

Crosfield Bridge



Lever's Plan

At the beginning of the twentieth century, George Dewhurst sold Beechwood Estate* (of which Lymm Dam was a part) to William Lever. William Lever intended to make considerable changes to the area and develop the site into housing for his workers.

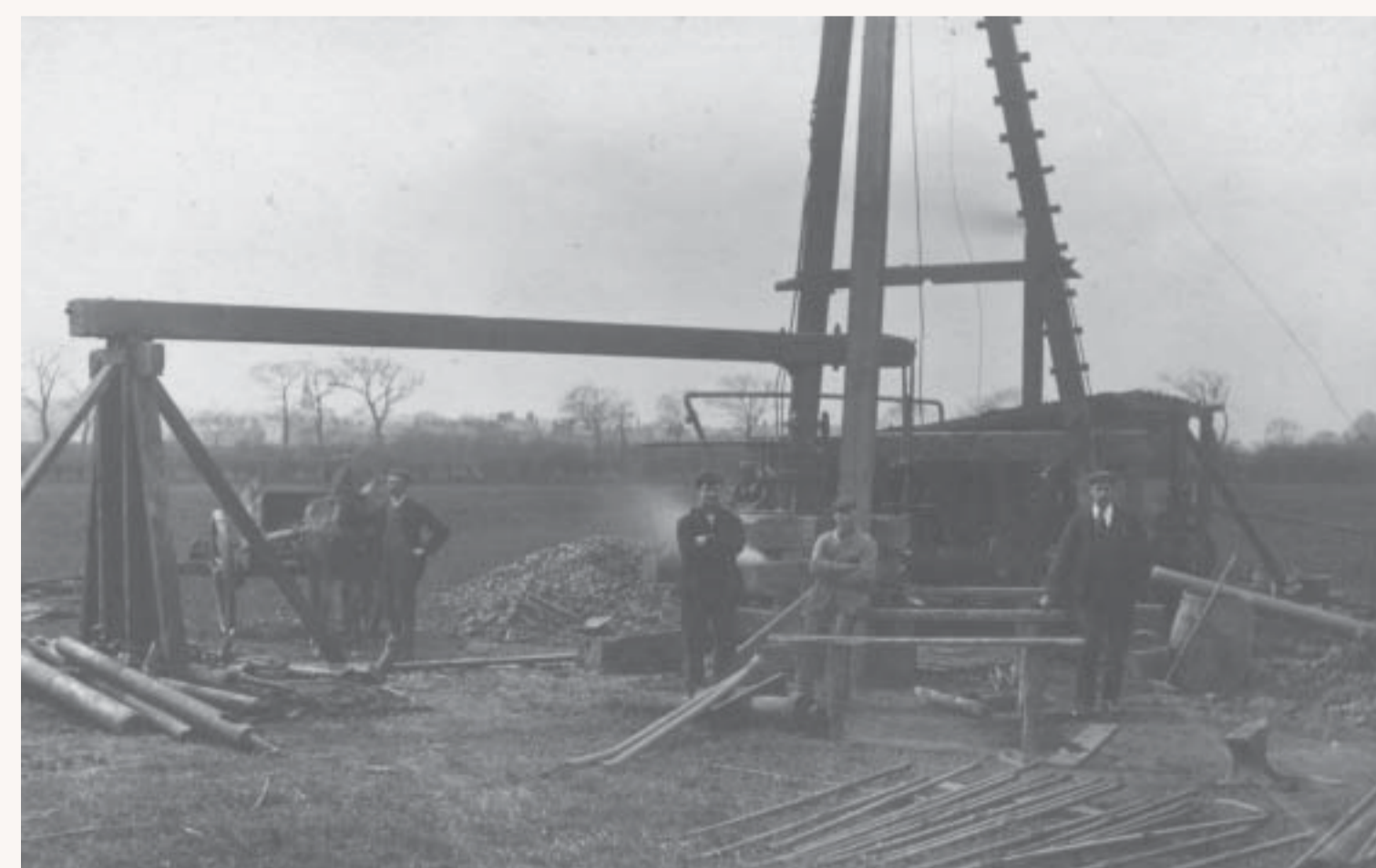
Lever's proposed development was to be based around three roads, (currently Lakeside Road, The Avenue and the bridleway running along the eastern boundary of Lymm Dam). The roads were to meet at the bridge and were planted with alternating Lombardy poplar and English elm. The elms unfortunately succumbed to Dutch elm disease in the 1980s but the poplars remain.

