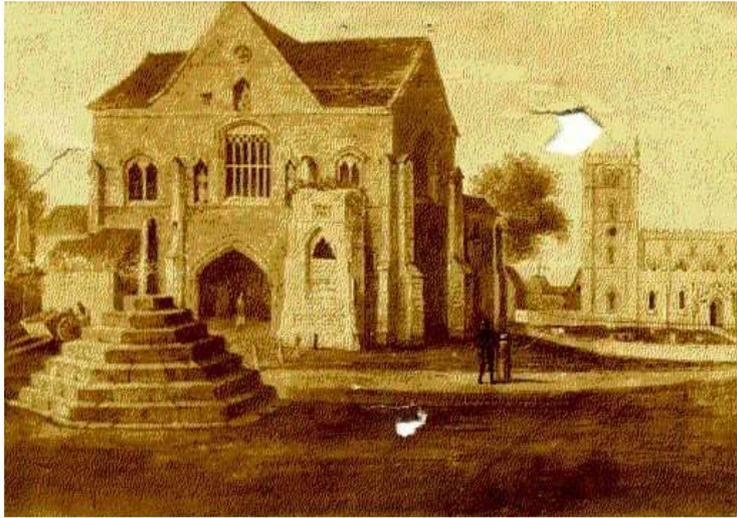


Worksop Fairs and Markets



The market cross in front of the Priory Gatehouse in the 19th century

Thomas Furnival, lord of the manor of Worksop, was a member of parliament from 1294 until his death in 1332. In 1296 he obtained from King Edward I a charter for a market and fair the Feast of St Cuthbert as follows:

‘Granting among other things to Thomas Furnival and his heirs forever, a weekly market on Wednesday and an eight day fair yearly within his manor of Worksop in the county of Nottingham. The King to his Archbishops etc Greeting. Know ye that we have granted and by this our charter have confirmed to our beloved and faithful Thomas de Furnyvall that he and his heirs for ever may have one market in every week on Wednesday at this manor of Worksop in the County of Nottingham, and one fair there in every year to last 8 days, that is to say, on the eve and on the day and on the morrow of St Cuthbert the Bishop, March 20th and for the 5 days following ... unless those markets and fairs be to the nuisance of neighbouring markets and fairs. And that they may have free warren in all their desmesne lands of Wyrkesop in the aforesaid country of Nottingham. Provided that the same lands be not within the metes of our Forest, so that no one may enter those lands to chase in them or take anything which appertains to the warren without the licence and will of the same Thomas or his heirs upon forfeiture to us of £10.

In 1161 Richard de Lovetot’s charter of endowment to Worksop Priory mentions crosses which he and his son William erected with their own hands on the moor. These may have erected as a religious penance but could also have been boundary markers as the register of Welbeck Abbey referred to the cross at Worksop ‘which divided the fee of the King and the fee of the lord of Worksop and the fee of Tickhill. One of these may have survived and been used as a market cross.

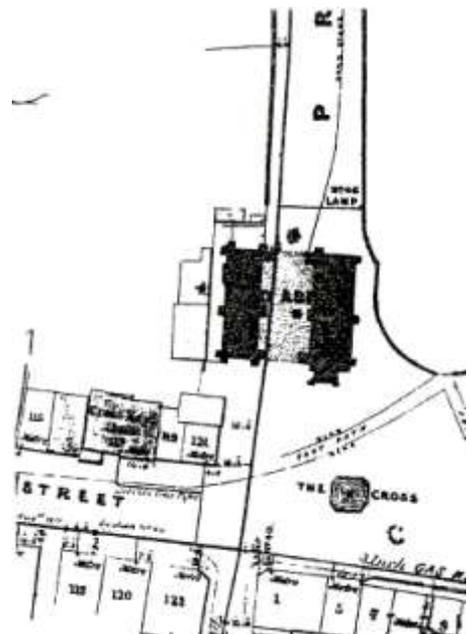
However, the cross presently outside the Priory Gatehouse may not have been situated here from medieval times as had been previously thought. In the Nottinghamshire Extensive Urban Survey Archaeological Assessment for Worksop prepared for English Heritage by Gill Stroud in 2002, it is stated that: 'This area is traditionally said to be the site of Worksop's medieval market, outside the Priory gates. However, it seems more likely that the market was held in Worksop proper, at least from the later 13th century when the lord acquired the market charter. It is not even certain that the cross stood here originally - it is not, for example, shown on the 18th century plan of Pond Yards, which includes the area in front of the gatehouse. Buildings and other structures such as field gates are shown in considerable detail, yet no cross is depicted. Similarly, Kelk's maps of 1763 and 1775, both in Sheffield Archives, do not show a cross by the gatehouse; the latter shows one at the top of Potter Street, while the former is too damaged to tell... There was a cross here [near the gatehouse] in the early 19th century, which in 1896 was moved closer to the gatehouse once the road had been diverted to the west of the building.'

