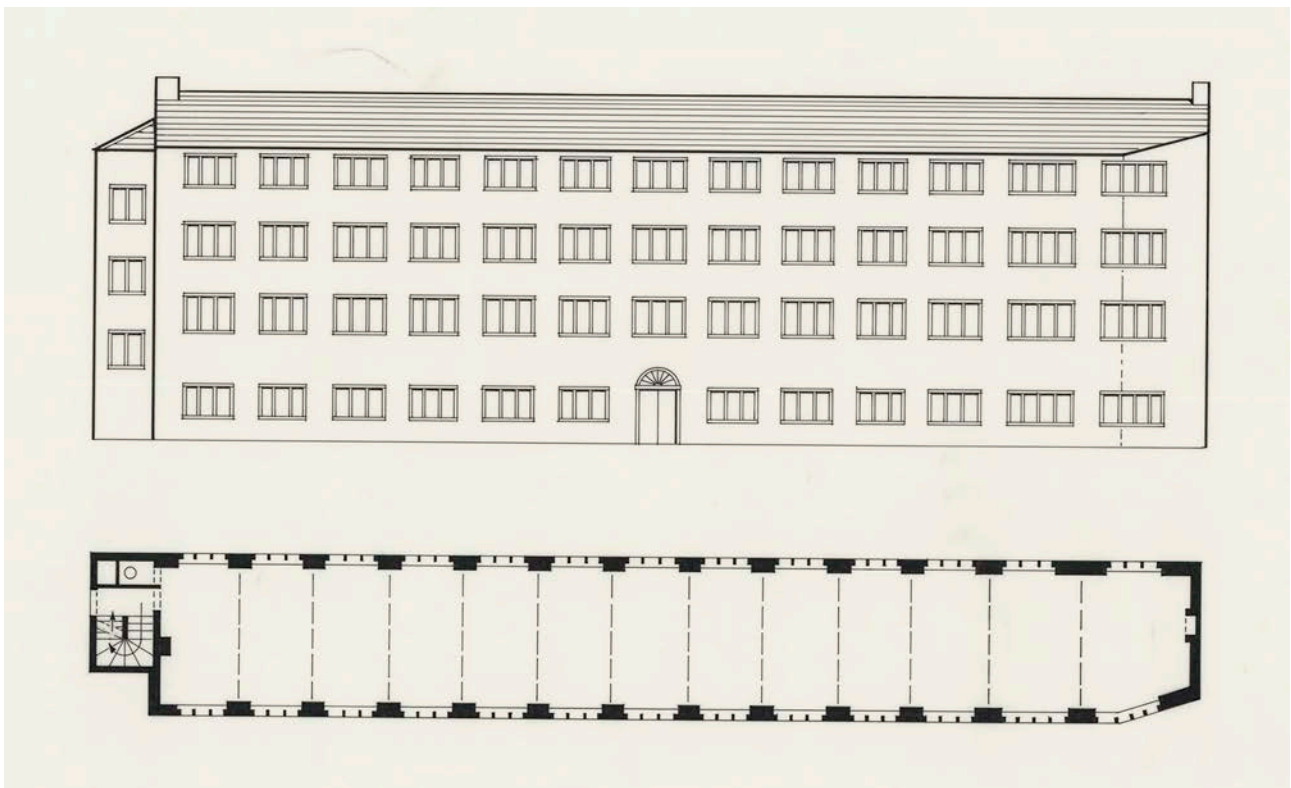


Figure 13: A reconstruction of Longbottom's Loomshop based on the survey undertaken by the Royal Commission of Historical Monuments in England (RCHME) in the 1980s. [© Historic England Archive, MD94\_04314].

At the same time as the Greenups were expanding their business, it appears that Timothy Bates left the milling trade to set up Bank Foundry in 1788, identifying an opportunity to build a business on the back of the town's rapidly growing technology and transport links.<sup>58</sup> Bank Foundry no longer survives but it was located to the north of the Rochdale Canal and Wharf Street, manufacturing machinery and transport equipment for the ever-increasing number of mills (see Figure 18).<sup>59</sup> Thus by 1800 the two main industries characterising Sowerby Bridge today – engineering and textiles – were present in the town.

## A thriving industrial settlement, 1820 – 1850

By the early 19th century, Sowerby Bridge was a bustling settlement focused on the textile and metal-working industries with a large number of houses (mostly back-to-backs) to accommodate the workers. With such a rapid increase in population – Warley had a population of 5,685 in 1831 which rose to 6,408 by 1851 – the small chapel of ease located beside the bridge was deemed to be too small and the parish church at Halifax was both extremely crowded and too distant.<sup>60</sup> The call for a 'comfortable and commodious' new church was first made in April 1803 at a general meeting held at the Wharf Inn, but no action was taken until a second meeting was held over 14 years later on 21 August 1817 at the Bull's Head.<sup>61</sup> At this meeting, a plot of land at the corner of Bank House Field, bordered by Tewel Lane (Tuel Lane, now named Tower Hill) on the west and Rochdale Road (now Wharf Street) on the south and owned by William and George Greenup was identified as the location for a new and larger church.<sup>62</sup>

The land was partly to be exchanged for that on which the old church was located, directly next to the Greenups' Sowerby Bridge Mills. When the Greenups sought to impose restrictions on the size of the proposed new church, the committee rejected their offer, seeking land in an alternative location further along the Rochdale road held by James Goodall and Timothy Bates.<sup>63</sup> The Greenups retaliated by writing to the Archbishop, explaining that there were insufficient grounds for rebuilding the church, but to no avail. The Greenups did eventually acquire part of the land beside the bridge, creating a private garden for their mill house.<sup>64</sup> Some of the land was also used to improve the goits and to widen the bridge in 1821 and 1823.<sup>65</sup> The new Christ Church was designed by John Oates (1793-1831) and it opened on 24 May 1821; the old church was taken down shortly afterwards with its materials auctioned on 1 June 1821.<sup>66</sup> A smaller Anglican church, St George on Haugh End Lane, was built in 1839-40 to serve the expanding south-western reaches of the settlement.<sup>67</sup>

Non-conformism was also developing in the town in the early 19th century with the construction of a large Methodist church at Bolton Brow in 1831. The building towers over the wharf on its south side and given the size of the building, it is unsurprising that its ground floor was used as a canal warehouse from about 1840.<sup>68</sup> There were a number of schools and Sunday schools providing education within Sowerby Bridge and

the surrounding areas in the early decades of the 19th century.<sup>69</sup> The National School at the foot of the bridge over the Rochdale Canal, on what is now known as Tower Hill, was one of the first purpose-built schools within the town constructed on land previously owned by the Greenups. It had a room on the ground floor for 224 boys and a room above for 266 girls; it opened on 12 March 1837.<sup>70</sup>

The map of Halifax of 1834-35 by J. F. Myers shows the site of Christ Church (marked with a Greek cross) with a new road linking it to the upper part of Tower Hill, then known as Tuel Lane (Figure 14).<sup>71</sup> Sowerby Bridge now had buildings along either side of the main Rochdale road (later Wharf Street), particularly on the south side where industrial activity met the river and canal basin. An 'Intended New Road' is shown on this map as a dotted line, bypassing Sowerby Bridge and requiring a new bridge just to the west of the present one, but it was never built. It is unknown why or when this proposal was abandoned, but perhaps it was due to cost and the impending arrival of the railway.



Figure 14: A Map of the Parish of Halifax in the West Riding County of York, made in the years 1834 and 1835 by J. F. Myers. [Reproduced with permission of West Yorkshire Archives Service, Wakefield, C559/23].

## The railway arrives

With the construction of the first steam railways in the 1820s and 30s and the subsequent rapid development of the railway network across the country, it was inevitable that railway companies would want to build an east-west, trans-Pennine route. The topography that made the Calder Valley ideal for roads and canal traffic also made it suitable for rail.<sup>72</sup>

In 1830 a potential route through the Calder Valley was identified and surveyed by the chief engineer of the Manchester to Leeds Railway Company, George Stephenson (1781-1848). The scheme was put to Parliament in 1831, but was rejected; a redrafted plan was submitted in 1835 and was passed.<sup>73</sup> The line was opened from Manchester as far as the Summit Tunnel – the high point of the route – in 1839, and Hebden Bridge to Leeds opened in October 1840 with the line complete by 31 December 1840; the exception was the Summit Tunnel which required repair and was opened a few months later (Figure 15).<sup>74</sup>



Figure 15: Undated photograph of Sowerby Bridge from the south-east showing the railway, Christ Church, and the mills and foundries on both sides of the Calder. [Calderdale Libraries, 32 923 512 and National Railway Museum].

The original railway station was built on the south side of the Calder, to the west of the Ryburn; it was superseded in 1876 by a second station between Holmes Road and Station Road, now mostly replaced with the present station (see Figure 17 and below).<sup>75</sup> Whilst there had been some settlement on the south side of the Calder for much of Sowerby Bridge's history, the choice of it as the location for the station undoubtedly led to this area's further growth.



## Industrial fluctuations

As transport improved, industry continued to consolidate and grow within the town. However, some industrialists overstretched themselves. In 1823 Anne Lister (1791-1840), of Shibden Hall, recorded the severe financial difficulties of the Greenups in her diary: they owed £22,500 to various creditors.<sup>76</sup> Unable to resolve these difficulties, the partnership between William and George Greenup was dissolved in 1828.<sup>77</sup> The property was subsequently sold in the same year and was described as:

Extensive woollen and worsted mills...with dyehouses, drying-houses, warehouses and all other Conveniences, occupied by Mr. George Greenup... Also, an excellent Dwelling-house...and six cottages.<sup>78</sup>

In 1844 it was for sale again, occupied by James Walton and used primarily as a carding and fulling mill.<sup>79</sup> By 1850, when the mills were sold yet again, the buildings were let to various businesses who each undertook different manufacturing processes.<sup>80</sup> The accompanying plan shows the mills and some of the surrounding area and gives us a good insight into the layout of the western part of the town at this time, which was still very much focused on the river and transport networks (Figure 16). The ground to the north of the Rochdale Canal was occupied by a large area of tenters.

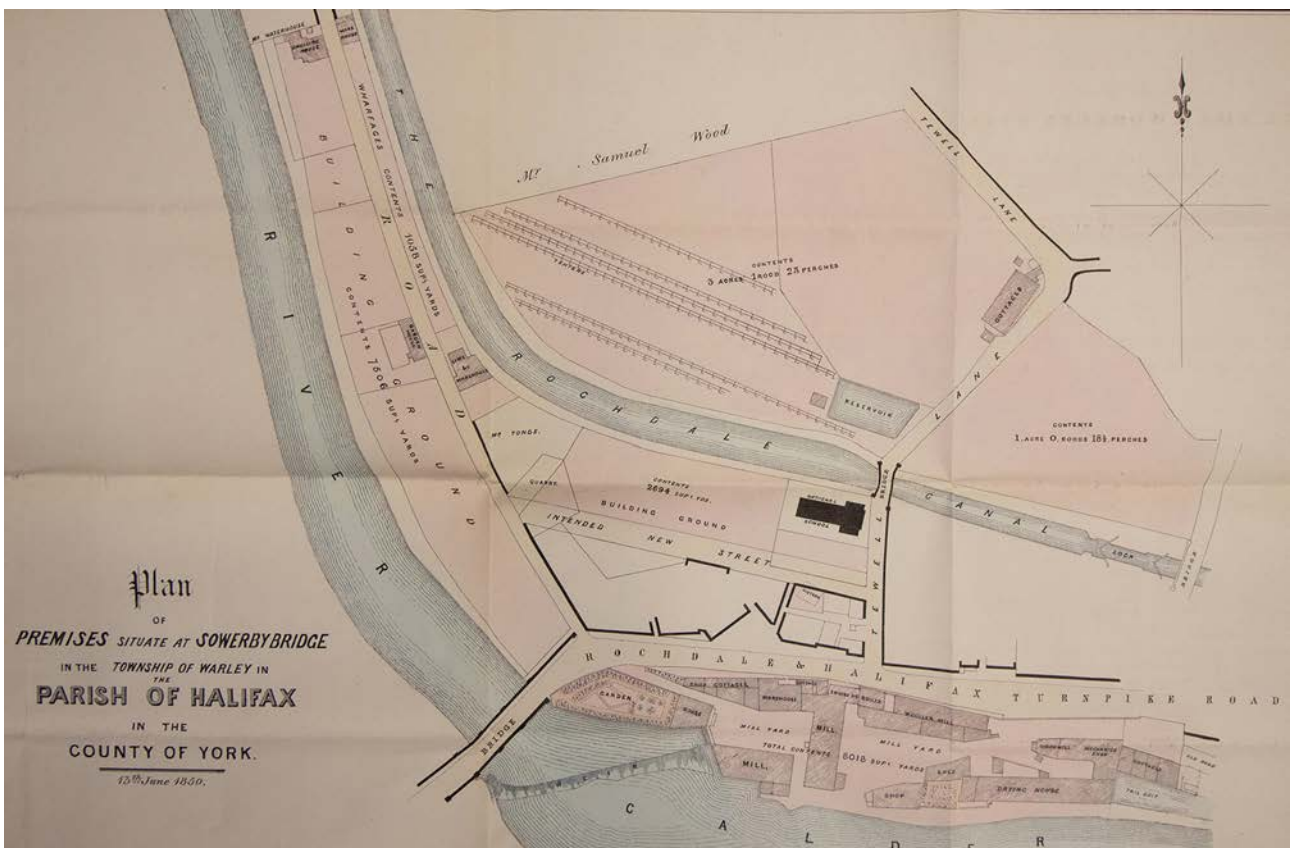


Figure 16: Extract from *A plan of premises situate at Sowerby Bridge in the Township of Warley in the Parish of Halifax in the County of York*, 13th June 1850. [Reproduced with permission of West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale, WYC 1307].

## Sowerby Bridge becomes a town, 1850 – 1900

Following the advent of steam in the 1840s, Sowerby Bridge continued to grow into a substantial industrial settlement. The second half of the 19th century would see much change in its landscape and built environment, though based on the prerequisites for industrial expansion which had been laid down in the previous 100 years. The rest of the century would see the maturation of the factory system, the establishment of local government for Sowerby Bridge, a massive population boom and the subsequent growth of domestic, civic and commercial architecture.

The first detailed published map of Sowerby Bridge is the six-inch Ordnance Survey map surveyed between 1848 and 1850, published 1854 (Figure 17). The map shows the settlement containing significantly more buildings than in the late 18th century, although it should be noted that earlier maps may not have depicted all of the buildings within the settlement at that time, just the key landmarks. All of the low-lying land along the north side of the Calder, east of the bridge, had been built upon, particularly around the canal basin and to the east of it where there was a gasworks and a brewery. With such a substantial amount of construction, it is interesting to note the sandstone quarry – perhaps for building materials – between Tower Hill (previously known as Tuel Lane) and Hollins Mill Lane. Corporation Street was yet to be laid out, although it appears as ‘intended new street’ on the 1850 sale plan (see Figure 16). Whilst the town had grown significantly, it was still surrounded by fields along the valley sides, which remained largely open and some still contained tents for drying and stretching the cloth. Hollins Mill Lane was yet to be developed and there were almost no buildings between the south bank of the Calder and the railway line. The area south of the bridge, such as West Street, contained domestic and industrial buildings by this date, particularly mills and a foundry. There were also two non-conformist chapels (one for the Independents, the other for Primitive Methodists), a further National School, several inns and a hotel.

The creation of the Sowerby Bridge Local Board (see below) precipitated the production of a set of large-scale maps of the town, published in 1866 (Figure 18). Buildings and streets are labelled; industrial buildings are shaded grey with domestic and civic buildings shaded pink. The plans show some growth in the extent of the town since the 1854 Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1848-50), with the construction of further mills and iron works between the railway station and the Calder. The area north of the Calder (south of the Rochdale road, later Wharf Street) appears to have changed little, with the majority of the housing still located in and around the Old Cawsey and canal areas. Corporation Street and Corporation Mill (a brass foundry) had been constructed as well as pockets of further housing replacing tents north of the Rochdale Canal. The plans demonstrate that while the town was certainly growing, there was still room for development. Indeed, by the publication of the 1894 Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1888-92) (Figure 19), the area between the Calder and the Rochdale Canal had become saturated with the development of commercial and industrial buildings. Many of the vacant plots shown on the 1866 plans had been filled and the town was a hive of activity.



Figure 17: Extract from the six-inch Ordnance Survey map, surveyed 1848-50 and published in 1854. [© and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd. All rights reserved 2024. Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024].



Figure 18: Extract from Local Board Plan for Sowerby Bridge, 1866. [Reproduced with permission of West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale, SBS:6/5].

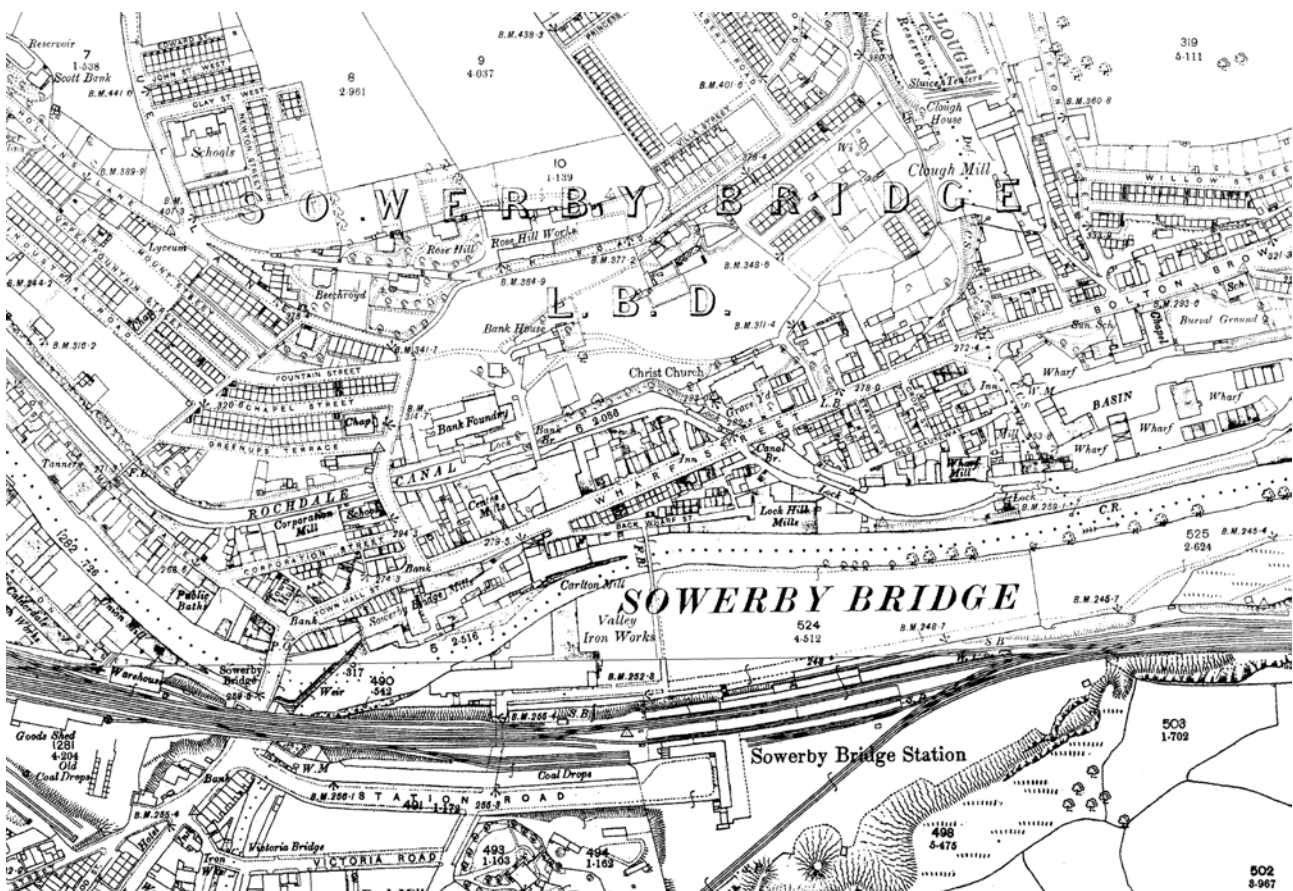


Figure 19: Extract from the 25-inch Ordnance Survey map, surveyed 1888-92 and published in 1894. [© and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2024). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024].

