

WALKING ON WATER STREET, Part 8

VANISHED STREETS: CHORLEY STREET, 1725-1925

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Vanished streets are perhaps somewhat like long-departed relatives; gone but fondly remembered through family records and a few fading black-and-white photos taken in their advancing years. Chorley Street is like that. Shown on the first contemporary map of Liverpool – Chadwick’s ‘*Mapp of all the Streets Lanes & Alleys*’ of 1725 (detail in fig. 1)¹ – it survived for two centuries, watching first the town and then the city grow all around it.



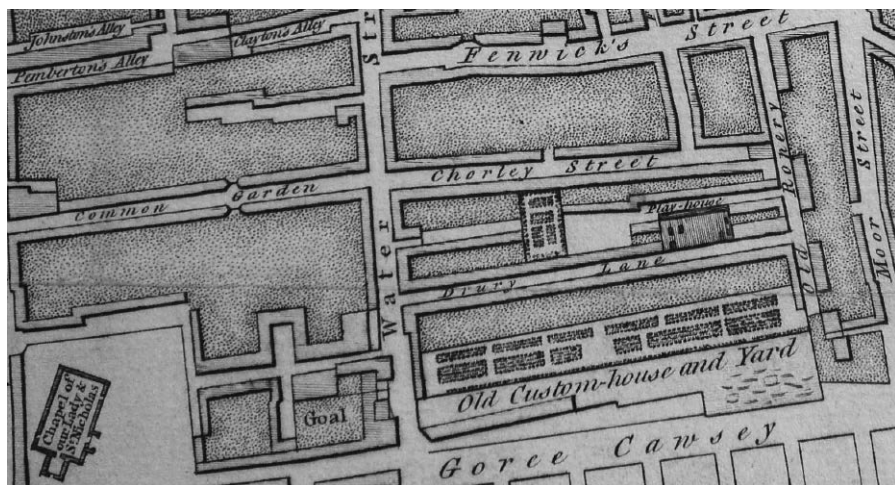
Fig. 1. Not mentioned in Queen Anne’s rate assessment of 1708, Chorley Street appears in the legend to John Chadwick’s map as ‘Entwistle [sic] Street’ (no. 27), an almost straight continuation of Covent Garden (24), and running from Water Street (26) towards Moor Street (43). Immediately above it, Fenwick Street (28) is listed as “Phenwick Street”. Later in the century, Phenwick Alley (29) would be replaced by Brunswick Street.

Increasingly the poor relative of the likes of Water Street and Castle Street, its fate was sealed by the decision to construct the 20th century India Buildings beneath which it now lies buried. But Chorley Street does have a history, albeit fragmentary, and deserves to be celebrated for what it was: a street which at different times bore the names of mayors, recorders and bailiffs (Table).

Mayors, recorders and bailiffs from the Appendix to *Gore’s Directory*.

1602-1619	Leonard Chorley	recorder
1662-1708	John Entwistle	recorder
1678	John Chorley	mayor
1706	William Squire	bailiff
1707	Henry Chorley	bailiff
1709-1722	Bertie Entwistle	recorder
1715	William Squire	mayor

John Eyes' sketch of 1753 and his map of 1765 (fig. 2)⁵ both show the street with its eventual name of Chorley, whilst George Perry's plan of 1769 is unique in marking it as '*Chorley Street or Squire's Garden*'.⁶ Indeed, the first three editions of *Gore's Directory* all refer to the street as Squire's Garden prior to its becoming Chorley Street from 1772.⁷ When John Gore, '*Bookseller near the Exchange*', published his first directory in 1766 just three names appeared: those of Thomas Eden (merchant), Henry Grimbalston (cooper) and William Hill (tide waiter).⁸



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A detailed historical map of the Castle Street area in London. The map is oriented with Castle Street running vertically along the right side. Other major streets include Brunswick Street, which runs horizontally across the middle. To the left of Brunswick Street, there are several smaller streets: Tower Garden, Commercial Buildings, and a street labeled 'GOREE' at the bottom. The map shows a dense network of streets and buildings, with some areas shaded to indicate specific features or land use. The overall layout is typical of 18th-century urban planning, with a grid-like system of streets and a mix of residential and commercial buildings.