This indicates that any earlier cross near the Priory was destroyed and the market cross from the top of Potter Street was moved to outside the gatehouse early in the 19th century to a position in the centre of the road at Cheapside and later moved to its present position in 1896. The shaft of the cross was replaced in the 20th century.



Above: The cross and gatehouse before 1898

Right: A map of 1888 showing the position of the cross before it was moved in 1898.



The shambles, where butchers sold their meat, were situated in the market place. The rents for the shambles due at Michaelmas were recorded by John Harrison's Survey in 1636:

'John Thacker holds a shop at will by the yearly rent of 6 shillings.

Thomas Croftes holds a shop at will by the yearly rent of 6 shillings.

Westewodes holds a house and a shop at will by the yearly rent of 16 shillings.

Francis More holds a stall at will by the yearly rent of 4 shillings.

Item, 3 stalls let without or under a penthouse adjoining to the Shambles for which is paid a yearly rent of 8 shillings.

Peter Boler holds a shop at will by the yearly rent of 10 shillings.

William Ffrone, the under bailiff holds at will the toll of the market by the yearly rent of 40 shillings'.



The Moot Hall

The Moot Hall stood between the Old Ship Inn and the Holly Bush Inn and was the focal point of the market from the 17th century. In 1826 it was described as being 'indicated by a crazy wooden belfry on the gable of the building of no great antiquity, but old and shabby enough to be a disgrace to the use to which it is appropriated, and the situation where it stands'.

The first floor was the home of the bailiffs who set out the stalls and collected the rent with the ground floor used as covered sales space. A Court Baron was held in the Moot Hall every three weeks and a Court Leet twice each year in April and October. These were medieval institutions held by the Lord of the Manor, and similar to a parish council and was the only form of local government until Worksop District Council was created in 1894

The open market stalls were situated in Bridge Street and Potter Street. The fairs held in 1832 were on March 31st for cattle, and October 14th for horses, cattle and pedlery.

In Wright's Directory of 1879 the markets are described as:

'The market, chiefly for corn, is held on Wednesday, and a fat stock market is held on Mondays. A business market, for vegetables and general produce, is held in the Market Place, at the top of Bridge Street, on Saturday evening. A cattle and horse fair is held on the second Wednesday in April and October, in the field at the foot of the 'Castle Hill'. Efforts are being made to remove some of the buildings on the eastern side of the upper end of Bridge Street, so as to form a small market place worthy of the name, and when this is done, a regular Saturday market will probably be initiated, and a vast improvement effected to the appearance of this part of the town.'

The Market Place was originally lined with buildings and was accessed by two alley ways. In 1882 the land was eventually cleared by demolishing small shops and houses to form a proper market place when the land was purchased by the Local Board of Health.

The Cattle Market remained in Bridge Street and Castle Street until the new Cattle Market in Newcastle Avenue was opened in 1871.

The Market Place before buildings were cleared about 1880



The Cattle Market in Newcastle Avenue in 1907

In 1851 the Corn Exchange was built. It was designed by Charles Gilbert of Nottingham. The arms of the Duke of Newcastle were mounted on the side and above was a clock given by the Duke. The Corn Exchange was described in White's Directory of 1864, 'The Corn Exchange in Potter Street opened in 1851 costing £2,600 and at the back is a convenient market place with a row of shops on each side for butchers. In the upper storey is a spacious and handsome room in which concerts are held. The library and newsroom of the Mechanics Institute is also held here'.

The Court Leet was now held here and the Moot Hall demolished.

The Town Hall
about 1970



In Kelly's Directory of 1900 the Town Hall is described as built in the Venetian Gothic style, erected in 1854. This building remains on the corner of the Potter Street.



Potter Street
about 1910

The Corn Exchange was administered by the Corn Exchange and Market Company. In 1882 it was purchased by the Local Board of Health and became known as the Town Hall. Further buildings were demolished to enlarge the Market Place and improve the appearance of the area.

The Local Board of Health remained the statutory authority for 42 years until local government reform instituted Worksop Urban District Council and Worksop Rural District Council in 1894. Worksop received its Charter to become a Borough in 1931. The composition of the Borough Council was eighteen Councillors and six Aldermen.



Above Left: Malcolm McDonald, MP for Bassetlaw, holding the Charter in 1931. Taken at Worksop Railway Station with Worksop Charter Mayor, F.G. Foster in the foreground. Above Right: Worksop Borough Coat of Arms



The Public Address on Charter Day, 1931

Worksop Borough Council joined with Retford Borough Council, and Worksop and Retford Rural District Councils in 1975 to become Bassetlaw District Council. Parts of Potter Street were demolished and Queen's Buildings were built next to the original Town Hall and was opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 1977.



Above Left: the Town Hall about 1970 before alterations.
 Above Right: The Town Hall with the steps removed and building work in progress on Queen's Buildings in 1974.



Her Majesty the Queen opening
 Queen's Buildings in 1977



Inspecting the scale model of
 the new buildings



Queen's Buildings and
 the Town Hall in 2008