## Local government reform

Across England, particularly the north, the realities of the Industrial Revolution and rapid population growth made previous systems of local government difficult to maintain. Sowerby Bridge became its own parish by 1851 with a population of 4,365, but it was not a separate administrative entity until 1856 when a Local Board of Health (of 12 members) was established under the Public Health Act of 1848.<sup>81</sup> It incorporated the four townships of Warley, Norland, Skircoat and Sowerby. As only those with an annual income of £30 or more were eligible to be members of the Board, they included some of the key businessmen and landowners: the chairman was Thomas Nicholl of Sowerby Bridge Mills.<sup>82</sup> On 31 December 1894, the Local Board was superseded by the Urban District Council under the Local Government Act 1894, and in 1900 the four townships were represented as separate wards each with three members.<sup>83</sup>

One impact of the Local Board and its successor was the introduction of building control measures, requiring new buildings and extensions to comply with public health measures. This led to a minimum standard in the design and construction of buildings, roads and other changes.<sup>84</sup> In addition, the Local Board was responsible for improvements in services (such as water, gas and, later, electricity), drainage, sanitation and routeways.

Sowerby Bridge did not have any large public or civic buildings at the time the Local Board was established in 1856; most meetings tended to be held in public houses. A public subscription was set up by a private company to raise funds for a suitable building and a new town hall was duly built to designs by William Belton Perkins (about 1809-74) and Elisha Backhouse (1809-94) of Leeds, under the superintendence of Edward Ball of Halifax (Figure 20).<sup>85</sup> It was opened on 30 September 1857.<sup>86</sup> It had two rooms for the Local Board of Health (who rented the space) and others for the mechanics' institute on the ground floor, and a concert hall for seating 700 people on the first floor.<sup>87</sup> It was expected that the Local Board would purchase the building but this never happened; they rented it for a short time before they built new offices, public swimming and slipper baths and slaughterhouses on the opposite side of the road on Hollins Mill Lane. The new buildings, now known as Fire and Water, were constructed between 1877 and 1878 to the designs of J. H. Smethurst on land purchased from William Appleyard Nicholl (owner of Sowerby Bridge Mills).<sup>88</sup> A public library was added in 1905 and alterations were made in 1922.<sup>89</sup>



Figure 20: Photograph showing Town Hall Street after the construction of the Town Hall in 1857 and before the construction of Central Buildings in 1874. [Reproduced with permission of Calderdale Libraries, 58 538 07X].

In addition to the development of public buildings, the town also grew its religious and educational provision with a new Sunday School overlooking the wharf at Bolton Brow to accompany the neighbouring Methodist church, designed by C. F. L. Horsfall of Leeds and opened 1882-3.<sup>90</sup> These two vast structures continue to dominate this part of the town. Furthermore, there had been a proliferation of new non-conformist chapels throughout the town to the south of the Calder and also north of the Rochdale Canal, as depicted on the 1894 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map. A large school known as Tuel Lane Infant School was built to the north, on Tower Hill (then named Tuel Lane), and a smaller school complex associated with St George's on Haugh End Lane served the expanding south-western part of the town.

## Transport infrastructure

In 1867, the county bridge surveyor reported that on a typical day between 6.30am and 10pm, 9,285 pedestrians crossed County Bridge, in addition to 605 'vehicles and horse and carts'.<sup>91</sup> This substantial amount of traffic demonstrates not only the importance of the town but also the constant pressure on its infrastructure. Despite the widening of the mid-17th-century bridge in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, it still could not accommodate the town's increasing traffic. This led to the decision to widen the bridge substantially, using cast-iron columns and braces to support a wider deck with a cast-iron balustrade. The work was carried out in 1874-5.<sup>92</sup> Other pedestrian bridges were added around this time to alleviate some foot traffic over the bridge. The iron bridge which crosses the river Calder to Old Cawsey was probably added when the railway station was moved to its present location in 1876 between Holmes Road and Station Road (see Figure 17 and below).<sup>93</sup> It was not until 1873 that the Local Board obtained the toll roads and the toll booths at Bolton Brow, Tuel Lane (now Tower Hill) and Watson Mill Lane were closed. Thereafter, the Board made necessary improvements, including widening and resurfacing; Tuel Lane (now Tower Hill) bridge was widened in about 1877.<sup>94</sup>

## Retail and commerce

Following the move of the Local Board to new premises in 1878, the old town hall became vacant and part of the building was sold to the Halifax Banking Company to expand their neighbouring premises in 1882.<sup>95</sup> This bank was the first in the town, with others being established towards the end of the century, including the Lancashire and Yorkshire Bank at nos. 21 and 23 Town Hall Street in 1894 and the Yorkshire Penny Bank at nos. 4, 6 and 8 Tower Hill (formerly Tuel Lane) in 1898.<sup>96</sup> This increase, combined with a number of new shops, suggested that business, retail and individual banking and investment was on the rise.

As the main thoroughfare, Town Hall Street and Wharf Street gained new shops and commercial enterprises from the 1870s onwards. Central Buildings at nos 1, 5 and 7 Town Hall Street were built in 1874 and housed a post office and other shops. Buildings on the opposite side of Town Hall Street with similar stone elevations were probably built or remodelled in the mid- to late 19th century. Further along Wharf Street, domestic buildings were starting to accommodate shops with some back-to-back houses knocked through to create larger premises. Nos 48-52 Wharf Street were entirely replaced by three new buildings accommodating workshops in the basement, shops on the ground floor and living accommodation behind and above (see Figures 90 and 91).

## Industrial development and expansion

The 1854 Ordnance Survey map (surveyed between 1848 and 1850) shows that by the middle of the 19th century mills and foundries had proliferated throughout the Calder Valley, particularly along the Calder and Ryburn as a result of previous reliance on (and in some cases a continuation of) water power and water transport (see Figure 17). In addition to the original Sowerby Bridge Mills, Carlton Mill (a woollen mill with attached weaving shed) was constructed by the industrialist Thomas Nicholl between the survey of the 1854 Ordnance Survey map and the 1866 Local Board Plans.<sup>97</sup> In addition, there were Wharf, Regulator, and Lock Hill mills downstream, Clough Mill to the north of the town, and West End Mills and ironworks on the Ryburn. Some of these mills, such as the Wharf and Regulator Mills, were powered by steam from the early 19th century.<sup>98</sup> By the late 19th century, industry had spread further on the south side of the Calder, with the construction of the new station and the vast Valley Iron Works. Hollins Mill Lane was also more fully developed, including the substantial Holme and Hollins Mills (both woollen).

Interestingly, the products of the mills were varied, with at least two devoted to corn (Wharf Mill and Brow Mill) and the rest producing woollens, worsteds and cotton, often in the same mill. More metal-working and engineering factories were also being established. These included Corporation Mills on the north side of Corporation Street between 1850 and 1866 and the neighbouring brass foundry on Hollins Mill Lane. New ironworks were built south of the town between the original railway station site and the river Calder (Perseverance Mill, Prospect Mill and the Calder Dale Iron Works), conveniently located with their own railway sidings. South of the settlement, on the Ryburn, was the vast Asquith Bottom dye works and mill, much of which complex still stands.

## Housing

Amongst the new and expanding industrial and commercial buildings, pockets of new housing were also appearing across the town to accompany the rows of back-to-back terraces which lined Wharf Street. By the survey of the 1866 Local Board plans (see

Figure 18), two rows of back-to-backs had been built to the north of the canal on Chapel Street and Fountain Street.<sup>99</sup> A series of detached villas had also been built further north and above the Wharf, to house factory managers and other professionals (such as doctors) within the town.<sup>100</sup> Industrial Street, Upper Fountain Street and Holland Street are shown in outline on the plan, indicating that they were in the process of construction when the map was surveyed, providing a range of housing from back-to-backs to rows, and even another non-conformist chapel. Bank House, the home of the owners of the Bank Foundry, remained an isolated detached dwelling surrounded by a large area of green space. Other larger detached houses included Orrel House (to the north-east of Christ Church), set back from Wharf Street with a large garden and prominent gateway.

## Sowerby Bridge in the 20th century

Sowerby Bridge as a town in its own right continued to grow in the early 20th century. The town received electricity at the beginning of the century which led to the development of the tramway connecting the town with Halifax and other surrounding areas between 1900 and 1902 (Figure 21).<sup>101</sup> This in turn contributed to an increase in population which by 1931 had reached 20,558 inhabitants, before it declined to 18,775 by 1951 as the Great Depression and the two world wars took their toll.<sup>102</sup>

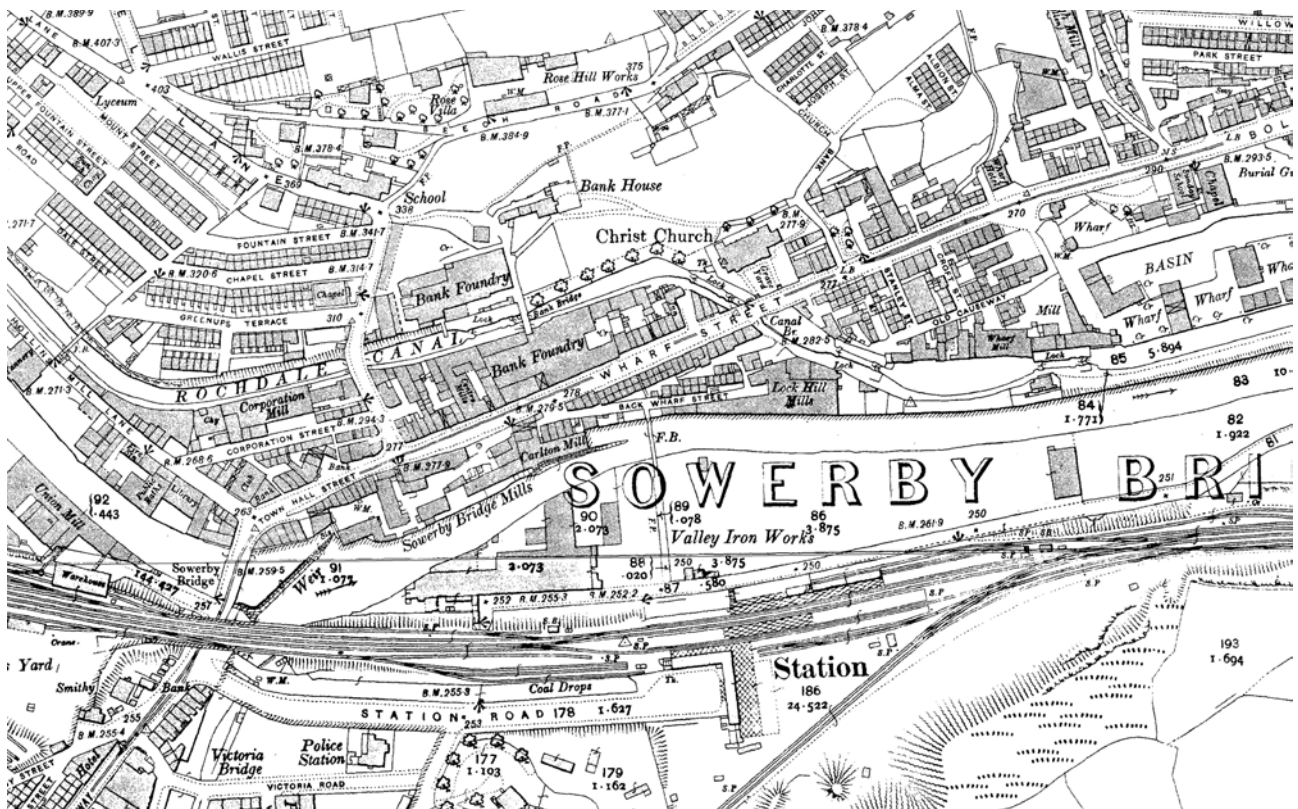


Figure 21: Extract from the 25-inch Ordnance Survey map, surveyed 1905 and published in 1907. [© and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd. All rights reserved 2024. Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024].



Sowerby Bridge District Council merged with Sowerby in 1926, forming a new Sowerby Urban District Council (SUDC).<sup>103</sup> The name was changed to Sowerby Bridge Urban District Council in 1937 following confusion with Sowerby in North Yorkshire. In the same year, further areas of Luddenfoot, Norland and Midgely joined the SBUDC and in 1939 Midgely became its own ward.<sup>104</sup> The District Council was incorporated into Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council in 1974.<sup>105</sup>

## Industrial and commercial activity

Kendall, writing in 1915, reminds us that while Sowerby Bridge had become an important industrial and commercial hub by the early 20th century, it was 'sordid' and 'grimy'.<sup>106</sup> With so much industry within such a confined area, the air would have been thick with smoke, as blackened stonework in the area demonstrates (Figure 22).



Figure 22: Blackened stonework of a drystone wall along Hollins Mill Lane. [Clare Howard, 2023 © Historic England].

The pre-war Ordnance Survey map series show that the mills and foundries of Sowerby Bridge continued to expand in the early 20th century, taking over the last remaining sites that had not been occupied by housing. This is most apparent on the south bank of the Calder, which for a large part of the 18th and 19th centuries had been tenter grounds; by the publication of the 1933 Ordnance Survey map (revised 1931) it was almost completely overbuilt by Valley Mills and Holme Iron Works. Aerial photographs dating from the 1930s show a landscape of mills and chimneys (Figure 23).



Figure 23: Aerial photograph of Sowerby Bridge from the south, taken in 1931 [© Historic England Archive (Aerofilms Collection), EPW036870].

Despite the intensity of industrial activity, there were changes taking place that suggested the town was becoming increasingly focused on commercial interests in addition to manufacturing. One of the key changes was the conversion of part of the late 18th-century mill (including part of the engine house) at Sowerby Bridge Mills into two shops and offices (nos 38 and 40 Town Hall Street) in about 1906 by the owner Nathaniel Bates.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, Messrs Longbottom constructed a shop at Wharf Street level adjoining the Carlton Mill chimney in 1921, since replaced (Figure 24).<sup>108</sup> At the other end of the mill complex, the mill house adjoining the mills and once belonging to the Greenup family was replaced in 1923-4 by a showroom with warehouse underneath for William Bates and Sons.<sup>109</sup>

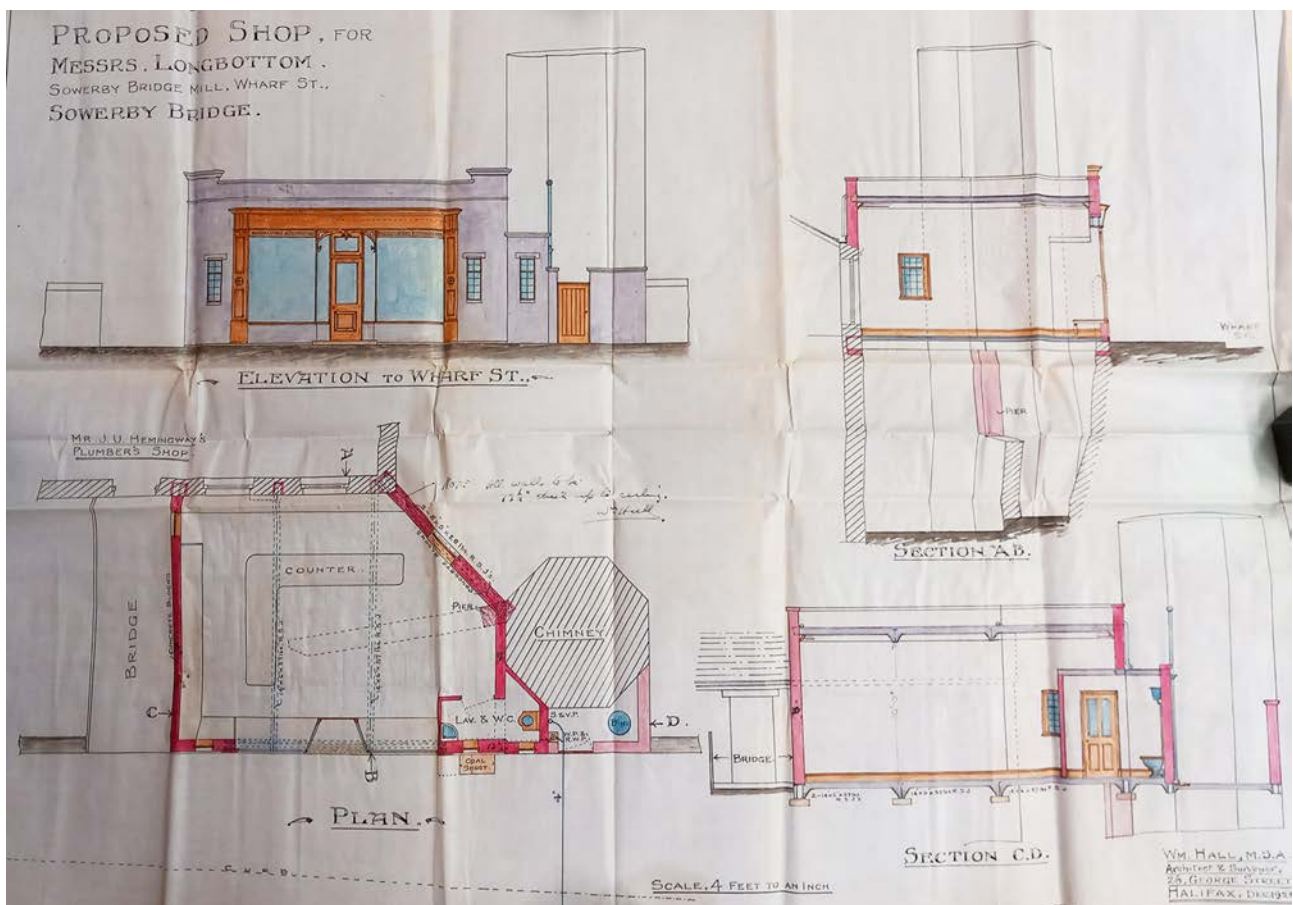


Figure 24: Proposed plans for a shop adjoining Carlton Mill, 1921. [Reproduced with permission of West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale, CMT21/BIP/SB:559].