The bridge itself was constructed just after the First World War, the work being carried out by local contractors Harry Fairclough.

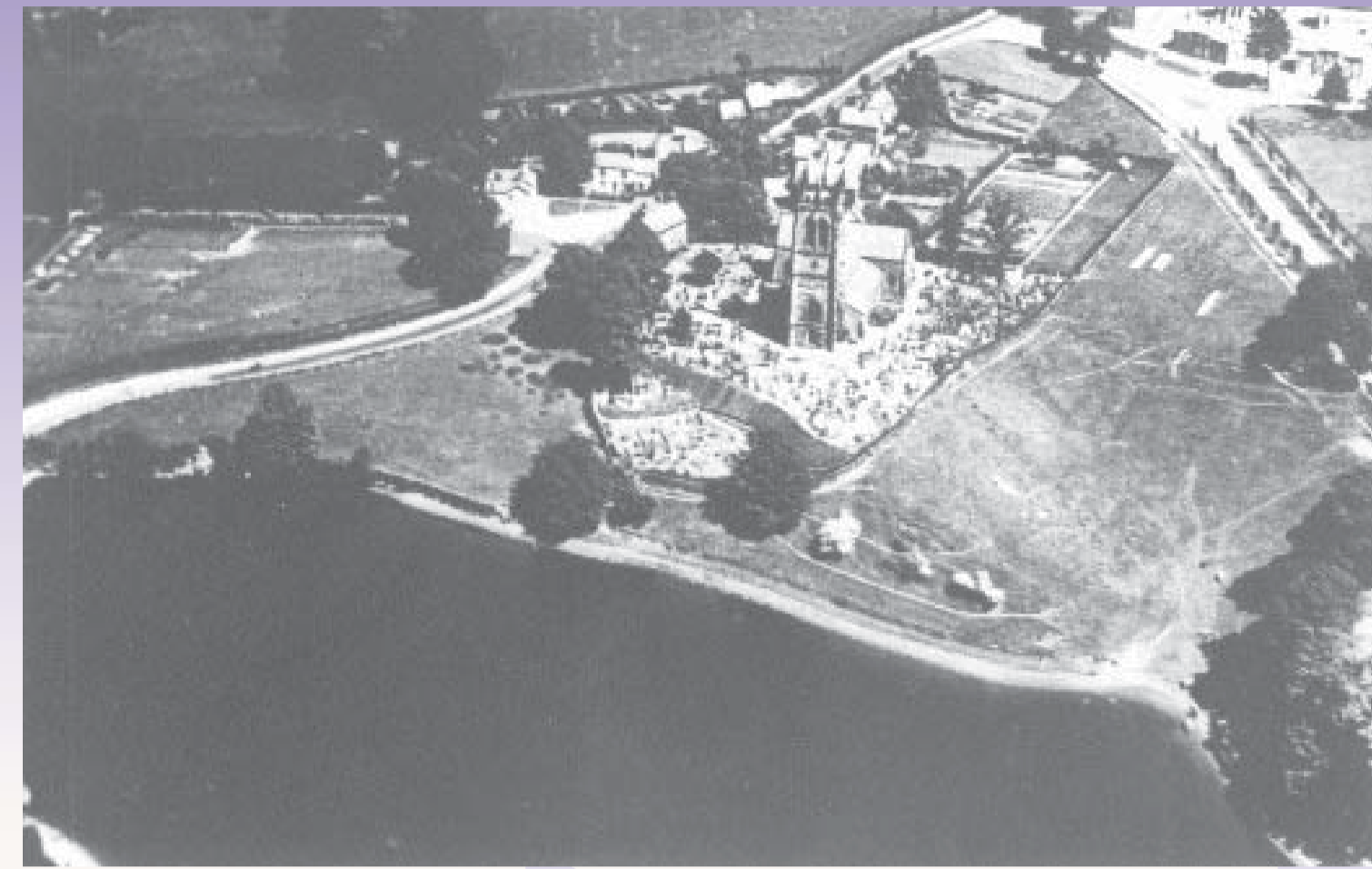
This however was as far as Lever got with his development plans, the houses were never actually built. The reason for this is not entirely clear, though one possible suggestion is the following