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Gore's Directory for 1790 lists the names of 21 people who lived in Chorley Street in a total of 18 properties (some of which would also have been their places of work). They comprised an auctioneer, brewer, cooper, joiner, two shoemakers, two shopkeepers, three tailors, a tinsmith, an upholsterer, two victuallers, and – given that the street was a matter of yards from George's Dock – a mariner and no less than five pilots. A 22nd person, a merchant, was the only one listed as living elsewhere but with his premises – a counting house – in the street, and one other building was listed as the Court of Request Office. This therefore accounts for only 20 of the 38 buildings on Horwood's map and also gives no clue as to the total number of occupants or of the true extent of activity in the street.

However, a population survey, '*Taken by M Simmons, from October 13th, 1789, to January 13th, 1790*' (reproduced in the 1790 directory) provides a more complete picture. Chorley Street is listed as having 36 front houses (accommodating 254 people) and two back houses or cottages (11 people) (38 buildings in total, in good agreement with Horwood's map) plus an additional eight cellars within those buildings (29 people). The total of 294 people that were living there may be compared with the totals in the surrounding streets: 242 in Water Street, 178 in Drury Lane, 173 in Moor Street, 140 in Covent Garden and 125 in Fenwick Street. In 1790 therefore, even with the disruption caused by the arrival of Brunswick Street four years earlier, Chorley Street had maintained its historical importance.

In the 19th century, however, things would begin to change dramatically. By 1805 the number of people listed as living or working in Chorley Street had dropped to 12. In 1810 Troughton's *History of Liverpool* depicted the arrival of the first Corn Exchange in Brunswick Street (fig. 4) which had required the obliteration of the 10 Chorley Street buildings between Brunswick Street and Old Ropery. And by 1824 the list for Chorley Street in *Baines' Directory* had shrunk to nine names.

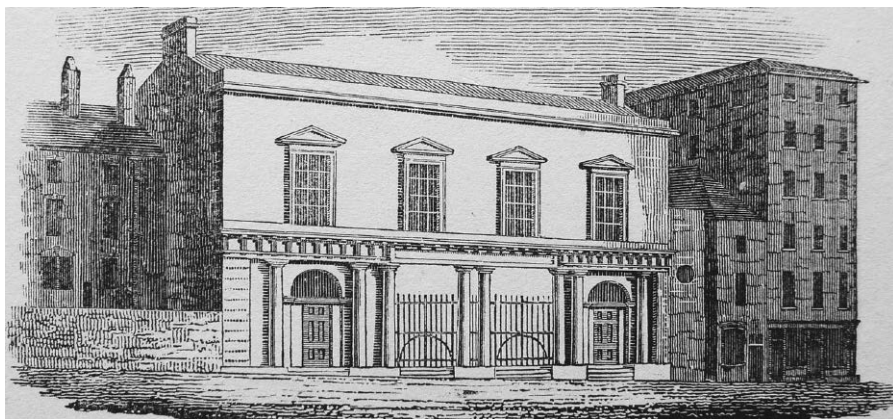


Fig. 4. From Troughton's *History of Liverpool*, 1810, showing the town's first Corn Exchange in Brunswick Street. Image courtesy of the LRO, ref. Photographs & Small Prints (P&SP): Commerce & Industry: Trades: Corn Exchange (old).

Gore's Directory for 1829 contains just seven names: the street was the residence of Elijah Airey (victualler), Ann Balmer (rabbit dealer), Ellen Davies (victualler), Robert Hunter (warehouseman) and Samuel Warburton (joiner), whilst it also contained the cooperage of William Harrison and the office of the merchant Robert Syers (both living elsewhere).

And it was Robert who, a year later and just before his retirement, published his famous '*The History of Everton*', about which James Picton would later be full of praise for its '*Boswellian minuteness of portraiture, and a naivete which is racy and amusing in the highest degree*'.⁹

Michael Alexander Gage's detailed survey of 1835 reveals the considerable redevelopment of the commercial area that had begun to take place by then (fig. 5). The street widening scheme, begun in Castle Street in 1786, had been completed in Water Street as far as the newly constructed Liverpool Union Bank, most if not all of Chorley Street's ancient dwellings had been replaced by offices and warehouses, and (the first) India Buildings had also arrived.