Banks were inserted into existing premises at 1a-1b Hollins Lane by 1914 (as depicted on the 1919 Ordnance Survey map, surveyed 1914), at nos 13 and 15 Town Hall Street for the London Joint City and Midland Bank Limited in about 1920 and at no. 17 Wharf Street for the Halifax Equitable Benefit Building Society in the early 1920s.<sup>110</sup> There were a variety of shops, from clothing outfitters and grocers to specialist wares, and the majority of the houses occupying Wharf Street now incorporated a commercial function. Recollections of the town before the Second World War describe it as 'all very lively'.<sup>111</sup>

Whilst the town had a large population, the rise of public and private transport kept Sowerby Bridge within the sphere of Halifax, where many residents probably spent much of their leisure time. Despite this, the first half of the 20th century saw a small but significant growth in leisure amenities in Sowerby Bridge itself. This included an increase of cafés and coffee houses such as at no. 5 Town Hall Street run by Harry Chadwick.<sup>112</sup> A new picture house was built about 1914 by the National Electric Theatre Company Limited in Wharf Street.<sup>113</sup> This was later accompanied by a leisure complex at nos 1-7 Regent Parade on the north side of Wharf Street incorporating a cinema, dance hall and a row of shops. The latter replaced Pollit and Wigzell's Bank Foundry and was opened in 1939; the cinema became an Essoldo in 1949.<sup>114</sup> As mentioned above, the library

was opened on Hollins Mill Lane in 1905 and the adjacent swimming baths continued to operate, although they were closed in winter and the pool was covered over to create a dance hall.<sup>115</sup>

## Post-war change

In common with many industrial towns and cities in Britain, the second half of the 20th century, following the Second World War, was a time of decline, particularly for the textile industry. Whilst the wool trade never disappeared to the same extent as the cotton trade, the widespread adoption of synthetic fibres, foreign competition and an increasing focus on services rather than manufacturing led to the closure of many factories and an inevitable decline in fortunes for most textile towns. Sowerby Bridge was no exception and, whilst its decline was gradual, its last remaining textile mill, Corporation Mill, had closed by 1979, although it was fortunately reoccupied in the 1980s and still is today. Similarly, late 20th-century industrial decline caused many of the engineering works and foundries around Sowerby Bridge to close with many buildings becoming empty. The Calder and Hebble Navigation and the wharf closed in 1952.<sup>116</sup>

However, some of the factories were responsible for providing ‘millions of yards’ of cloth during the Second World War, there was still a broad range of industries manufacturing within the town and the 1968 handbook refers to Sowerby Bridge as the ‘shopping centre of the district’ (Figure 25).<sup>117</sup> There was minimal redevelopment during the late 20th century, which means that many of its earlier buildings and its historic layout have survived well but there is very little late 20th-century architecture within the town.



Figure 25: Photograph of Sowerby Bridge market, taken in the 1980s. [Calderdale Libraries, unknown copyright, 69 939 893].

There were a limited number of isolated losses, notably at the west end of Town Hall Street beside the bridge, and some demolition at the east end of Wharf Street to make way for the rerouted Tuel Lane (A6139). In addition Longbottom's Mill, Lock Hill Mills, Wharf and Regulator Mills were demolished, and housing north of the Rochdale Canal was revised. One of the biggest changes to the layout and streetscape of the town during this time was the construction of a new road now known as Tuel Lane from the top of Tower Hill to its junction with Wharf Street near Christ Church. Tower Hill was known as Tuel Lane prior to the new road's construction in the early 1970s; the new layout is first shown on the 1971 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map along with the market to the north of Wharf Street.

## From 1980 to the present: a time for change

By the 1980s, it was recognised that Sowerby Bridge was suffering from low occupancy rates (particularly within the mills and former industrial premises) and few employment opportunities; it was becoming dilapidated following a lack of investment.<sup>118</sup> The Sowerby Bridge Riverside Development Project was first proposed in 1984 by the consultants URBED (on behalf of Calderdale Council) to focus on regenerating the area on the south side of Town Hall Street and Wharf Street, primarily occupied by Sowerby Bridge Mills and Carlton Mill.<sup>119</sup> The key aim was to regenerate the town as a shopping and recreation centre with a canoe slalom course as a key attraction. The initial proposal suggested that West Yorkshire Metropolitan Borough Council (as owners) would initially be responsible for clearing away buildings that were beyond repair and undertaking stabilisation and environmental works, while private investors would then target spaces for conversion.

The Sowerby Bridge Improvement Trust was set up to help guide the development. Longbottom's loomshop, located on the north side of the Sowerby Bridge Mills site and thought to date to 1792, was beyond repair and was demolished in the 1980s. Furthermore, Crosslee Mill (previously known as Lock Hill Mill), thought to be one of the best preserved of the mills, was destroyed by fire and then subsequently demolished in 1995.<sup>120</sup> Despite these setbacks, the main mill buildings, including Sowerby Bridge Mills, Winton Works and Carlton Mill, were converted to a mixture of residential, office and educational space in the mid-1990s.<sup>121</sup>

This redevelopment momentum continued with the reopening of the Rochdale Canal in 1996 and in the same year the Sowerby Bridge Wharf Partnership was formed, consisting of local businesses, English Heritage, Civic Trust and Yorkshire Forward with a vision to restore the buildings surrounding the wharf and bring the canal back into use. Over the next seven years, supported by funds from the Prince's Regeneration Trust, Heritage Lottery Fund and Yorkshire Forward, the redundant buildings were repaired, becoming offices, workshops and restaurants alongside the canal boat wet dock. The

area continues to flourish (Figure 26).<sup>122</sup> The southern end of the Tuel Tunnel for the Rochdale Canal was also lengthened in 1996, to allow more space for Wharf Street's junction with Tuel Lane; this part of the tunnel is dated on its southern elevation.



Figure 26: Sowerby Bridge Wharf following restoration in the 1990s. [Derek Kendall, 2009 © Historic England Archive, DP073898].

Despite so much regeneration in the town, some areas continued to require improvement, investment and regeneration (Figure 27). Changing consumer habits and evolving town centre property markets have led to a decline in high-street shopping in Britain in recent years, forcing many businesses to transfer to online sales or to commercial outlets. In 2020, Historic England launched the High Street Heritage Action Zone programme to champion and revitalise high streets across England and act as catalyst for wider regeneration. Sowerby Bridge was one of 68 places to receive funding to support a number of regeneration projects within the town including targeted repair and reuse of historic buildings, the restoration of local character and improvement of the public realm. Historic England joined Calderdale Council and the charitable organisation based at the former municipal offices, baths and fire station known as Fire and Water to form the four-year HSHAZ partnership.



Figure 27: The former municipal offices and fire station, now known as Fire and Water, at the beginning of the HSHAZ project in 2021. [Lucy Jessop, 2021 © Historic England].

The programme coincided with the outbreak of Covid-19 in early 2020 and the subsequent government restrictions placed on movement and business operations had a devastating impact on high-street retailers and the national and local economy. Despite this, the programme has enabled the targeted improvement of shop fronts and further funding and repairs to key historic buildings within the streetscape. The two key buildings to receive support from the HSHAZ were the Town Hall (listed at grade II, NHLE 1319977) and the former municipal offices, baths and fire station on Hollins Mill Lane, now known as Fire and Water, to ensure the buildings were watertight and to make necessary repairs to bring them back into use. This momentum will be taken forward beyond the HSHAZ by the Council and Fire and Water.

# Character areas

According to the Historic England *Understanding Place* guidance, ‘character in the historic environment is a subtle compound of many different ingredients’.<sup>123</sup> These ingredients include visual attributes such as the type, scale, style and materials of buildings, but also the topography, street pattern, vistas, open and enclosed spaces, and street surfaces. The HAA study area has been divided into three character areas to define this character, and some areas have been further subdivided to reflect distinct aspects of character or to aid reader orientation.

The three character areas within the HAA are:

- Character Area 1 (CA1): Hollins Mill Lane and Corporation Street;
- Character Area 2 (CA2): Old Cawsey;
- Character Area 3 (CA3): Town Hall Street, Wharf Street and Tower Hill.

A map showing all three character areas can be found towards the beginning of this report (see Figure 3). Each character area’s description is illustrated by a relevant extract from that map, and each map also shows the current NHLE designations.

## Overview

Despite the subdivision of the study area into distinct character areas, there are aspects of the town’s character that can be universally applied. Overall, the dominant building materials of choice in Sowerby Bridge is the local buff-coloured sandstone with roofs tiled with stone or in Welsh slate, employed on the oldest to the newest buildings regardless of their size or status. The town is typified by a contrast between small-scale domestic and retail buildings, and large industrial complexes of mills and engineering works which dominate the skyline, along with high-rise flat blocks to the north (outside the study area). The town therefore has a stark mix of fine- and large-grain development corresponding with the domestic/retail and industrial sites. Historically, the dominance of industrial complexes would have been denoted by the amount of chimneys and the smoke-filled atmosphere.



## Character Area 1: Hollins Mill Lane and Corporation Street

This character area is primarily focused on Hollins Mill Lane, which was first depicted on Myers' 1835 map (see Figure 14) but is potentially an older packhorse route running parallel with the River Calder and predating the Rochdale Canal. The road leads from the centre of Sowerby Bridge at Town Hall Street to the junction of Hollins Mill Lane, passing the site of the former Hollins Mill (outside of the study area and since demolished) from which its name was derived (Figure 28 and 29). Hollins (sometimes named on historic maps as Lower Hollins) is the name of the farmstead containing medieval and later fabric which is positioned on the south-west side of Hollins Lane, a near parallel and probably also historic road on the hillside above.<sup>124</sup> Corporation Street branches from the southern end of Hollins Mill Lane, laid out around 1850 when sales particulars were drawn up for the Greenups' estate – it is labelled as 'intended new street' – and constructed by 1866 when the Local Board plans were drawn (see Figures 16 and 18). Prior to 1850, the land (or at least its western part) was used as a sandstone quarry, presumably providing building stone for the construction of the town but also for transportation and sale further afield via the Rochdale Canal just to the north.

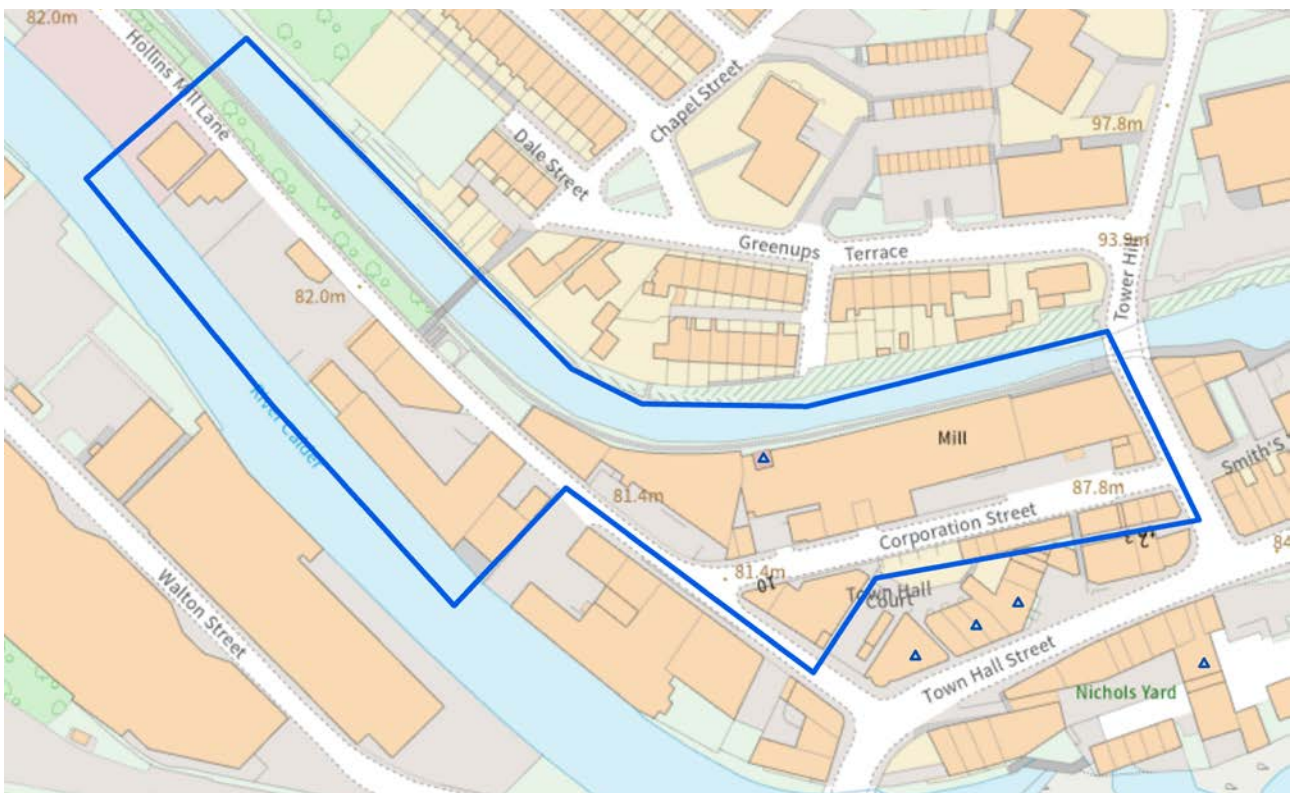


Figure 28: The extent of Character Area 1: Hollins Mill Lane and Corporation Street (blue outline). Listed structures are shown as blue triangles. [Crown Copyright and database right 2024. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900].



Figure 29: Oblique aerial photograph showing Character Area 1 outlined: Hollins Mill Lane and Corporation Street, facing east. [Damian Grady, September 2021 © Historic England Archive, 33928\_001].

The Hollins Mill Lane part of the character area consists of a long strip of land following the road, bounded on either side by the river Calder and the Rochdale Canal. The north side of the road is formed of an earthen bank with stone revetment walls and with the Rochdale Canal set above; consequently, the majority of buildings are located on the south-west side of the plateau facing the Calder (Figure 30). Corporation Street slopes upwards to the east, demonstrating how the valley sides were exploited for development during the mid-19th century. The character area is generally dominated by industrial buildings which made use of the water transport network and, as one of the last parts of the centre of Sowerby Bridge to be developed, the buildings date primarily from the late 19th and 20th centuries (Figure 31).

Prior to the mid-19th century, the strip of land on the south-west side of Hollins Mill Lane was green space divided into fields and gardens. The 1850 sales particulars for the Greenups' estate (which included Sowerby Bridge Mills) includes the south-eastern part of this land occupied only by Puzzle Hall, a 'garden house' and land used as gardens in the occupation of Mr Joseph Radcliffe and others (see Figure 16).<sup>125</sup>



Figure 30: Rochdale Canal with Hollins Mill Lane set at a lower level to its right (south) [Lucy Jessop, 2021 © Historic England].



Figure 31: Corporation Street showing Corporation Mill (now Joel House) from the south-east. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP436998].

The earliest building in this character area is the Puzzle Hall Inn, originally a house with 17th-century origins later converted to a public house. Previously known as Puzzle Hall, it is somewhat isolated from the main core of the town and partially obscured by the later industrial buildings that stand either side of it (Figure 32). It consists of a large two-storey central block with a smaller two-storey addition on its south-west side, a single-storey lean-to extension with hipped roof on the north-east side, a single-storey extension on the south-west side and a three-storey tower on the north-west side. The central two-storey part is presumably the earliest; it may date to the 17th century as the stone mullioned windows in the south-east gable and the rougher stonework may suggest. The two-storey block to the south-west was probably added later, then altered in the 19th century, including the addition of the end-stack chimney and new windows. The three-storey tower is unusual, constructed in about 1905 as part of alterations for Lydia Platt, then the landlady, to accommodate brewing.<sup>126</sup> Building plans show that the tower as proposed contained a beer cellar at basement level, wash house, fermenting vat and refrigerator at ground level, a cooler and copper at first-floor level and a hot-water boiler and mash tun on the second floor (Figure 33). Further proposals were submitted in 1906 for an extension to accommodate a stable and malt and hop room, which may relate to the single-storey extensions to the north-east and south-west.<sup>127</sup>



Figure 32: Puzzle Hall, Hollins Mill Lane, from the south-east. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP437009].

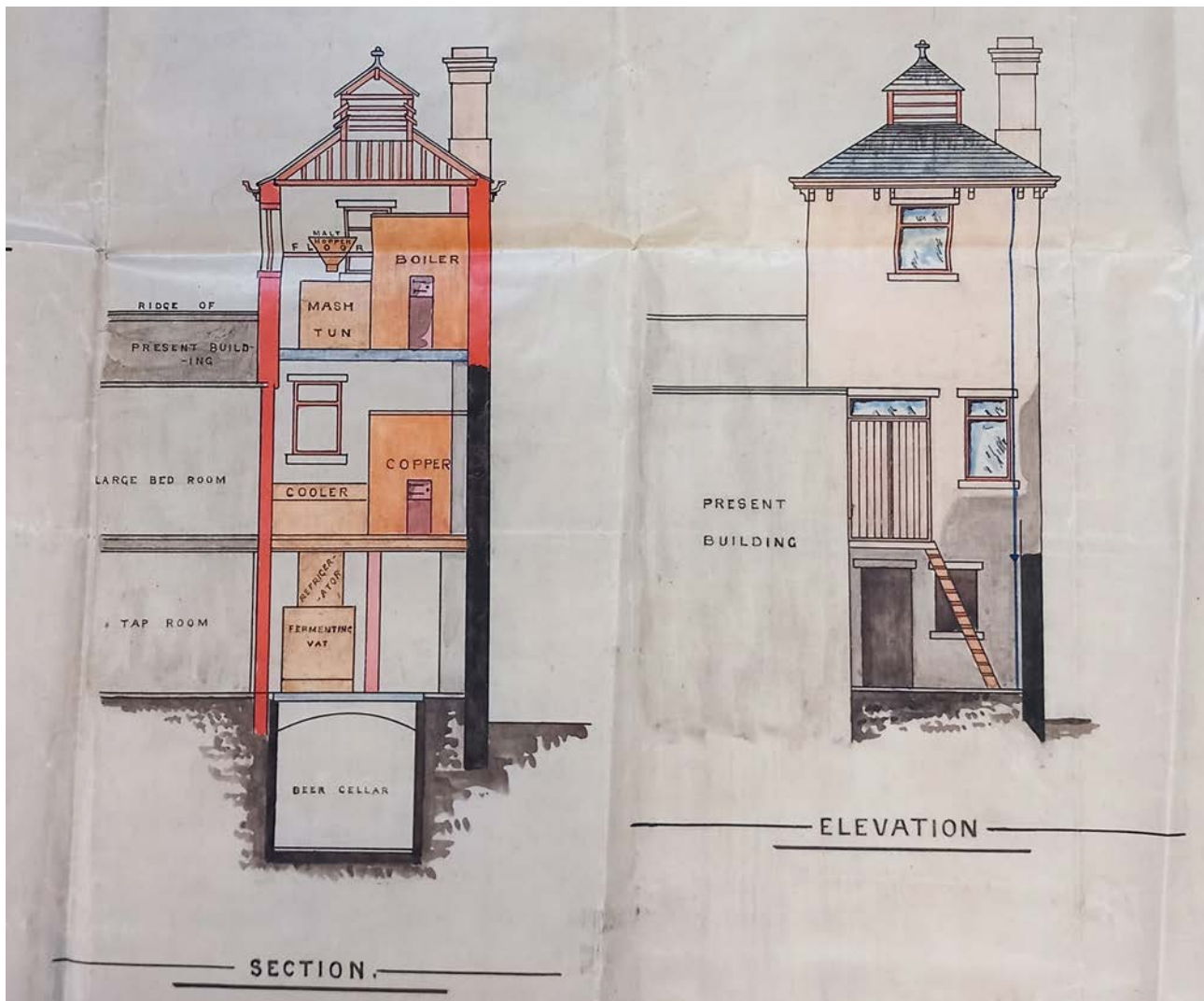


Figure 33: Proposed plans for a new brewery tower submitted in 1906. [Reproduced with permission of West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale, CMT21/BIP/SB:208].