William Lever had developed a commercial interest in the production of salt, which was a prominent industry in early 20th century Lymm. It has been suggested that Lever's proposed development at Lymm Dam was to house his workers. Lever's advance into the salt industry aroused

* For more details of Beechwood Estate see the boards at the site entrances (Nos. 5, 6 & 8)



Heatley Saltworks – one of three plants in Lymm which produced salt of notoriously high quality. Could they be the reason behind Lever's plan ?



An aerial photograph of the area around the church in the 1920s. One of the newly constructed roads of Leverhulme's proposed model village can be seen on the right of the photograph. Contrast the height of the Lombardy poplars with their height today.

the interest of ICI who were the major force in salt production. Lever's main business interest was soap and it is thought that ICI and Lever may have struck a deal whereby ICI would stay out of the soap business if Lever stayed clear of salt. This being the case, the development at Lymm Dam never materialised.

Whatever the reason, Lever left Beechwood and the house was demolished in the 1930s. The Estate was divided and the section which is now Lymm Dam eventually passed into local authority ownership, remaining so to this day.

Crosfield Bridge and the tree-lined avenues which lead to it, are a legacy of a period of Lymm Dam's history and a reminder that the area could have looked very different today.



The poplars planted by Lord Leverhulme have become one of the Dam's most recognisable features, as shown in this watercolour by local artist Julie Scott.

What is 'The Bongs'?

This is a commonly asked question by first time visitors to Lymm Dam. The Bongs is the area of woodland behind you which stretches south of this point for half a mile. 'Bongs' is a mediaeval Cheshire dialect word (corrupted from 'le bancs') which means 'wooded banks'. The Bongs is one of only a handful of areas of semi-ancient woodland in the Borough of Warrington (the phrase 'semi ancient' means the woodland itself is older than the oldest trees in it). The wood is privately owned but a public footpath runs through it leading eventually to the A50 Warrington to Knutsford road a mile south of here.



Walkers on the bridge in the 1920s.

Bridge Repairs

Because Lever's vision was unrealised, Crosfield Bridge has never been required to carry frequent vehicular traffic and as a result has not had any maintenance work carried out to the structure. The bridge has now stood for over eighty years and has fallen into a state of considerable disrepair. The obvious deterioration which can be seen from the bridge deck runs throughout the structure.

In 2001, Warrington Borough Council commissioned an engineer's report into the full extent of the structural defects together with recommendations for reinstatement work. Funding is currently being sought to carry out this work.



Crosfield Bridge in its early days.

Lymm Heritage Trail

Lymm Heritage Trail is a self-guided trail exploring the built and natural heritage of the village. The route is based on the north/south valley which runs through the village centre (comprising Lymm Dam, the Dingle and Slitten Gorge) and two east/west routes – the Bridgewater Canal and the former Warrington to Altrincham Railway (now part of the Trans Pennine Trail).

The full route is 3 1/2 miles but the trail can be walked in shorter sections if desired. The route is waymarked and route maps can be found on each of the eleven information boards along the trail.