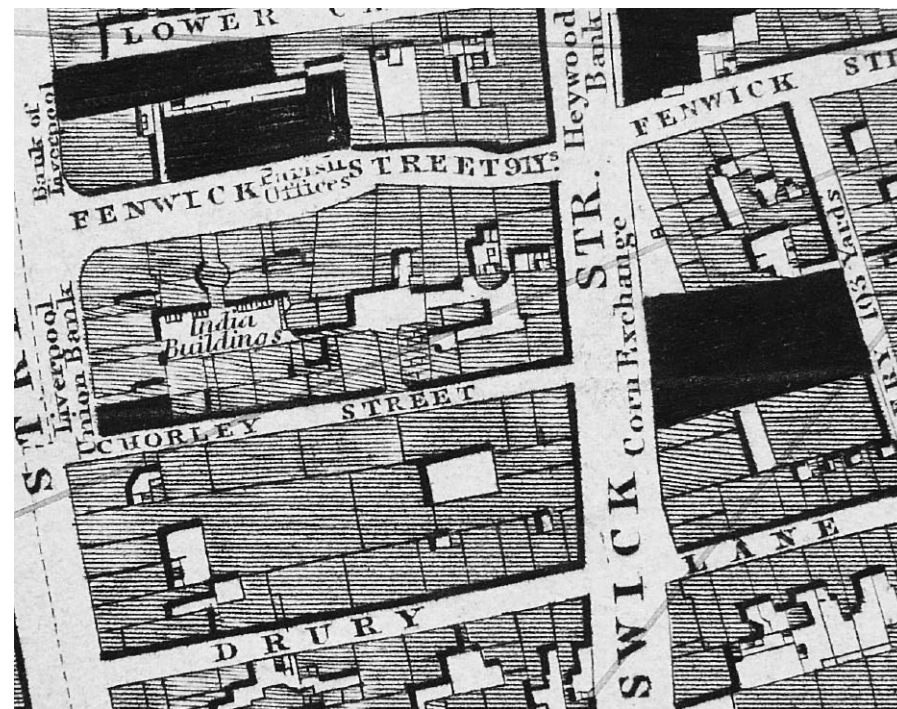


Fig. 5. From Michael Alexander Gage's plan, surveyed in 1835 and published in 1836, showing where a section of Chorley Street had been replaced by the Corn Exchange and where the dwellings in the remaining section had also been superseded by larger buildings. Private collection. The LRO copies are under ref. Hf912 1836.

It was not until 1839 that *Gore's Directory* began to provide a numerical (street by street) index in addition to the alphabetical list of names. By then, however, Chorley Street had been so transformed that it did not justify its own listing, and the 1848 O.S. provides an indication of what had taken place (fig. 6).

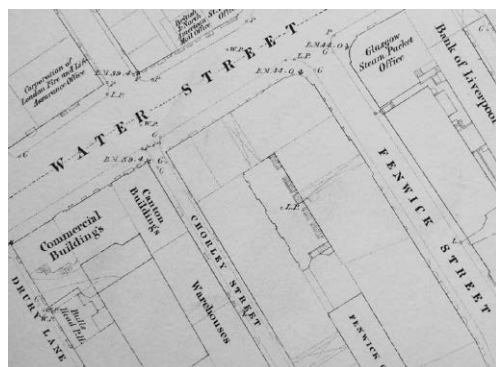


Fig. 6. A detail from the bottom edge of sheet 24 of the 1848 O.S. (correctly oriented to the north in contrast to the other maps) showing Chorley Street as having become a passageway between offices and warehouses. Image courtesy of the Athenaeum.

When *Kelly's Directories* took over publication of the directory at the end of the 19th century, it introduced a listing for Chorley Street and this shows just what little remained (fig. 7).¹⁰

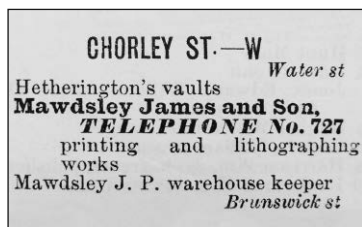


Fig. 7. The entry for Chorley Street in the directory for 1900, the third issue published by *Kelly's Directories*. Image courtesy of the Athenaeum.