On the north-east side of Hollins Mill Lane, opposite the Fire and Water complex (see Character Area 2), is a group of industrial buildings composed of various phases of development, well placed to take advantage of the Rochdale Canal immediately to the north (Figure 34). The single-storey range (with a mezzanine later inserted internally) used as a bar called Hollins Mill at the time of writing (although this was not its original name) is fairly uniform in appearance, constructed of roughly squared sandstone with stone eaves brackets and a pitched slate roof. There is, however, a clear straight joint between two phases of construction approximately two-thirds along the Hollins Mill Lane elevation. To the north-west there are eight square-headed windows (four of which are full height) and a central doorway flanked by tall round-headed windows in the south-eastern part. The footprint of the north-western end of this low range is shown on the 1866 Local Board plans, labelled as a foundry with a row of domestic buildings (coloured appropriately on the map) fronting it. The large windows would be appropriate for a foundry, providing plenty of light and ventilation. The building was possibly occupied by Messrs W. Newsome and Son, machinery and brass founders, in 1895.<sup>128</sup>



Figure 34: Former foundry and the site of former houses, Hollins Mill Lane, taken from south. [Alun Bull, 2022 © Historic England, DP372692].

The extension to the south-east side of this low range was added by the publication of the 1907 Ordnance Survey map (revised 1905) (see Figure 21). It has round-headed windows and a central doorway edged with alternating jamb stones, now covered by a later steel sliding door. The head of this doorway has been altered; it was presumably once a segmental-headed vehicle entrance. A fragment of the front elevation of the former houses – which were probably similar in construction and appearance to the surviving house on the opposite side of the road at no. 7 Hollins Mill Lane – survives within the corner of the neighbouring building.

By the publication of the 1894 Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1888-92), a building had been constructed to the north-west, presumably the three- and four-storey range seen today at 1-6 Hollins Mill Lane and now incorporating flats (see Figure 19). This large building is constructed of squared stone with pitched slate roofs. Its south-east elevation is built over the party wall with the houses shown on the 1866 plan, now demolished (see Figure 18). Many of the openings, particularly on the ground floor, have been heavily altered during conversion, but loading doors on the north (canal) side of the building show that it was probably a warehouse storing goods for transport and taking in materials for manufacturing processes, perhaps relating to the neighbouring foundry.

Further to the west, on the south side of Hollins Mill Lane, is a large former tannery complex. The site was occupied by a large building with a square-ish plan, labelled as a tannery by the publication of the 1894 Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1888-92). By the revision of the 1:2500 OS map in 1905 (published in 1907), the building covered a larger footprint, and by the publication of the 1933 Ordnance Survey map (revised 1931) it was linked with other buildings to the south-east edging the river and returning towards the lane. The flat-roofed two-storey complex is constructed mainly from red brick with a steel-frame and principally appears to be the part added by 1931. Parts of the building also incorporate stonework from earlier buildings. Now operating as car mechanics' and metal fabrication workshops, it retains an unquestionably industrial and utilitarian character.

On the Rochdale Canal side of Hollins Mill Lane is an earthen bank retained by a stone wall. Further back is the high stone wall which marks the edge of the canal embankment, composed of multiple phases of development and incorporating fabric of buildings (shown on the 1894 Ordnance Survey map) which have since been demolished. The area is labelled as 'wharfages contents and supply yards' on the 1850 sales particulars, demonstrating that it was directly associated with the canal (see Figure 16).

While much of this area was primarily industrial, it was well connected to the new and developing residential areas on the opposite side of the Rochdale Canal by the stone and iron bridge located just opposite the tannery; it is first shown on the 1894 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 35). Stone pillars mark the entrance to a rather tall and imposing winding stone staircase which leads to the bridge. It provided access for workers residing to the north of the canal and remains in use today, offering views of the Rochdale Canal, the town and the wider surrounding area.

Corporation Street shares the area's industrial character, although it was not fully developed until the 1860s. The east end of the street was occupied by the National School, as depicted on the 1854 Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1848-50), with a sandstone quarry to the west of it, but today the school's site is now occupied by a late 20th-century extension to Corporation Mill. The mill itself was established between the drawing up of the Greenups' sales particulars in 1850 and the drafting of the 1866 Local Board plans (Figure 36).<sup>129</sup> It was occupied by William Morris' worsted spinners and wool combers from at least 1875, who produced khaki for the Army and materials for the Navy during the First World War.<sup>130</sup>



Figure 35: Revetment wall and stone stairwell leading to iron bridge over the Rochdale Canal, taken from south. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP437008].



Figure 36: Corporation Mill, Corporation Street taken from south-west. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP436997].



Corporation Mill is strategically situated by the Rochdale Canal on a compact site including the remains of a chimney and other ancillary buildings such as the pair of rusticated arched entrances into the yard (currently home to a vehicle repair workshop). When it closed in 1979 it was the last worsted spinning mill operating in Sowerby Bridge. It was subsequently occupied by a number of different users and was purchased by J. & C. Joel in 1989 who produce specialist woollens; the mill is now known as Joel House. It is the only mill in Sowerby Bridge still producing textiles. The row of buildings opposite the mill appears to be a mixture of houses and former industrial buildings (as suggested by the first-floor loading door), built in at least two separate phases around the same time as the mill, and possibly by the mill owners themselves. Some of these buildings have been converted to office and workshop space, and some of the changes to the fenestration have changed their original character.

## Significance

The Hollins Mill Lane and Corporation Street character area is dominated by industrial buildings intermixed with some small-scale domestic and commercial buildings, often dating after 1850. The presence of the Rochdale Canal and the Calder affect the placement of these buildings, which often back onto one or the other. However, there is evidence of the area's pre-industrial character at Puzzle Hall and the remaining green and open land further west. This is an important reminder of the town's earlier history and development.

The integrity of the character area should be considered high. There have been minimal losses of historic fabric within this character area, largely owing to its late development and continued use (Figure 37 and 38). Buildings that have been lost include the National School (now the site of the addition to Corporation Mill), housing fronting the foundry site on Hollins Mill Lane and some smaller industrial buildings alongside the canal. Remnants of these industrial and domestic buildings can still be seen in surrounding fabric providing vital clues of the area's previously compact and busy appearance.

The area's industrial character has been retained, despite the conversion of some buildings to residential and other uses. The materials used here are the same as throughout the town, predominantly sandstone with slate roofs, although there are some exceptions in brick that offer a stark contrast. The area is generally well maintained, albeit with the use of uPVC windows and cement repointing which can disguise the historic character.



Figure 37: Photograph showing industrial mills lining the river. Hollins Mill Lane is located behind the buildings shown on the right (now Fire and Water), 1950. [© RIBApix, RIBA49992].



Figure 38: View of River Calder, showing the extent of demolition since 1950 on the south bank. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP437011].

The key landmark dominating the area is the tower of Corporation Mill, accompanied by the large and imposing mill building itself (Figure 39). The bridge over the Rochdale Canal with its vast stone staircase is set at such a height that it should also be considered a landmark. Views of the character area are best achieved from the junction of Hollins Mill Lane and Corporation Street, along Hollins Mill Lane and east along Corporation Street. Wider views of the area and its setting, as well as the wider town and surrounding countryside, are enjoyed from the bridge over the canal.



Figure 39: Rochdale Canal lined by former warehouses and Corporation Mill on its south bank, taken from west. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP437000].

## Character Area 2: Old Cawsey

The Old Cawsey and Back Wharf Street character area is another fairly linear character area running east-west along the north bank of the river Calder and broadly following the course of what is variously called Old Cawsey, the Old Causeway or Back Wharf Street. This was originally the main routeway through Sowerby Bridge prior to the alignment of the new turnpike road along Town Hall Street and Wharf Street in the 1790s (Figure 40 and 41). The character area is bound by the Calder to the south, Town Hall/Wharf Street to the north and the canal basin to the east. The dominant character of the area is a mixture of domestic and industrial, with its collection of mills, workshops, warehouses and small-scale workers' houses. This area was home to the medieval fulling mill from which the industrial hamlet grew and as such the character area comprises many of the oldest buildings within the town, mostly dating from the 18th century but with the potential for earlier hidden fabric. The character area once formed a continuous stretch of industrial activity stretching from the wharfs in the east to the bridge in the west, but this was bisected by the construction of the Rochdale Canal in about 1794-5 (opened 1804).

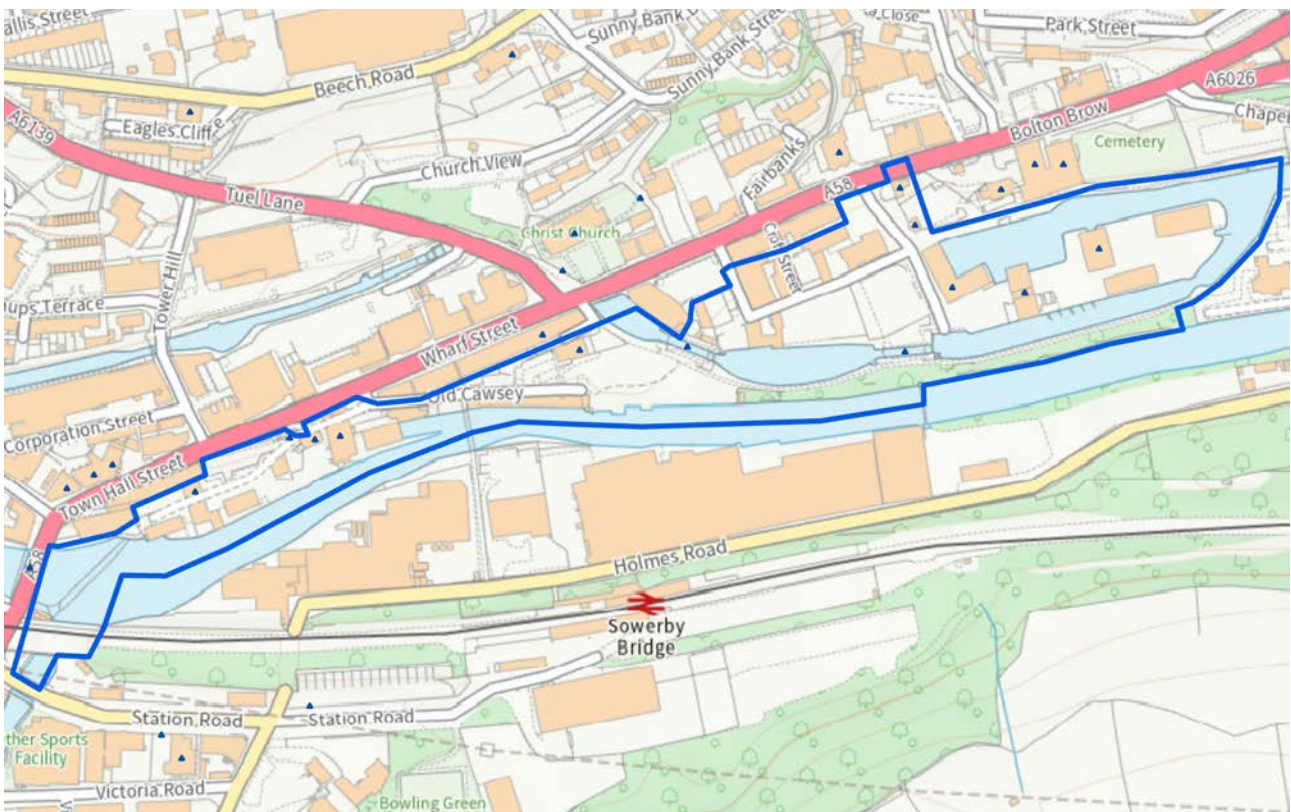


Figure 40: The extent of Character Area 2: Old Cawsey (blue outline). Listed buildings are shown as blue triangles. [Crown Copyright and database right 2024. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900].

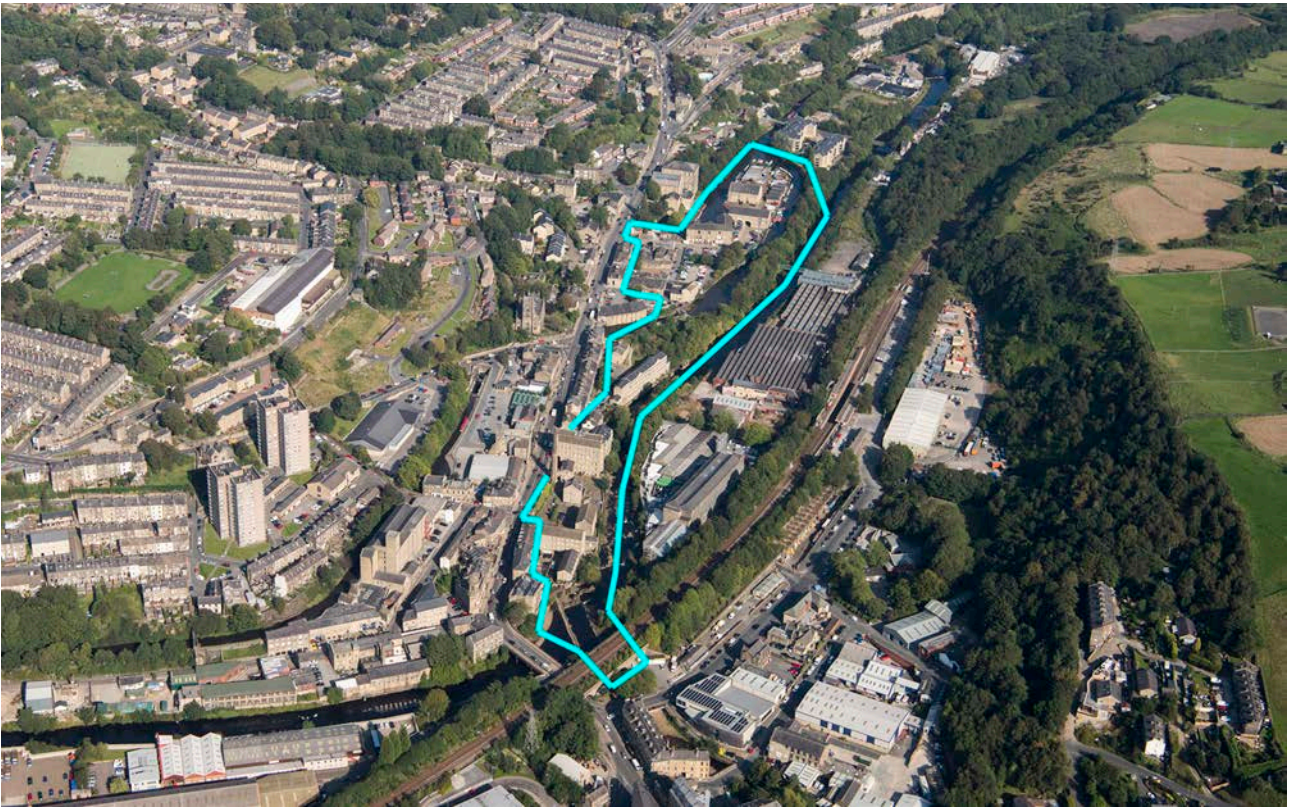


Figure 41: Oblique aerial photograph showing Character Area 2 outlined: Old Cawsey, facing east. [Damian Grady, September 2021 © Historic England Archive, 33928\_003].

At the far west end of the character area lies the sprawling Sowerby Bridge Mills complex, also known as Greenups Mill after the family that owned it from about 1787.<sup>131</sup> It is now entered from a lane with stone setts branching from Town Hall Street which passes underneath a steel-supported archway before opening onto the mill yard now known as Nichol's Yard (named after Thomas Nicholl who purchased the mill in the mid-19th century).<sup>132</sup> It then continues underneath the main mill aligned north-south before climbing the hill to join the old route of Old Cawsey (Figure 42).

The earliest building within the complex is the four-storey main mill which incorporates two former waterwheel houses (in the position of the Venetian windows) powered by water from the Calder diverted through goits or water channels.<sup>133</sup> Its date was given as 1793 by George Greenup at an enquiry of 1834 when he also described the mill as powered by two waterwheels powering carding, spinning and fulling processes (Figure 43).<sup>134</sup> By the time the mill was offered for sale in 1850, it was converted (at least partly) to steam with an engine house and associated boiler house at the north end of the main mill. The mill is constructed of squared stone with a triangular pediment and oculus window on its east elevation (Figure 44). Most of the openings have stone surrounds and there is evidence of blocked loading doors, transmission boxes (later additions) and other openings. The central opening through which vehicular access is now provided appears to be a later insertion, first depicted on the Ordnance Survey map published in 1933 (revised 1931).



Figure 42: Passageway leading to the former mill yard of Sowerby Bridge Mills and demonstrating the way in which the topography has been used to the best advantage of construction. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP437018].

Standing at the north-east corner of the main mill, parallel with the river, was a second mill or loomshop (often referred to as Longbottom's Mill), also probably built in the late 18th century and demolished in the late 20th century. Remnants of this building survive in the revetment walls of Town Hall Street. It is also possible that there is late 18th-century fabric incorporated into the brick building on the east side of Nichol's Yard, now forming part of no. 18 Town Hall Street. This was the site of the mill owners' house (as depicted on the 1850 sales particulars); the reused fanlight over the doorway under the archway leading into the yard, as well as sections of reused stonework, may fit a late 18th-century date. The brickwork, however, appears to be later and much altered in the mid-20th century. Westgrove Buildings, a smaller three-storey stone building to the south-west of the main mill, probably dates from around the same date, although it was partially rebuilt as a blacksmith's workshop for William Bates and Son in about 1915.<sup>135</sup> Winton Mill, on the eastern side of the main mill, is a similar three-storey building constructed of squared stone with pitched slate roof and with evidence of former loading doors (Figure 45). This building does not appear on the 1850 sales particulars but is shown on the 1866 Local Board plan. All of these buildings were converted to flats in the late 20th century and much of their character has been retained.

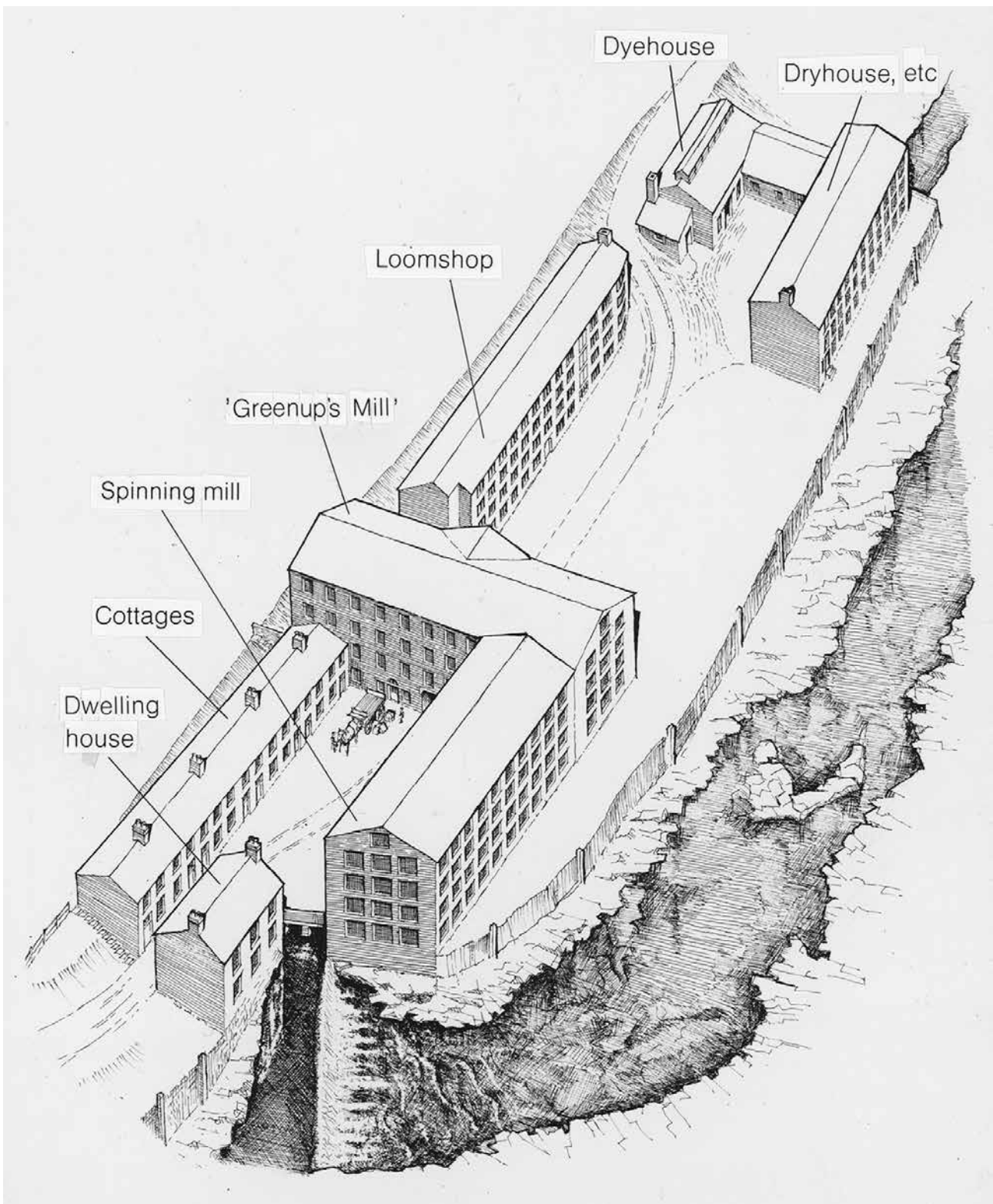


Figure 43: Reconstruction of Sowerby Bridge Mills, before 1850. Drawn by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England for the *Yorkshire Textile Mills* book, published in 1992. [© Historic England Archive, MD94\_4319].



Figure 44: Main 1793 mill of Sowerby Bridge Mills from north-west. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP436994].



Figure 45: Sowerby Bridge Mills with Winton Mill to the left. The latter was constructed between 1850 and 1866, viewed from the north-east. [Alun Bull, 2022 © Historic England, DP372718].



Carlton Mill is a later steam-powered mill of five storeys (four storeys on its east side owing to the topography of the site) standing to the east of Greenups Mill on a similar north-south alignment, perpendicular to the river and accompanied by a detached three-storey boiler house and chimney on its west side and a lower weaving shed attached to its east side (Figure 46). The mill is constructed of squared sandstone with moulded cornice and double pitched roof, with its materials and openings recalling Sowerby Bridge Mills. The windows retain their stone sills and lintels. There are loading doors in the gable end fronting Wharf Street, suggesting a need to connect with road transport. The rusticated round-headed archway running through the north end of the building houses the former route of Old Cawsey which originally ran north-westerly from here towards the Bull's Head, although the topography has clearly changed. The stone setts of the roads and yard probably date from the 19th-century. To the south of the vehicular archway is the former engine house with its tall arched windows, suitable for bringing in steam engines.



Figure 46: Carlton Mill and associated chimney constructed in about 1850, viewed from the north-east. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP437031].

The boiler house is a three-storey building built in a similar style with the typical round-headed arches associated with boiler houses at ground level. The chimney is the only one remaining standing within the study area (although the base of one survives at Corporation Mill) and is built of squared sandstone on an octagonal plan. The now detached weaving shed on the east side of the mill is of three storeys and is constructed of squared stone with a pitched slate roof. The arches of the goits for the tail race of the mills can be seen in its east elevation, but the building appears to have been significantly modified above this level, perhaps even entirely rebuilt. It was certainly raised by two additional storeys as part of the Sowerby Bridge Riverside Development which transformed the building into flats. A picture taken in the 1980s shows the building prior to these alterations (Figures 47 and 48).



Figure 47: A photograph of Carlton Mill and its weaving shed with the Turk's Head public house in the foreground, viewed from the east, 1980. [© RIBApix, RIBA86875].



Figure 48: Carlton Mill and weaving shed following the Sowerby Bridge Riverside Development project. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP436993].

Carlton Mill was built on the site of the former wood mill, mechanics' shop and drying house of Sowerby Bridge Mills as depicted on the 1850 sales particulars (see Figure 16). It was built after the sale of Sowerby Bridge Mills and was complete by 1866 when the Local Board plans were drawn. The buildings have been modified to accommodate flats and offices in the late 20th century (and most recently education space), but the character of the buildings has been largely retained. The Goits is an early 21st-century addition to the complex built in a similar style to accommodate flats. An application to build a three-storey building housing three flats was submitted in 1997, but was replaced by a second application for a three-storey building accommodating six flats in 2001.<sup>136</sup>

From Carlton Mill Old Cawsey continues eastwards towards the Rochdale Canal. The small group of buildings to the north-east of Carlton Mill's weaving shed, now forming the Turk's Head Inn, appear to have been built as two two-storey houses in the late 18th or early 19th centuries, with a later extension to the east (Figure 49). Again, they are similar to their neighbours, with squared stonework, pitched roofs and stone surrounds. Older stonework in the lower level of the south elevation (visible from the river side) suggests that the buildings may have earlier foundations. The row is depicted as four separate cottages (and labelled) on the 1850 sales particulars for the Greenups' estate, but only the western part of this row (presumably two of the cottages were combined into one) remains on the 1866 Local Board plans.<sup>137</sup> By the 1881 census, it had become the Turk's Head, occupied by Henry Stafford and his family.<sup>138</sup> The premises underwent structural alterations and additions to increase living accommodation and lavatories about 1938, when plans were submitted by Mr Fox on behalf of the landlords Messrs Websters.<sup>139</sup> These proposals may relate to the eastern part of the building; there is a clear structural break between the two phases of development.



Figure 49: Turk's Head public house, viewed from west. [Alun Bull, 2022 © Historic England, DP372745].

The opposite, north, side of Old Cawsey comprises the rear elevations of the row of cottage fronting Wharf Street (see Character Area 3) (Figure 50). Their southern elevations show that they were designed as weavers' cottages, suggesting that hand weaving was still taking place in the home when they were built in the late 18th or early 19th century. It is possible that some of the occupants of the houses worked in the mills whilst others produced woven fabric at home, probably for Sowerby Bridge Mills.



Figure 50: Rear (south) elevation of back-to-back houses lining Wharf Street, viewed from Old Cawsey (south). [Alun Bull, 2022 © Historic England, DP372748].

The 1804 plan of the Rochdale Canal shows a row of buildings along the north side of Old Cawsey, part of which is labelled Causeway Farmhouse and now demolished (see Figure 12). Given their alignment following the old turnpike road, these buildings probably predated the late 18th- or early 19th-century houses along Wharf Street. By 1888-92 when the 1894 Ordnance Survey map was surveyed, this group had been partly replaced and extended with six back-to-backs and other buildings, probably through-houses. Today this area is rough waste land with remnants of some walls relating to former buildings, probably later outbuildings.

Further to the east is a detached building which was probably built as a number of houses but later became the Jolly Sailor public house (Figure 51). The eastern part of the present building is shown on a plan of the Rochdale Canal dated 1804, with a range attached to its north-east corner (removed by 1905 survey of the revised 1905 Ordnance Survey map).<sup>140</sup> In 1877 the Jolly Sailor public house was acquired by a Mr Naylor from the trustees of Mr Goodall (deceased) and was occupied by William Kershaw in 1881.<sup>141</sup> The eastern part of the present building is also shown on the 1894 Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1888-92) with a square demarcation to the south-east corner and a small extension on its west side. This south-east corner meets the north elevation of Lock Hill Mills and may therefore be associated with it. The north-eastern block (now removed) shown on the 1804 map is also shown on the 1894 Ordnance Survey (surveyed 1888-92) as three separate buildings, presumably dwellings with extensions on its eastern side. The pub was operated by Benjamin Jackson and Sons of Bradshaw Lane Brewery (Ovenden) pub in 1899-1900 when it underwent alterations, then by Bentley and Shaw of Lockwood Brewery in 1926.<sup>142</sup> The building was converted into two flats around 1948 by W. and R. K. Lee Limited, cotton spinners, providing further evidence that the building perhaps formed part of the nearby Lock Hill mill complex.<sup>143</sup> The western part of the building was added about 2004 when the building was extended to accommodate further apartments.<sup>144</sup>



Figure 51: Former Jolly Sailor public house, now flats, viewed from the south. [Lucy Jessop, 2021 © Historic England].

The large multi-storeyed block on the southern side of Old Cawsey, bordering the Calder and now known as Kingfisher Chase, occupies the site of the former Lock Hill Mills (later known as Crosslee Mills) (Figure 52). It was a cotton mill on the 1854 six-inch Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1848-50) and it had been extended to north on the 1894 25-inch Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1888-92). In 1874 it was occupied by Smith, Whiteley and Greenwood, but was damaged by fire in 1880 when it was occupied by Woods Brothers and John Wood and Sons.<sup>145</sup> A large part of the mill was destroyed by fire and the buildings were subsequently demolished in 1995.<sup>146</sup> Part of the western end of the new buildings, however, contain older sandstone blocks that may have been reused. The modern remainder of the building retains the style and characteristics of nearby industrial buildings. Part of the site was retained as green space, providing a softer backdrop to the Rochdale Canal in an area that was previously saturated with heavy industry.



Figure 52: Kingfisher Chase, built in the 1990s following the demolition of Lock Hill Mills on the same site, viewed from the south-west. The lower courses of stonework and a portion of the left (west) taller section of the building appear to incorporate older reused stone. [Alun Bull, 2022 © Historic England, DP372750].

## Old Cawsey to the east of the Rochdale Canal and Sowerby Bridge Wharf

This area lies beyond the HSHAZ boundary, but it is included as part of this assessment because it forms an important aspect of the history and development of the centre of Sowerby Bridge. When the Rochdale Canal was constructed from 1794 (opened 1804), Old Cawsey was truncated and access over the canal was provided only by Wharf Street or via Lock no. 2 on foot (Figure 53). This is one of the key causes of the traffic issues within the centre of the settlement today, despite an attempt to alleviate them by extending Tuel Lane in the 1960s. Much of the eastern part of Old Cawsey is industrial in character, dominated by warehouses, as a direct result of the establishment of the canals and wharf. There are, however, remnants of earlier domestic buildings.



Figure 53: View of the Rochdale Canal from Lock No. 2 viewed from south-east showing the bridge which carries the 1790s turnpike road (now Wharf Street). [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP436992].

The south of the area, between Old Cawsey and the Rochdale Canal, has largely been cleared and it is now used for car parking. It was formerly the site of the Wharf and Regulator Mills, shown as a corn mill on the 1854 Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1848-50) and a worsted spinning mill on the 1933 Ordnance Survey map (revised 1931). The remaining buildings at the west end of this area, beside the canal, form a small group of former industrial buildings and houses, now all in domestic use. Nos. 1 and 2 Hammonds Landing were clearly built as a pair of houses of a similar style to the mid-19th century houses along Wharf Street. The adjacent building is also shown as in domestic use on the 1866 Local Board plans, but the large, inserted openings in the north elevation (now blocked) suggest it had a commercial use (the openings perhaps being blocked shop windows) or industrial use at some previous stage in its history.

On the opposite side of Old Cawsey, between Stanley Street and Croft Street, is a collection of former industrial premises, all constructed in the traditional squared sandstone with slate roofs and finely tooled stone dressings. The main building fronting Stanley Street, now the Hog's Head Brew House, was probably a warehouse built shortly after the completion of the Calder and Hebble Navigation and the canal basin in about 1770 (Figure 54). The neighbouring building on the corner of Old Cawsey and Croft Street appears to be of a similar date, perhaps slightly earlier. The central bay of the principal elevation facing the yard is set forward under a gable with a central segmental-headed archway; to either side are a pair of windows either side of smaller round-headed doorway, arranged in the manner of a Venetian window (Figure 55). There are three oculus windows above to light the first floor. The 1866 Local Board plans suggest that this building was in domestic use in the mid-19th century, but the minimal number of windows at the back and smaller first-floor windows at the front would indicate that its original use was functional, perhaps a stable or workshop.



Figure 54: Former warehouse, now the Hog's Head Brew House, Stanley Street, viewed from the south. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP437012].





Figure 55: Former late 18th-century stable at the corner of Croft Street and Old Cawsey, viewed from the south. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP436986].

The 1866 Local Board Plan and later Ordnance Survey maps suggest that the plot at the opposite corner of Croft Street and Old Cawsey (used as a beer garden in June 2023) was previously occupied by six back-to-back houses. The stone walls which bound this plot appear to be built from reused stone, perhaps from the former buildings. The neighbouring stone-built house also appears on the 1866 plans but may incorporate earlier stonework in its west elevation with late 19th-century alterations to the south and east elevations. At the rear of this building is another three-storey stone building with pitched roof and stone dressings characteristic of the late 18th- or early 19th-century structures seen elsewhere within the character area. The building is colour-coded as industrial on the 1866 Local Board plan.

At the opposite end of this block, at the corner as Old Cawsey turns towards Wharf Street, is a complex group of multi-phase buildings, now in use as Wharf Garage (Figure 56). The rubble stonework, stone mullioned windows, and quoins on the south-western gabled wing, as well as four-centred arch-headed doorways within the building noted during a survey in 2000, suggest that this building dates back to at least the mid-16th

century (Figure 57).<sup>147</sup> A detailed investigation of this building would aid dating and understanding of its development. It was possibly part of Cawsey House, owned by the Bolton family in about 1550 and which later became the Mermaid Inn by 1747.<sup>148</sup> There is a small building with pitched roof with what appears to be a central chimney stack shown on the 1758 plan of the Calder in approximately the correct location (on the north side of Old Cawsey) and labelled 'Mermaid' ( see Figure 8).<sup>149</sup> Lee suggests without reference that the inn became the Wharf Inn in the 19th century.<sup>150</sup> Wharf Inn on 'Causeway' is listed in Cary's *Itineraries* published between 1808 and 1826.<sup>151</sup> The main part of the former house is believed to have been demolished in about 1922 and further alterations have been undertaken to transform it into a garage, with extensions probably built with reused stone.



Figure 56: Wharf Garage at the corner of Old Cawsey, viewed from the east. [Lucy Jessop, 2021 © Historic England].



Figure 57: South elevation of older sections of Wharf Garage showing mullioned windows and stone quoins that may be indicative of a 16th-century date, viewed from the south. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP436990].

The wharf is separated from the remainder of Old Cawsey by a wide cobbled street stretching downhill from Wharf Street to the canal (Figure 58). The small single-storey building with canted bay at the north-west corner of the basin is the former weigh house, built in the mid-19th century for the Rochdale Canal Company; it unofficially marks the entrance to the wharf complex.<sup>152</sup> Adjacent to this is a large, imposing canal warehouse, built in local squared sandstone with slate roof on an L-shaped plan (Figure 59). There are loading doors in the north and south elevations and very large cart entrances in the west elevation relating to the constant transfer of goods on and off the barges. It was probably built shortly after the completion of the Calder and Hebble Navigation and associated basin in about 1770, and is first depicted on the 1792 map (see Figure 11).<sup>153</sup> Today, the building is used as a restaurant, public house, commercial premises and offices.



Figure 58: Old Cawsey leading from Wharf Street towards Wharf, viewed from the north-west. [Clare Howard, 2024 © Historic England].



Figure 59: Sowerby Bridge Wharf showing large warehouses to the right and salt warehouse to the left, viewed from the north-east. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP436985].

Further to the east are two further warehouses built in a similar way but lit by smaller mullioned windows. The western one is known as the salt warehouse owing to its original purpose. It has a loading door in the north elevation (directly onto the canal), three wide arches at ground level in the east and west elevations and a set of loading doors also in the east and west elevations. A contract for a new warehouse dated 1796 may be attributed to this building.<sup>154</sup> This is supported by the building's omission on the 1792 map and its depiction on the 1835 map (see Figures 11 and 14). The third three-storey warehouse to the east is known as the wet dock, due to its archway onto the basin with a pool beyond which allows barges to enter the building. Like the westernmost warehouse, this building was probably built shortly after the completion of the Calder and Hebble Navigation in 1770 and appears on the 1792 plan (see Figure 11).

In addition to the larger warehouses, there are two rows of single-storey stores, constructed in the same squared sandstone. The western row has four separate units each with pitched roofs while the other may have been lowered and its roof is composed of corrugated sheets. A row of buildings in this location are first depicted on the 1854 Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1848-50) (see Figure 17). There are also two larger buildings shown to the south which are no longer standing. It is worth noting that on this map the main basin is labelled 'Calder and Hebble Navigation Wharf' while the slightly wider section of the Rochdale Canal which runs parallel to the south is labelled 'Rochdale Canal Wharf', although there appears to have been some shared ownership and use over time. Following the regeneration of the wharf in the 1990s, the area has become a hub of activity and the basin is once again filled with barges making it an attractive and colourful setting (Figure 60).