Relegated to life as an alleyway for the collection and discharge of goods at warehouses, its ultimate fate had been sealed. In the next century, in a further street improvement programme, it would finally vanish. And it was not until 1923, two hundred years after its creation, that a view of the street first came to be recorded – or a view of it, whether sketch or photograph, first came to be preserved (fig. 8). It forms part of the City Engineer's immensely valuable collection at the LRO. Seen from Water Street and with the Corn Exchange visible in the distance, warehouses on either side of Chorley Street are linked by a makeshift covered bridge.

Fig. 8. 5th July 1923, the earliest known view of Chorley Street in a detail from a City Engineer's Department photograph. Image courtesy of the LRO, ref. P&SP: Streets & Districts: Chorley Street.

The photographer was standing with his back to Covent Garden, Lloyds Bank's Colonial & Foreign Department was still open for business in Canton Buildings, three women had paused for a chat outside Frank Lamb's shop, and a bread van was passing by. How many of them, other than the Engineer's Department photographer, knew what was to come so soon?

A year later and seen from Brunswick Street (fig. 9), a photograph shows Chorley Street's redundant warehouse hoists on the right whilst, on the left, wooden chutes can be seen discharging rubble into heaps. Beyond the pedestrians on Water Street, the view extends along Covent Garden to offices on Chapel Street.



Fig. 9. June 1924, a view along Chorley Street seen from Brunswick Street. Image courtesy of the LRO, ref. P&SP: Streets & Districts: Brunswick Street.



Fig. 10. June 1924, and another view of Chorley Street from the Water Street end. Image courtesy of the LRO, ref. P&SP: Streets & Districts: Chorley Street.

During that same month in 1924 a city engineer walked down from the Town Hall, stepped into Covent Garden, turned around and focused his camera again upon Chorley Street (fig. 10). Hoarding had now arrived to block the entrance and, ominously for the middle of the day, Frank Lamb's doorway had a gate across it. Lloyds had moved to India Buildings in Fenwick Street, two boys posed for the engineer, and a bowler-hatted man chatted to a street trader and glanced at the man's basket of wares. And the buildings stood empty, awaiting their fate.

Then, in 1925, the photographer J F Smith captured the final obliteration of Chorley Street in a view which would have reduced two centuries of its ghosts to tears (fig. 11). On the left the foundations were being laid for the western section of ‘Holt’s Buildings’ (the second India Buildings) and, standing silently in the background, Oriel Chambers had watched Canton Buildings vanishing and was wondering which other of its neighbours would go next.



Fig. 11. Left: 24th March 1925, and a dramatic image by the photographer J F Smith captures the final disappearance of Chorley Street. Image courtesy of the LRO, ref. P&SP: Commerce & Industry: Firms: India Buildings.

Fig. 12. Below: In 1927 and viewed from the Water Street / Rumford Street junction, the new and half-completed second India Buildings towers over the old one. Image courtesy of Liverpool University Press.



Two years later in a remarkable photograph (fig. 12), subsequently reproduced in *Blue Funnel* by Francis Hyde,¹¹ two India Buildings – both the old and the partially completed new – stand alongside each other. A reminder of Chorley Street is marked by the break in the pavement prior to the demolition of the old India Buildings and, with it, the completion of another section of street widening.

Chorley Street thus disappeared from maps (fig. 13) and before the end of the 20th century, with the ‘Commercial Quarter’ having moved a few hundred yards northwards into St Paul’s Square taking with it several important businesses, the Water Street area had become a ghost town, and India Buildings – together with many of its once busy neighbours – was struggling to remain viable.



Fig. 13. From a 1930s Bartholomew’s map of the city centre marking Holt’s Buildings and the Corn Exchange – memories of where Chorley Street once ran. Image courtesy of Harper Collins.

Then, in 2012, the *Liverpool Post* reported that ‘The future of one of Liverpool’s most famous buildings appears in crisis, with tenants fearing eviction and its owner cautioned by the council for illegally removing its eight bronze entrance plaques’.¹² Liverpool’s planning conservation officer issued a caution to the owner, and with the developer’s threat to close Holt’s Arcade and convert it into offices – an arcade which, as the successor to Chorley Street, was considered a right of way between Water Street and Brunswick Street – two of the arcade’s shopkeepers launched an SOS campaign.¹³ At the time of writing things remain uncertain for this once vibrant arcade (fig. 14), but the owners of the antique shop, barbers and newsagents that have survived are “just hanging on”.