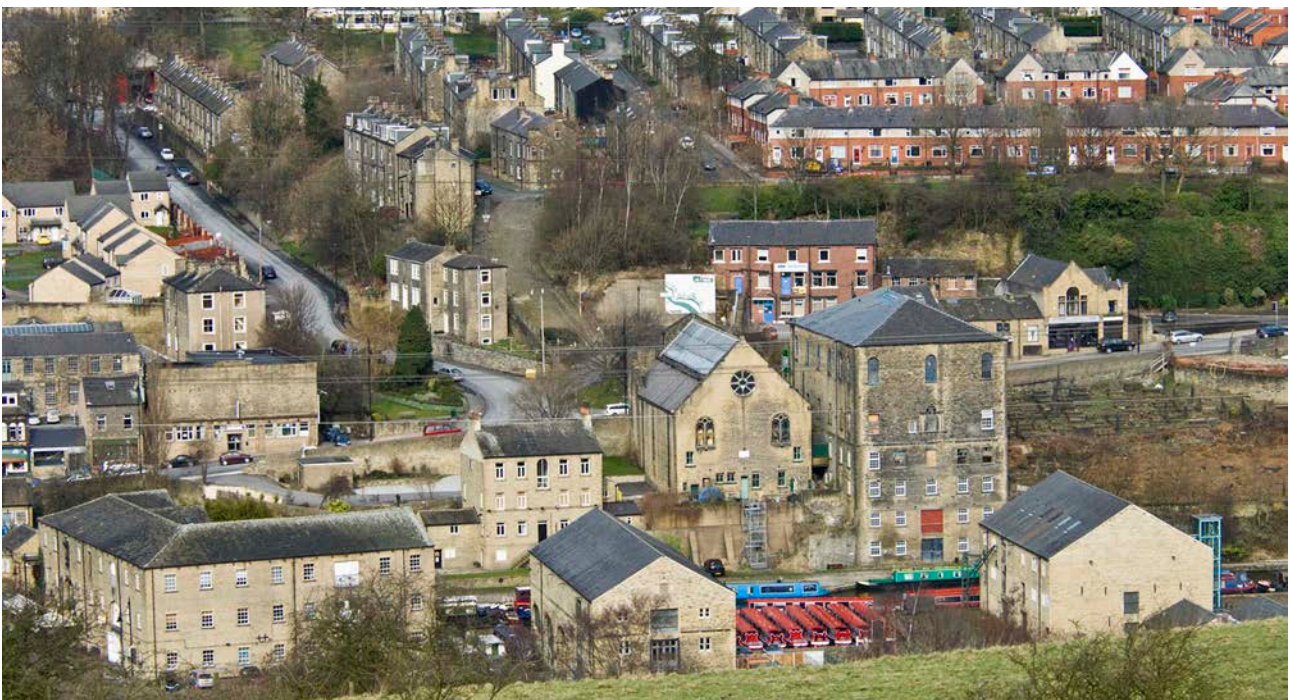


Figure 60: Sowerby Bridge Wharf following restoration in the 1990s, viewed from the south. [Derek Kendall, 2009 © Historic England Archive, DP073932].

## Significance

Despite being truncated by the Rochdale Canal in about 1795, this area still retains evidence of its pre-industrial character and of the early layout and development of the town along the route of the Old Cawsey, which is probably roughly the line of the old medieval paved causeway to Halifax. Detailed examination of the interior of buildings and of the riverside were outside the scope of this study, but it is possible that medieval fabric survives within the foundations of the 18th-century Sowerby Bridge Mills complex, its goits, the weir and in the lower foundations of walls lining the riverbank. Although the recent ASWYAS survey of the bridge suggested the earliest fabric of the bridge dated from the 17th century, there is also a possibility that earlier fabric may survive, particularly under Town Hall Street. In addition, there is evidence of 16th-century buildings along Old Cawsey, near the canal basin. These remains are complex owing to the later transformation of the buildings but they could nevertheless provide important information about the history and development of the town.

Most of the buildings in this area date from the late 18th century, particularly at Sowerby Bridge Mills; its neighbour Carlton Mill, built approximately 60 years later, demonstrates the development of not only the town, but of industrial progress in West Yorkshire. This character area demonstrates how and why the town became what it is today. Again, almost all of the buildings are constructed of sandstone with slate roofs. The urban landscape is softened by the leafiness around the riverside and views to the surrounding countryside, which the topography largely makes possible (Figure 61).



Figure 61: View of the River Calder with the rear of properties along Town Hall Street and Sowerby Bridge Mills on its north bank, viewed from County Bridge to the west. [Alun Bull, 2022 © Historic England, DP372574].

The fire and subsequent demolition of Lock Hill Mills in the 1990s and the demolition of Longbottom's Loomshop around the same time have been the biggest losses within this character area. Longbottom's Loomshop was a particularly large, multi-storey building overlooking Wharf Street and its deteriorating condition was considered to detract from the main shopping street. Its loss, while regrettable, has provided more light into Wharf Street and the remaining buildings of the mill complex to the south, as well as giving new and welcome views of the river and surrounding countryside. Kingfisher Chase has been built in the style and on the scale of Lock Hill Mills with similar materials; it did not, however, completely fill the mill's former footprint, allowing more green space to the east, next to the canal. While this is perhaps the first time this area has been so open since the mid-19th century, it offers an attractive setting and prospect for the canal with its primary use for leisure rather than industrial transport. The loss of Wharf Mill and buildings on the west side of Stanley Street, however, has left large areas of open land which is now used as car parking, significantly changing the character of this once compact industrial area.

Many of the area's industrial buildings have been converted to flats, offices or other non-industrial uses. While the transformation of the western part of Old Cawsey as part of the Riverside Development Project has clearly had a positive impact on the town and sympathetically restored a number of large buildings, the use of uPVC windows and changes such as the heightening of the weaving shed attached to Carlton Mill are less in keeping.

The Carlton Mill chimney remains an important and iconic landmark within the heart of the town and it is the only chimney remaining within the study area. The main mill of the Sowerby Bridge Mills complex and Carlton Mill are vast multi-storeyed structures that cannot fail to be noticed. The same applies to the large and imposing warehouses beside the canal basin, and the chapel and Sunday School above it.

Owing to the topography of the area which slopes towards the river, there are key views from along Town Hall Street and Wharf Street, particularly where the demolition of Longbottom's Loomshop has left a vacant plot. The mill complexes tend to be fairly enclosed and compact and therefore some of the key views of them are obtained from the former mill yards and at the entrance to the mill yards. The wide road rolling down towards the canal basin provides an excellent view of the canal basin area and the river beyond. Lock No. 2 and the bridge over the river towards the railway station also provide wide views of the area unencumbered by tall structures.

## Character Area 3: Town Hall Street and Wharf Street

Town Hall and Wharf Street form the main thoroughfare of Sowerby Bridge, effectively creating the town's 'high street'. Running roughly east-west and uphill, the character area includes the bridge and all the buildings fronting the street to the point where it becomes Bolton Brow, as well as the rear plots not covered by other character areas (Figure 62 and 63). The street itself follows the line of the Rochdale to Halifax turnpike road, as rerouted in the 1790s and therefore the majority of the buildings fronting the road were built after this date. The character of the street itself changes somewhat along its length, but it is typified by a mix of small-scale houses and shops, with some large-scale former mills and mill sites. The west end of the character area is dominated by late 19th-century civic and commercial buildings such as the Town Hall, the municipal complex along Hollins Mill Lane (the library, and what is now known as Fire and Water), shops and banks, while the east end of the area has a mixture of smaller commercial and residential buildings, many of which were built as houses and were later adapted as commercial premises.

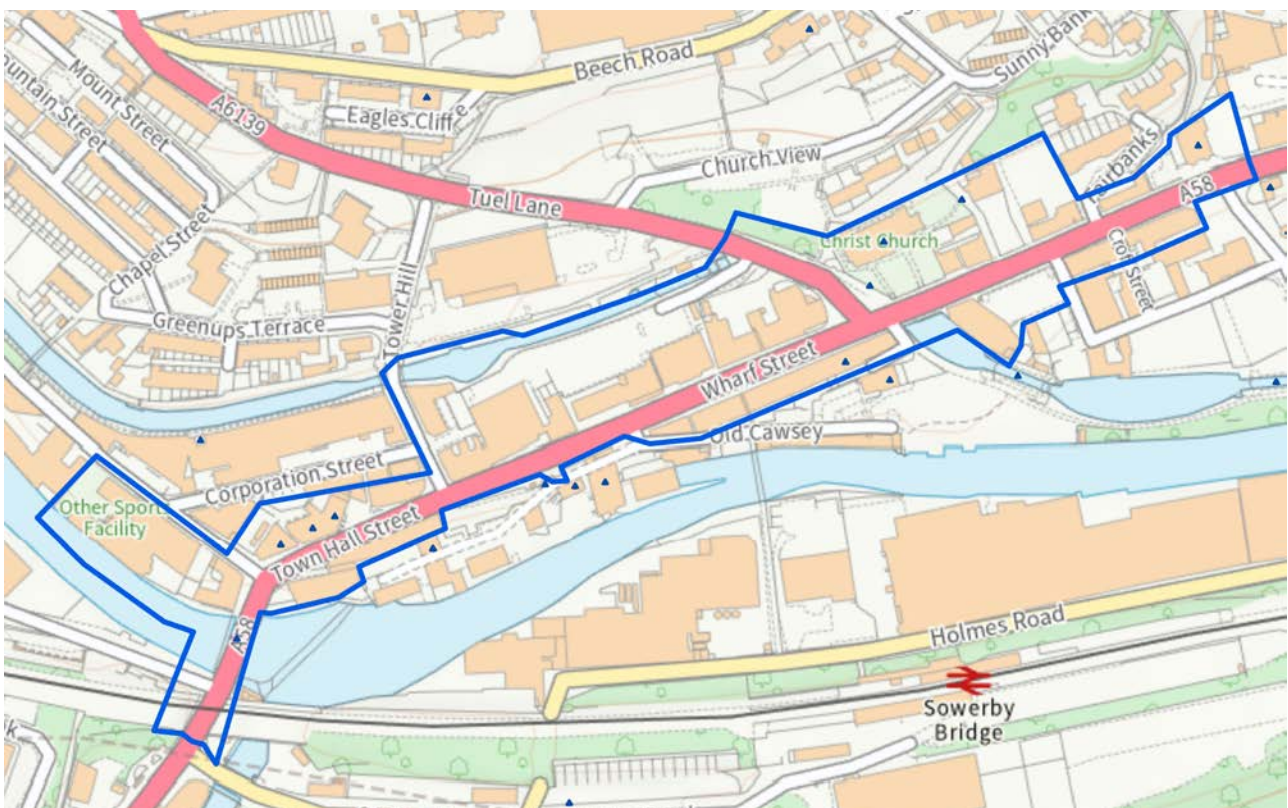


Figure 62: The extent of Character Area 3: Town Hall Street and Wharf Street (blue outline). Listed buildings are shown as blue triangles. [Crown Copyright and database right 2024. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900].



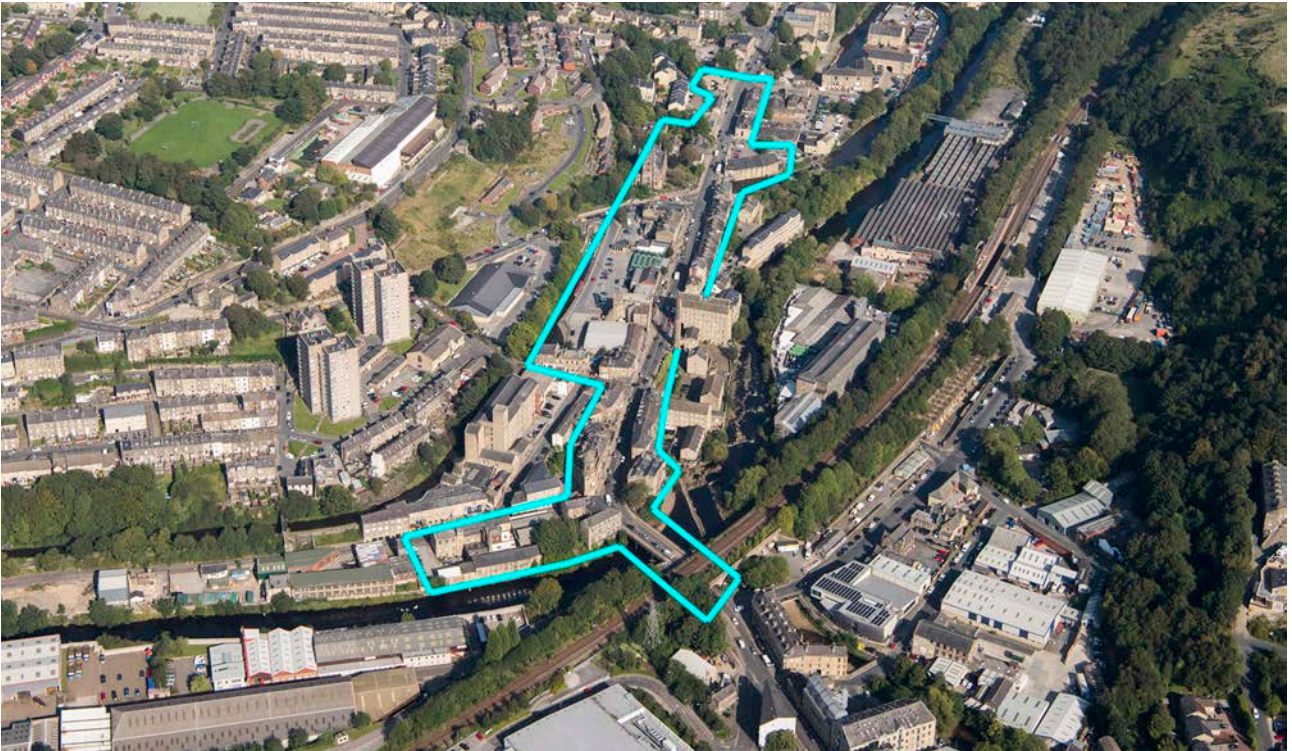


Figure 63: Oblique aerial photograph showing Character Area 3 outlined in cyan: Town Hall Street and Wharf Street, facing east. [Damian Grady, September 2021 © Historic England Archive, 33928\_003].

## Town Hall Street

The west end of Town Hall Street starts at the bridge from which the town acquired its name. The bridge spanning the river Calder has three arches, with a fourth arch believed to be buried under Town Hall Street (see below). It is constructed from stone with later iron-plate decks supported by iron columns on the west elevation, and ironwork parapets resting on lattice girders (Figure 64 and 65). As discussed above, a stone bridge has stood on the site since about 1517 (presumably replacing a timber bridge), and it is likely that at least some of the fabric dates to that period, albeit mostly now concealed. Recent survey and documentary research by ASWYAS, however, suggests that the earliest visible part of the stone bridge probably dates to the mid-17th century and it is depicted in the West Riding book of bridges surveyed by Robert Carr and John Watson, and compiled in 1752 (Figure 66).<sup>155</sup> This corroborates Kendall's research that suggests it was widened in 1632 and at least one of the central arches was rebuilt in 1675 after damage caused by severe flooding the previous years.<sup>156</sup> The Carr and Watson drawing depicts four arches separated by three triangular cutwaters; the outer two arches are pointed and the central pair are rounded. As mentioned above, only three arches are visible today suggesting that the northern pointed one is buried underneath Town Hall Street. The shape and fabric of the two central arches suggest that they are those that were probably rebuilt in the mid-17th century, but the southern pointed arch appears to be earlier.



Figure 64: Eastern side of County Bridge showing the older stone bridge surmounted by the late 19th-century wider deck and iron balustrade, viewed from the south-east. [Lucy Jessop, 2021 © Historic England].



Figure 65: Western side of County Bridge showing the older stone bridge surmounted by the late 19th-century wider deck and iron balustrade, viewed from the north-west. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP437025].

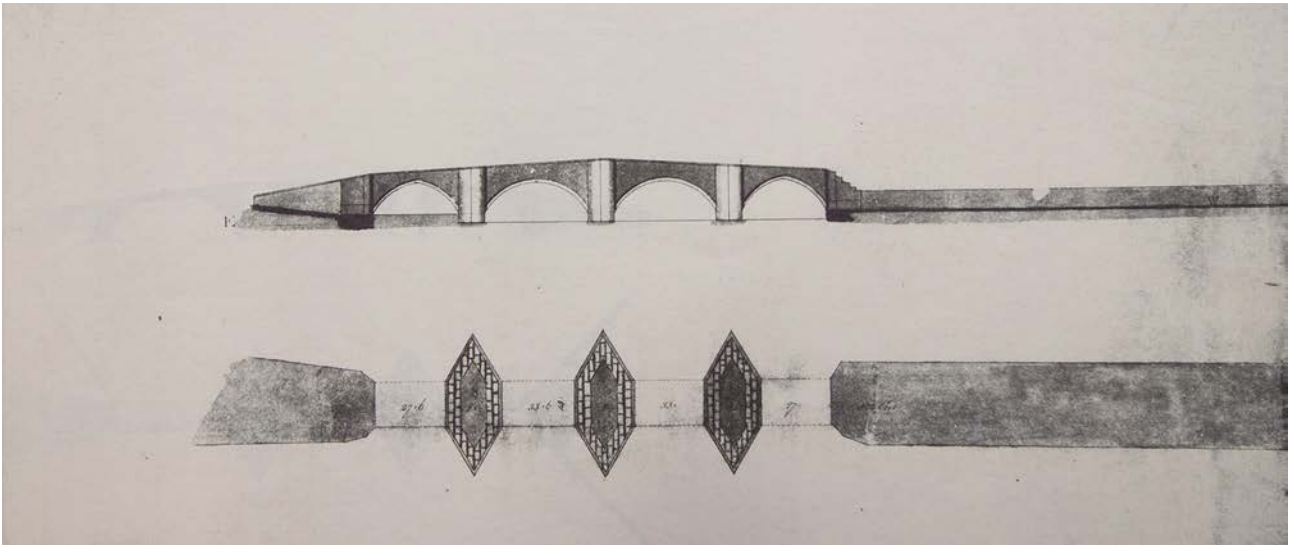


Figure 66: Survey drawing of County Bridge from the *Book of Bridges*, drawn by Robert Carr and John Watson in 1752. [Reproduced with permission of West Yorkshire Archives Service, Wakefield, QD1/461].

ASWYAS argue that a further widening of the stone bridge took place at some stage between the 1752 survey and 1823, probably around the time that the Halifax and Rochdale Turnpike road was established along Town Hall Street and Wharf Street (replacing Old Cawsey) in the 1790s.<sup>157</sup> The stonework on the western elevation of the bridge with its margined keystones supports a late 18th- or early 19th century date. A third widening dates to 1823 and probably relates to new wing walls and cutwaters, following the purchase and subsequent use of land to the north-east which was previously occupied by the chapel (see above).<sup>158</sup> ASWYAS suggest that the final stage of alterations relate to the addition of cast-iron columns and braces to support a new deck finished with cast iron parapets, all added in about 1875.<sup>159</sup> It became a West Riding bridge in 1875 when money was given by the county for its repair; it was then known as County Bridge.<sup>160</sup>

The views of the river from the bridge are fairly leafy with long views to the surrounding countryside, contrasting with the hard lines of the tall and imposing sandstone buildings which line the riverbank on the north side. The two blocks either side of the bridge were built in the late 19th century as a mixture of commercial and domestic space. Nos. 1-7 were originally known as Central Buildings and were built in 1874, as indicated by the plaque above the bull-nosed corner to Hollins Mill Lane. It consists of three-storey slate-roofed buildings in squared stone with ashlar dressings, placed around a yard accessed via a carriage arch from Hollins Mill Lane. The buildings appear to have been conceived as a combination of shops, warehouses and possibly offices and houses. The front, Town Hall Street, section of the building was split into three units which have accommodated a range of shops over the years, including the post office, a watchmaker, ironmonger and shoemaker.<sup>161</sup> Its ground floor, facing Town Hall Street and Hollins Mill Lane, is finished with rusticated ashlar; wider shop windows overlook the main street and narrower window and doors are used along Hollins Mill Lane. At the corner is a larger arched entrance with a cartouche above it bearing a fleece symbolising the wool

industry. The three doorways along the river elevation are accessed from a balcony from the bridge and may have always been used as houses, or as back offices with service entrances for the shops.

A group of civic buildings – a public library, and the former public baths, slaughterhouse, fire station, and municipal offices now known as Fire and Water– lie just beyond the main street on the south-west side of Hollins Mill Lane. They have been included within this character area given their links with the civic centre of the town, whereas the rest of Hollins Mill Lane and Corporation Street are, by contrast, industrial in character (see Character Area 1). At the time of writing (2023), Fire and Water is undergoing repair by a community voluntary group of the same name. All of the buildings, with the exception of the library and fire station, were constructed between 1877-8 by the Local Board of Health. The complex has a restrained two-storey elevation facing the street, built in rough squared sandstone (see Figure 27). The façade is simply decorated with freestone quoins, cornicing and openings. The fire station at the north-west end of the complex is separated by a straight joint and, although matching in style, is a later addition of 1904. The slaughterhouse and bathhouse complex to the rear is constructed of squared sandstone with no architectural adornment. The rear of the complex, with its complicated arrangement and phasing, as well as an intact chimney, is more industrial in character (Figure 67). The attached ashlar single-storey library of 1905 is smaller in scale but more elaborately decorated in a Renaissance style with pilasters and a strapwork frieze (Figure 68).



Figure 67: View of the River Calder with (from left) the former baths and accompanying chimney, Central Buildings and the Town Hall, viewed from south-east. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP437010].



Figure 68: Sowerby Bridge public library, Hollins Mill Lane, opened in 1905, viewed from the south. Fire and Water is beyond, encased in scaffolding. [Alun Bull, 2022 © Historic England, DP372734].

Framed centrally within the vista from the bridge and standing prominently at the corner of Hollins Mill Lane and Town Hall Street is the former Town Hall (Figure 69). Although named as such, the Town Hall was a speculative venture by a group of prominent citizens who were keen that Sowerby Bridge should have its own meeting place for town business (see above). It was constructed in 1857 and it originally extended across what is now a vacant plot facing Hollins Mill Lane. When completed the building had two rooms for the Local Board, rooms for the Mechanics' Institute and the local constabulary, and also contained a 700-seat concert hall.<sup>162</sup> In the late 19th century the building was bought by the Halifax Banking Company, who used it as a bank and also leased space to the Liberal Club. The range containing the auditorium, facing Hollins Mill Lane, was demolished in 1963 (Figure 70).<sup>163</sup> Built in an Italianate style, the attractive two-storey building is constructed from ashlar sandstone, with quoins at the corner of projections and a use of channelled rustication on the lowest part of the curved stair tower; it is lit by large round-headed windows with scrolled keystones and pediments (Figure 71). The front elevation is finished with a deep eaves cornice with parapet above, surmounted by urns. The rounded corner housing the stair has a large curved Venetian window with balustrade and a domed cylindrical clock tower above, directly alignment with the bridge as a symbol of civic pride and as a visual reminder of Sowerby Bridge's rise to town status in the middle of the 19th century. The interior of the building also retains many of its original features including ceiling cornices and friezes, panelling, doors and a fine sweeping stone staircase finished with an iron balustrade (Figure 72).



Figure 69: View of the Town Hall from County Bridge, 1910s[?]. [Calderdale Libraries, 58 538 192].



Figure 70: A photograph showing the demolition of the rear wing of the Town Hall, 1963. [Calderdale Libraries, 34 072 897 Courtesy of Halifax Courier].



Figure 71: Former Sowerby Bridge Town Hall, opened in 1857, viewed from south-east. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP437048].



Figure 72: Staircase inside the tower of the former town hall. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP437042].

On the opposite side of Town Hall Street, nos 12-16 are in a style similar to Central Buildings in the usual squared sandstone with slate roof and stone dressings, even windows with segmental heads. However, the first-floor canopies and the sills have a more elaborate design. The Town Hall Street elevation is punctuated by pilaster strips, string courses and a parapet. There are subtle differences between nos 10-14 and no. 16 since the latter is later, first depicted on the 1933 Ordnance Survey map (revised 1931). The earlier buildings (nos 10-14) were previously part of a much larger row of six buildings which occupied the site of the former mill house garden. The row is absent from the 1866 Local Board map, but a light pencil outline suggests construction may have been planned, making it a similar date to Central Buildings. The four buildings to the west of no. 10 were demolished by the publication of the 1970 1:1250 Ordnance Survey map. Like Central Buildings, this row had a commercial focus facing onto Town Hall Street, while doors facing onto the river indicate domestic use to the rear and or above. Tucked away at the east end of this row, no. 18 Town Hall Street is the site of the original mill house, occupied by the Greenup family of Sowerby Bridge Mills in the mid-19th century. The building was largely rebuilt in about 1924 (commemorated by the date plaque) to accommodate a showroom at street level – accessed via a bridge from the main street – with a warehouse underneath.<sup>164</sup> The building was adapted yet again



in about 2004 with additional residential accommodation. While the new addition has a fairly austere feel with a high ratio of wall to window, it balances the 1920s character below with its side doorway, large windows and simple moulded plinth.<sup>165</sup>

Set forward from nos 10-18 on the south side of Town Hall Street is a large and imposing row of shops formed of three separate phases of construction. The largest, westernmost, group (nos 20-28) has three storeys with a pitched slate roof and is constructed of squared stone to the sides and rear and ashlar to the front (Figure 73). The ground floor is separated into five separate units, alternating between two and three bays in width, defined by stone pilaster strips with fluted and panelled embellishment and with triangular caps. The shop fronts are modern with the exception of a sign in the central unit which reads 'SOWERBY BRIDGE'. The first-floor windows are rounded with moulded headers and keystones while the second-floor windows are shouldered with keystones. The rear of the building backs directly onto Nichol's Yard in Sowerby Bridge Mills, and it may incorporate parts of earlier structures. Their footprint is shown on the 1866 Local Board plans and some of the detailing seems to reflect that used in the Town Hall; this group was also probably built in the mid-19th century.



Figure 73: Row of shops at nos 20-28 Town Hall Street, viewed from the east. [Alun Bull, 2022 © Historic England, DP372542].

The lower row of shops at nos 30, 34 and 36 Town Hall Street are similar in construction to nos 10-14 with their squared stonework and ashlar pilaster strips – rusticated here – separating the bays. The detail is slightly finer on this group, including the large bracketed triangular pediments over the substantial first-floor windows. The roofline is punctuated by dormer windows with round-headed arches. Again, this row appears on the 1866 Local Board plans and it was probably built after the Greenups' sale of land in 1850. The third block at the eastern end of this row (nos 38 and 40) was added relatively late: plans were submitted in 1906 for two shops and offices to be built over the old engine house and onto the side the late 18th-century mill building at Sowerby Bridge Mills by Nathaniel Bates, one of the owners (Figure 74).<sup>166</sup> Despite this, the street elevation continues the style of earlier buildings with ashlar stonework, rusticated pilaster strips at first-floor level and moulded segmental headers with keystones over the first-floor windows. The building's central oriel draws the eye, with its elaborate finial; there is stained glass in the upper panes of the first-floor windows and a large chimney in the centre of the hipped roof (Figure 75). The proposed plans show that the building had two shops at street level with a loading gangway between and offices above with space for a crane. The loading areas suggest that the shops were directly linked to the mill and placed the business directly onto the high street as Town Hall Street became increasingly commercial.



Figure 74: Proposed plans for two shops adjoining Sowerby Bridge Mills, Town Hall Street, 1906. [Reproduced with permission of West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale, CMT21/BIP/SB:225].



Figure 75: Nos 38 and 40 Town Hall Street, built as a pair of shop about 1906, viewed from north. [Alun Bull, 2022 © Historic England, DP372566].

The footprint of the three buildings at nos. 11-15 on the opposite side of the street appear on the 1866 Local Board plans as three shops, variously occupied in the late 19th and early 20th century by establishments including clothing outfitters and the post office. Once again, the side and rear elevations are constructed of squared sandstone which would fit with a mid-19th-century date, but examination of the south-east corner of the building suggests that the building may have been refronted slightly later. This would also fit with the style of the windows at the front whose classical surrounds are of a late 19th-century shape and form. The detailing on this building is also more intricate than elsewhere with deeply projecting pediments over the tripartite first-floor windows and a greater amount of carved detailing, for example in the cartouches over the two-light second-floor windows and within the pilasters separating the units at ground level.

The Bull on the Bridge public house (known as the Bull's Head prior to December 2015) and its surrounding buildings form an interesting triangular yard, probably reflecting an earlier road layout which may have linked to the road now known as Tower Hill (previously Tuel Lane) (see above). The present Bull replaced an earlier pub of the same name in 1863, which probably dated from the mid- to late 18th century and thus predated the realignment of the turnpike road. An undated photograph of the earlier inn taken after the Town Hall was built in 1857 shows a stone building of three storeys, with a slate roof and stone mullioned windows, typical of the local vernacular in the late 18th or early 19th centuries (see Figure 10).<sup>167</sup> The public house was apparently rebuilt about

1863-5 by John Naylor of Albion Brewery, but the design of the front elevation in ashlar, particularly the form and shape of its windows, might suggest that the present front was slightly later, perhaps around 1870 (Figure 76).<sup>168</sup> In 1895 it was occupied by Thomas Riley and it contained dining, coffee and smoking rooms, with a number of ensuite bedrooms.<sup>169</sup>



Figure 76: Bull's Head public house, rebuilt in the late 19th century, viewed from south-east. [Alun Bull, 2022 © Historic England, DP372579].

The buildings to the north of the Bull are also of three storeys, but they are constructed of squared stone rather than ashlar. The plain surrounds of the doorways in particular, and a glimpse of the doorway on the photograph showing the Bull prior to remodelling (see Figure 10), suggests that these buildings are of a mid-19th century date. The block of buildings at nos 21, 23 and 25 are similar in style and construction and the corner of no. 21 is aligned with the front elevation of no. 19, forming the north-eastern side of the yard. The main elevation of nos 21-25 is also slightly at odds with the remainder of Town Hall Street, which suggests it follows an earlier alignment of the main road, perhaps before the turnpike road was formally established in the 1790s. If this is the case, it is possible that they pre-date the 1790s when the turnpike was established; however, it is more likely that they retain the same footprint as earlier buildings. The ground floor of nos 21 and 23 was refronted with large plate-glass windows and rusticated pilaster strips, and the side gable was refenestrated, as shown on a photograph of 1868 (Figure 77). Plans for these works for the Lancashire and Yorkshire Bank were submitted in 1894, at which date the corner entrance was altered and embellished with the bank's emblem and other carved details (Figure 78).<sup>170</sup>



Figure 77: A photograph of buildings along the north side of Town Hall Street, including nos 21 and 23, taken in 1868. [Reproduced with permission of Calderdale Libraries, 34 072 870].



Figure 78: Nos 21 to 25 Town Hall Street, viewed from south-west. [Alun Bull, 2022 © Historic England, DP372581].

At the corner of the row, the site of no. 27 is occupied by the Bar House (toll house) on the 1866 plan, but it was demolished and rebuilt in about 1872 as part of road widening alterations.<sup>171</sup> The present three-storey building is in the familiar local style of the mid-late 19th century as seen along the street. It is set back from its neighbour and it forms a distinctively curved corner for the entrance to Tower Hill.

## Tower Hill

Formerly the lower end of Tuel Lane prior to the mid-20th century, Tower Hill branches from the main thoroughfare in an upward climb towards the Rochdale Canal which it crosses with a stone bridge (Figure 79). The buildings fronting the west side of Tower Hill form part of buildings along Corporation Street and are described as part of Character Area 1 (see above). It should be noted, however, that the buildings flanking Corporation Street (nos. 1 and 3 Tower Hill) have a commercial aspect with modern shopfronts while the remainder of their rows are primarily houses. Tower Hill was, and still is, an extension of the commercial centre of the town: nos 4, 6 and 8 Tower Hill, for example, were built as the Yorkshire Penny Bank in 1898.<sup>172</sup> This attractive building has many of the characteristics of commercial premises on Town Hall Street, constructed in an eclectic style from squared sandstone with ashlar dressings, such as the rusticated pilasters strips (Figure 80). The main entrance is in the chamfered corner, designed to be seen from Town Hall Street. On the ground floor, round-headed openings are rusticated with consoles, almost creating Gibbsian surrounds. Further Baroque touches come from lugged window surrounds and tripartite keystones on the first floor, with Flemish Renaissance details in the strapwork-filled pediment and above the doorway's pilasters. The end bay for no. 8 is wider and has a stone dormer above the roof, also with carved decoration. Its three-storey neighbour, nos 10 and 12, is more modest, in squared sandstone with a pitched slate roof. The bracketed stone band between ground and first-floor level on no. 10 marks the position of a wide opening, perhaps a shop front, now infilled. Whilst the upper windows are of the same character, the doorways of nos 10 and no.12 are of slightly different design. This plot is vacant on the 1866 plans and the houses are first depicted on the 1894 Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1888-92). No. 10 has had a commercial use with a wide shop window at ground-floor level and evidence for a larger window.



Figure 79: A photograph of old Tuel Lane (now Tower Hill) showing the National School at the top of the hill on the left and the former Wesley Chapel at the back, beyond the canal bridge, 1956. [Calderdale Libraries, unknown copyright, 34 072 862].



Figure 80: Nos 4-8 Tower Hill, the former Yorkshire Penny Bank opened in 1894, viewed from south-west. [Alun Bull, 2022 © Historic England, DP372687].

## Wharf Street

Wharf Street formally starts at Tower Hill from where it continues eastwards. The west end of the street now has a fairly open character with views to the river and the surrounding landscape. However, it was once overshadowed by Longbottom's Mill (formerly part of Sowerby Bridge Mills), demolished in the late 20th century, and Bank Foundry which was demolished in the early to mid-20th century, only remnants of which survive. The large stone chimney of Carlton Mill and the remaining Mulhall Mill remind the viewer that the area was once predominantly industrial (Figure 81). The surviving buildings of Sowerby Bridge and Carlton Mills are covered as part of the Old Cawsey character area.



Figure 81: View along Wharf Street, viewed from west. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP437017].

The three-storey buildings at the corner of Wharf Street and Tower Hill, on the north side of the street (nos 1-5) are constructed in the usual squared sandstone with a slate roof. The majority of the windows are modern replacements, but there is a remaining shop window with stone surround along the Tower Hill elevation. First-floor openings are shouldered and the majority are separated by pilaster strips. The second-floor windows are square-headed. Two stones within the heads of a first-floor window along Tower Hill (reading 'A. S.' and '1878') suggests the building was completed that year; certainly this is a vacant plot on the 1866 Local Board plan, with 'A.S' perhaps relating to the builder



or owner at the time. The neighbouring building at nos 7 and 9 is probably slightly later, with larger squared stones at the front and a pitched slate roof with dormers. Pairs of round-headed windows light the first floor and the shop fronts are later replacements. The character of the street changes just to the east of these buildings, as grand, late 19th-century commercial premises give way to later development.

The north side of Wharf Street is occupied by a late 20th-century supermarket (BM Bargains at the time of writing, 2023), in rock-faced sandstone with a shallow pitched roof. The front elevation has shop windows and smaller windows above, rather austere after the richer carvings on some of the buildings of Town Hall Street and Wharf Street. However, its materials fit with the neighbouring Mulhalls Mill and the other former mills opposite.

The street elevation of Mulhalls Mill is formed of two different phases, as demonstrated by the straight joint at the front of the building. The western part has three storeys but has been reduced in height; a window has been cut diagonally by the present roofline. The eastern two bays are four storeys high, and the complex clearly originally extended westwards, as indicated by the projecting walls. Both parts of the building are of squared sandstone with slate roofs. There is the base of a large chimney at the rear of the four-storey block (Figure 82). They were part of Centre Mills in about 1862 by Francis Crossley, first shown on the 1866 Local Board plan as a collection of buildings arranged around a yard with access from an archway on Wharf Street, which remains today.



Figure 82: Site of Bank Foundry and the rear of former Centre Mills, viewed from the north east. [Lucy Jessop, 2021 © Historic England].

Most of Centre Mills was destroyed by fire.<sup>173</sup> The remaining building has had various uses, including as a YMCA and a Ministry of Health office before it became a Centre for Further Education in 1958; it now contains flats.<sup>174</sup>

The area immediately to the east of Mulhall Mills was previously occupied by part of Bank Foundry; established in 1789 by Timothy Bates, it was depicted on the 1866 Local Board Plan. The foundry extended across the Rochdale Canal to the north and the two parts were linked by Bank Bridge, since removed. By 1862 it was owned by the Pollit family, descendants of Bates, who were joined by Eustace Wigzell in 1865, manufacturing and exporting steam engines and engineering components.<sup>175</sup> The firm closed in 1931 and the south portion of the complex was demolished in 1937.<sup>176</sup>

Today, the front of the site is occupied by Regent's Parade, a two-storey Art Deco row with an ashlar elevation, stepped parapets and a pitched slate roof (Figure 83). The complex, which opened in 1939, housed a cinema (with seating for 931 people, which became an Essoldo in 1949), seven shops with offices over and a dance hall.<sup>177</sup> The cinema closed in 1969 and became Regal Bingo, and later Victoria's Discotheque; the north side of the building was demolished.<sup>178</sup> The remainder of the former Bank Foundry site, to the east of Regent's Parade, is an open space previously occupied by the market, cleared in 2022 (Figure 84). The area behind it, on the south side of the Rochdale Canal, is now Tuel Lane car park.



Figure 83: Regent's Parade, including former cinema with accompanying shops, opened in 1939, viewed from south-west. [Alun Bull, 2022 © Historic England, DP372677].



Figure 84: Former market (since demolished) on the site of the former Bank Foundry, viewed from north-west. [Alun Bull, 2022 © Historic England, DP372675].

There is a more commercial character to the row of buildings on the north side of Wharf Street beyond the market place. No. 17, with its fine ashlar, tall ground floor with grand columnar porch, short first floor and a massive parapet, is atypical for this stretch of Wharf Street; it was built for the Halifax Equitable Benefit Building Society in about 1922 (Figure 85).<sup>179</sup> The building control plans show a toplit banking hall accessed directly from the street with a dining room, manager's office, strong room and lavatories to the rear and a boiler room and store in the attic space above (Figure 86). It closed in 2018 and, though much of the interior has been removed or obscured, it retains a large, decorative rooflight window over the former main banking hall (Figure 87).<sup>180</sup>

The neighbouring three-storey building (nos 19-23) dominates the surrounding buildings. It is built of squared sandstone with pitched slate roof and incorporates a date plaque at the front, reading 'W S 1848'. However, the window openings and sills appear to be later than this date, as do the late 20th-century shopfronts; the plaque, then, may be reused. A closer inspection of the wall in the passageway between no. 23 and 25 reveals a straight joint with stone quoins, indicating that the frontage of 19-23 is a later addition and the building behind it might relate to the 1848 date plaque. The frontage and third storey of no. 23 is built up and over the older no. 25. Nos 25-29 are united by their design, executed in rougher squared sandstone and with plain ashlar window surrounds, albeit modified. Nos 27 and 29, however, have dressed stone quoins, suggesting the pair are the earlier of the trio, with no. 25 added soon after in a similar design and replicating the stone cornice.



Figure 85: Former Halifax Equitable Building Society at no. 17 Wharf Street, built about 1922, viewed from the south. [Alun Bull, 2022 © Historic England, DP372679].



Figure 86: Detail of rooflight window inside former Halifax Equitable Building Society at no. 17 Wharf Street, viewed from north. [Lucy Jessop, 2021 © Historic England].