Fig. 14. December 2014. Christmas in 21st century Chorley Street, looking towards the Water Street entrance and with many of the Holt’s Arcade shops standing sadly empty. Author’s photograph.

The eventual sweeping away of Chorley Street was an inevitable consequence of commercial growth. The Entwistles, the Chorleys, and the Squires had given it their names and dignity at a time in Liverpool’s history when most eyes were perhaps focused on the hoped-for success of the first dock. However, thanks to John Gore and his initiative in producing a Liverpool directory, it is not only their names that can be remembered, but also those of a variety of the townsfolk who arrived and departed through two centuries of growth and decline. If there are ghosts that inhabit the travertine marble arcade – perhaps including Ann Balmer’s rabbits – maybe they will ensure that a memory of Chorley Street lives on.



References and notes

¹ Chadwick's map, of which there is an original at the Liverpool Record Office (as used here, ref. Hf 912 1725), has many copies, a good quality version being in *Pictures from the Post*, Daily Post & Echo, 1946 (LRO ref. 942.7214 LIV, 1946). Most early maps of Liverpool, even after the 1848 O.S., are oriented towards the east.

² James Stonehouse, *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* (THSLC), 1852-53, vol. 5, p. 193 (LRO ref. 942.7206 HIS). Stonehouse mistakenly suggested that Entwistle Street was the original name for Drury Lane, a misunderstanding which has been repeated in some subsequent histories despite James Picton's correction (*Memorials of Liverpool*, 2nd edn., 1875, vol. II, pp. 90-91) that 'Chorley Street was originally called Entwistle Street; afterwards Squire's Garden,' and that Drury Lane was a new street laid out in the late 1840s.

³ Henry Peet, *THSLC*, 1930, vol. 82, p. 230.

⁴ *A List of the Streets, Lanes, Squares, Alleys, &c. in the Town of Liverpool, in 1752*, tabulated in *Gore's Directory*, 1805, pp. 109-111. This was the first directory published by Johnson Gore, his father having died in 1803.

⁵ Eyes' 1753 sketch: LRO ref. *Binns collection*, vol. 9, Hf 942.7204. 1765 map: Hf 912 1765.

⁶ LRO ref. Hf 912 1769. The LRO also has six documents (part of a collection under ref. 354 EVE/5) dated 1716 and signed by William Squire whilst mayor.

⁷ A possible explanation for the eventual decision to settle on the name Chorley Street was perhaps in memory of the fact that 'A Seamen's Hospital for aged sailors and their families was established in 1752, drawing upon a legacy for this purpose left by John Chorley.' Noted by Jane Longmore in *Liverpool 800* (ed. John Belchem), Liverpool University Press, 2006, p. 151.

⁸ G T Shaw, *THSLC*, 1906, vol. 58, pp. 113-162. Shaw remarked that the number of houses in Liverpool in 1766 was estimated at 6000 and yet the directory contained only 1134 names, and wondered on what basis John Gore had made his selection. 'On the title-page the directory is described as 'an alphabetical list of the merchants, tradesmen, and principal inhabitants.' What was the 'hall-mark' of respectability on those included?' The three residents in Chorley Street in 1766 may be compared with the 42 (mainly merchants and traders) in Water Street.

⁹ James Picton, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

¹⁰ James Mawdsley & Son had taken over publication of *Gore's Directory* earlier in the century and had retained the Gore's name. 1897 was their final year as publishers, using their printing and lithographing works in Chorley Street. It then passed into the hands of *Kelly's Directories* who likewise retained the Gore's name for several years. The penultimate entry for Chorley Street in 1922 was for *Oriental Import Co. fine art dealers*, and the final entry in 1923 was for *Alfred Holt & Co. (stewards' dept)*. Both were on the west side of the street and were therefore in the first buildings to be demolished (the left hand side of fig. 11). *The Liverpool Review*, 26 January 1889, p. 4, carried a fascinating account of Mawdsley's production process in an article entitled, *How a Directory is Made. 200 Liverpoolians at the Game*. It is available on microfilm at Liverpool Central Library.

¹¹ Francis E Hyde, *Blue Funnel*, Liverpool University Press, 1st edn., 1956.

¹² Peter Elson's article in *The Liverpool Post*, 22 November 2012, p. 7.

¹³ See, for example, the article in *Private Eye*, 14 December 2012, p. 11.