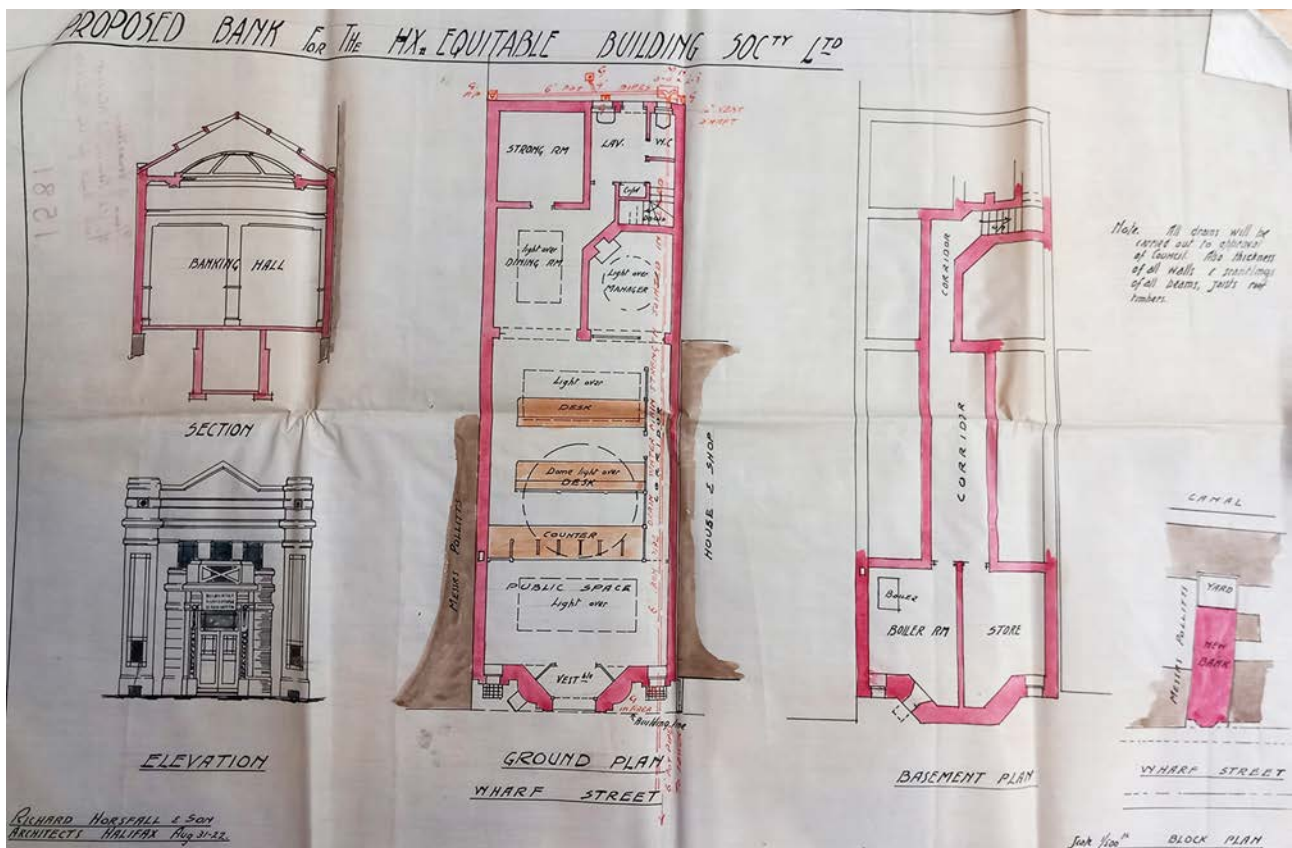


Figure 87: Proposed plans for Halifax Equitable Building Society, 1922. [Reproduced with permission of West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale, CMT21/BIP/SB:591].

The Commercial Inn at the corner of Wharf Street and Tuel Lane was originally a two-storey building with an L-shaped plan, built in a similar style to other buildings in the character area and probably dating to the first half of the 19th century (Figure 88). The range closest to the canal is taller, but both had the same heavy ashlar parapet with occasional pairs of uprights in the frieze. Originally the gable facing Wharf Street housed a tall stair window with 'Commercial Inn' carved above; entrances to the building were on its east side, rather than on Wharf Street. The building is labelled as an inn on the 1894 (surveyed 1888-92) Ordnance Survey map. It was extended extensively to the east in about 2013.<sup>181</sup>

Historic maps published from 1894 to 1933 show that there was originally a lane passing alongside the inn with a triangular block of buildings on the other side and the Rochdale Canal beyond. It was only in the late 1960s (between the publication of the 1964 and 1970 Ordnance Survey maps) that this part of Tuel Lane was constructed, extending from the north end of what is now Tower Hill (previously Tuel Lane) to its present junction with Wharf Street. This group of buildings were demolished, and the Rochdale Canal was enclosed by the Tuel Lane Tunnel. The tunnel was extended southwards in the 1990s (see above).



Figure 88: Commercial Inn at the junction of Tuel Lane and Wharf Street. [Alun Bull, 2022 © Historic England, DP372684].

The south side of Wharf Street, between the start of Old Cawsey and the crossing of the Rochdale Canal, is occupied by an almost complete row of small cottages (nos 2-52 Wharf Street) which probably date to the late 18th or early 19th century, built after the realignment of the turnpike road in the 1790s. They are clearly the earliest buildings within the character area and were built as back-to-back houses for domestic weavers, as indicated by the larger windows in the upper floors to provide plenty of light (Figure 89). The back-to-back arrangement are shown on the Ordnance Survey map published in 1894. The houses would have consisted of one room on each floor with a shared party wall between the houses, generally where the staircases were sited. Owing to the topography of the hillside, the houses present two storeys to Wharf Street, and three to Old Cawsey. They have very little decorative detail, only freestone window and door surrounds and a simply moulded bracketed eaves cornice.

Most of the buildings have inserted late 20th-century shopfronts, but a few demonstrate that the ground floor originally featured a door paired with a window matching those above. Nos 38 and 40 are a later replacement, built slightly taller than their neighbours in about 1912, according to the plaques on the building. This pair is built in a similar style to the row, but with larger windows at first-floor level which have lintels incised with a scroll motif and stained glass in their upper lights. When rebuilt, these buildings incorporated a commercial function, but retained domestic accommodation above and behind.



Figure 89: Late 18th-/early 19th-century back-to-back houses on the south side of Wharf Street, viewed from north. [Alun Bull, 2022 © Historic England, DP372559].

Similarly, nos 48, 50 and 52 were rebuilt as a taller set of commercial buildings in about 1897. Their style and character are akin to the late 19th-century buildings along Town Hall Street with large shop windows separated by rusticated pilaster strips; above are three-light windows with moulded stone surrounds, keystones, abbreviated Doric frieze and cracked pediments (Figure 90). Plans for this row submitted in 1897 show this trio much as are they are today, including some of the window designs and one of the shop fronts facing Wharf Street, making them a significant survival. The proposed plans show cellars and workshops in the basement, with shops on the ground floor and domestic accommodation behind and above (Figure 91).<sup>182</sup>



Figure 90: Nos 48-52 Wharf Street, built in the late 19th century, viewed from the north. [Alun Bull, 2022 © Historic England, DP372544].



Figure 91: Proposed plans for nos 48-52 Wharf Street, 1897. [Reproduced with permission of West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale, CMT21/BIP/SB:52].



## Eastern part of Wharf Street and Sowerby Bridge Wharf

The area of Wharf Street beyond Tuel Lane to the east is beyond the HSHAZ boundary but incorporates some important architectural elements that are worth mentioning briefly as part of this assessment. Wharf Street continues from its junction with Tuel Lane in a straight north-easterly direction. The corner of the junction is dominated by the Gothic Revival Christ Church which was built along the valley side above the main street and set within its own graveyard surrounded by iron railings above a stone wall with decorative stone gate piers marking the entrance to the main south door (Figure 92). The green and arboreal surroundings of the church as well as the views to the south along the river and the surrounding fields offer a pleasant natural backdrop to the sandstone buildings and the busy main road. This part of Wharf Street is less densely developed than it is to the west. The church is composed of an aisled nave, chancel and vestry with a pinnacled tower at its west end. It is constructed entirely of ashlar and built in a restrained perpendicular gothic style. The church was opened in 1824 and replaced the chapel which previously stood to the north-east side of County Bridge.



Figure 92: Christ Church standing above Wharf Street, opened 1824, viewed from south-east. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP437002].

Opposite Christ Church and directly beside the Rochdale Canal is another large and dominating building; its low roofline expresses its purpose and topography, which slopes towards the river. The Roxy picture house was built in about 1915, according to the datestone over its segmental-headed rusticated entrance facing Wharf Street (Figure 93). Remnants of earlier buildings, however, are incorporated into the east elevation. The entrance is flanked by pilasters which rise through an entablature to a parapet which is topped by a segmental pediment. There are two windows at first-floor level, perhaps inserted, with blind panels between separated by pilasters, and a lunette window at attic level. Other openings around the building are limited to a single small window and a few blocked ones in the east elevation to ensure the hall stayed dark for the big screen.



Figure 93: Former Roxy Cinema, opened 1915, viewed from north. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP437016].

East of this are rows of smaller two and three-storey buildings lining the street in a similar style to those on the western part of Wharf Street (Figure 94). All are built of squared sandstone with slate roofs with stone dressings and they are now shops with accommodation above or behind, or solely domestic. Some, such as nos 51-53 Wharf Street and no. 65 are in the local mid- to late 19th-century vernacular, whilst those in between appear to be similarly dated buildings that have been modified and cleaned, giving them a modern appearance. Those along the south side of the street (nos 72-90) are smaller and lower and are stylistically similar to the late 18th- or early 19th-century row to the west of Tuel Lane (nos 2-52). They are shown as through houses on the 1894 Ordnance Survey map.



Figure 94: View of eastern part of Wharf Street showing lower buildings, a wider street and increased amount of space, viewed from west (Lucy Jessop, 2021 © Historic England).

Amongst the terraces on the north side of the street are some larger houses. The most notable of these is a villa named Orrell House, obscured by a large garden running down the hillside to Wharf Street with stone walls and a round-headed gateway surmounted by a finial. The two-storey house is built of squared sandstone on an L-shaped plan, with an extension at the back. While the dressings of the windows and central doorway at the front would suggest a mid- to late 19th-century date, earlier elements may be incorporated within it. The footprint of a building here is shown attached to other buildings extending eastwards on the 1854 Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1848-50); a similar arrangement is shown on the 1866 Local Board Plans. The detail of the latter shows an eastern extension (now demolished) in three parts, perhaps for separate dwellings. These are linked to an industrial building running perpendicular to the row on the 1866 plan and 1894 Ordnance Survey map, possibly the former brewery

labelled on the 1804 map (see Figure 12). Orrell House was extended to the rear by the publication of the 1894 Ordnance Survey map. An Orrell House in Halifax is mentioned in an advertisement for surgeon's apprentices in 1827 and it was certainly occupied by doctors and surgeons in the following decades.<sup>183</sup> A second house stands to the south-east, stylistically of a mid-19th-century date, with similar central doorway and windows but facing north rather than towards the main street (Figure 95). The 1866 map suggests that there was a building attached to its east side connecting it to the same industrial building mentioned above, perhaps forming a small complex relating to brewing and industry in the early to mid-19th century.



Figure 95: An example of a larger double-pile house on the north side of Wharf Street, viewed from north (Lucy Jessop, 2021 © Historic England).

The building now a restaurant known as Village (no. 75), standing opposite the road to the canal basin, was previously the Wharf Inn, replacing an inn of the same name on the site of the Wharf Garage when the licence was transferred in the early to mid-19th century (Figure 96).<sup>184</sup> The building is set back from the street, and also apart from its neighbours as a result of demolition to the west of it. The quoins, fine cornice and smaller windows on the second floor suggest that it was built in the late 18th century or early 19th century with mid-19th century alterations made perhaps when it became an inn. It may have previously been a large house.



Figure 96: Former public house, perhaps originally a domestic house, now called Village, viewed from south. [James O. Davies, 2024 © Historic England, DP437013].

The road changes direction slightly as it becomes Bolton Brow, but the character of this eastern part of Wharf Street more or less continues with a mixture of larger buildings and smaller dwellings.

## Significance

The buildings of Town Hall Street and Wharf Street demonstrate the growth and development of the town from around 1792, when the turnpike was constructed and replaced Old Cawsey, until the late 1930s. Over this period, the street has been transformed from an area predominantly industrial in character, intermixed with some housing, to one that is mainly commercial. This change started in the mid- to late 19th century, aided by the completion of the town hall in 1857, but it was only in the early 20th

century when some of the industrial buildings were removed and replaced or converted that the main street became the commercial high street it is today. The character area has a good mixture of smaller, former back-to-back houses and larger commercial premises, shops and banks. The materials, however, remain the traditional sandstone with slate roofs throughout.

Losses within the character area have been minimal and could be considered historic. The largest loss was the removal of Bank Foundry and Centre Mills which has left some vacant space now partly used as car parking and the cleared market site. Despite these losses, the remaining buildings of Centre Mills are an important landmark. The key attraction is the Town Hall with its clocktower, orientated and framed by other taller buildings as the town is approached from the bridge. Similarly, Christ Church in its elevated position acts as a draw when travelling along the main thoroughfare. The County Bridge itself is a key landmark, along with the bold and imposing shops along the south side of Town Hall Street, and the Bull public house with its unusual orientation. Key views are obtained from the bridge and at various points along Town Hall Street and Wharf Street, with glimpses to the south via cleared or regenerated industrial sites. Generally, though, views are principally to the east or west.

## Further research

This study has identified a number of aspects or individual sites that would benefit from further research. Consideration of these elements could improve overall understanding and appreciation of heritage value within Sowerby Bridge. The town has been subject to relatively little archaeological investigation, largely as a result of the limited development taking place within the study area since archaeological recording became a requirement under national planning policy in 1990 (PPG16). Of particular interest is the general archaeological potential within the area, particularly within the older parts of the settlement in Character Area 3, around Old Cawsey, the river and the bridge. It is, however, expected that any areas within the historic centre would be subject to appropriate archaeological investigation and recording before and during any development.

Since the majority of the town's buildings were constructed in the 18th or 19th centuries, there is limited potential for hidden early fabric within the existing buildings. There are, however, a small number of buildings which may have earlier origins and would be worthy of further investigation should the opportunity arise. These buildings include Puzzle Hall, Hollins Mill Lane; Wharf Garage and adjoining buildings on Old Cawsey; and Orrell House, Wharf Street, although this is by no means an exhaustive list. Where alterations are expected to historic buildings, both externally and internally, building recording at an appropriate level proportionate to the impact should be recommended.

## Conclusion

The confluence of the rivers Calder and Ryburn has been the focus of activity since at least the early 15th century, if not much earlier. Not only did this part of the river offer a suitable crossing for a strategically important route across the Pennines but the force of the river was substantial enough to power a series of mills. It was upon the success of this water-powered industry, coupled with the town's fortuitous position at the centre of an important east – west transport network, that the town flourished and became what it is today: a place with a rich architectural and industrial legacy.

Within the study area, the town generally maintains an exceptionally high degree of historical integrity. The development of the town from a small hamlet focused on the river, its crossing and the causeway, to an industrial settlement and on to a commercial town is well documented and readable within the townscape today. However, much of its earlier history is only known from documentary evidence and it is possible that medieval remains survive within the foundations of the later mills, the goits, weir and even the bridge, but this evidence remains hidden and uninvestigated. Furthermore, there is evidence of pre-18th-century houses along older routes, including elements of the former 16th-century Cawsey House within Wharf Garage, which are also worthy of further investigation.

Sowerby Bridge Mills was one of the first, if not the first, integrated woollen mill complexes in the county. Its owners, the Greenup family, played a key role in the development of the town; as their mills became increasingly successful, they bought up much of the surrounding land and they were thus directly involved in some of the town's key developments, such as Christ Church. They left behind an architectural legacy that was passed on, reused and remains in use today, albeit with a different purpose.

The Greenups and other industrialists benefited from the area's transport revolution, initially from the Calder and Hebble Navigation, then the Rochdale Canal, with their associated canal basin. This major east-west link connected many of the major industrial centres with coastal ports for transportation overseas. Despite the arrival of the railways in the 1840s, the canals continued to operate, although rail transport eventually became a much quicker and more efficient way to transport goods. Some of the noisy and busy atmosphere of the industrial town has now quietened and the remaining and well-preserved canals are tranquil and peaceful backdrops to enjoy leisurely walks or cycle rides.

Despite such a short period of use as a public building and the loss of a large portion of its side wing in 1963, the Town Hall remains a key building within the town centre, central to the vista from County Bridge with its grand clock tower. It forms part of a collection of public buildings within this corner of the town together with the later municipal offices, swimming baths, public library and fire station along Hollins Mill lane. This important group of buildings associated with local government and services represents the period



at which the town was rapidly developing at the end of the 19th and early 20th century, and they celebrate the rise of the settlement as an important industrial town in its own right.

The commercial aspect of Sowerby Bridge developed relatively late, with many of the early shops accommodated in former domestic premises. Purpose-built shops and banks were built from the 1870s onwards, following the development of civic buildings around Hollins Mill Lane, adding more tall and fairly grand stone buildings at the western end of the town, in particular. Gradually, some of the former back-to-backs were replaced by purpose-built shops on a scale to complement those nearby which occupied former houses. The transformation of parts of former domestic and industrial premises into commercial space on the high street in the late 19th and early 20th century demonstrates how the town's focus was shifting from manufacturing to commercial enterprise. Very few original shop fronts survive along the main thoroughfare and almost all have replacement glazing. One key survivor is at 48-52 Wharf Street, the frontage of which survives almost exactly as proposed in 1897.

There was probably very little housing in Sowerby Bridge before the late 18th century with scattered houses along the main routes, particularly Hollins Mill Lane and Old Cawsey. The rows of back-to-back houses along Wharf Street, now almost entirely through houses, are an important reminder of Sowerby Bridge when its core economy was textile production which took place in the mills built along the new turnpike road laid out in the 1790s.

The way in which the town is used and experienced is very much shaped by its historic layout, the course of the river and the surrounding topography. The bridge (and previous crossings) and the course of the main road from Rochdale and over the Pennines have drawn people to the location, and the movement and transportation of people and goods was key to the development of the town. The main thoroughfare forms a strong east-west axis through the town, following the line of the valley and running parallel to the river. The canals interrupted certain routeways, namely Tuel Lane (now Tower Hill) which previously ran down in a south-westerly direction towards the Bull's Head and the bridge beyond, although they follow a similar alignment to the east-west transport link across the Pennines. This is further reinforced by the development of the railways on the south side of the river.

There are few open spaces within the town itself, unsurprising given that suitable building land amongst the routeways and along steep valley sides was at a premium. Historic open spaces tend to be functional, such as Nichol's Yard and the yard of Carlton Mill. Where demolition has occurred, the land is generally given over to car parking. There are pockets of quiet and small green spaces further north in the area previously occupied by Bank House and the churchyard while the edges of the canals are leafy and lead to more open countryside on the fringes of the town; this greenness contrasts pleasantly with the stone and slate buildings.

Sowerby Bridge's significance is recognised by its designation as a conservation area and the protection offered to many of the historic buildings within it through listing. Many more buildings are recognised to have a regional or local value. Heritage remains central to regeneration within the town, as shown by its HSHAZ programme, and this HAA provides an enhanced understanding of the town's history, character and significance, forming a foundation upon which Sowerby Bridge can continue to be cherished and grow.

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