

Lancaster Civic Vision

Celebrating our Heritage – Enhancing our Environment – Shaping our Future

GOLGOTHA, LANCASTER

Lancaster Civic Vision Guide 93

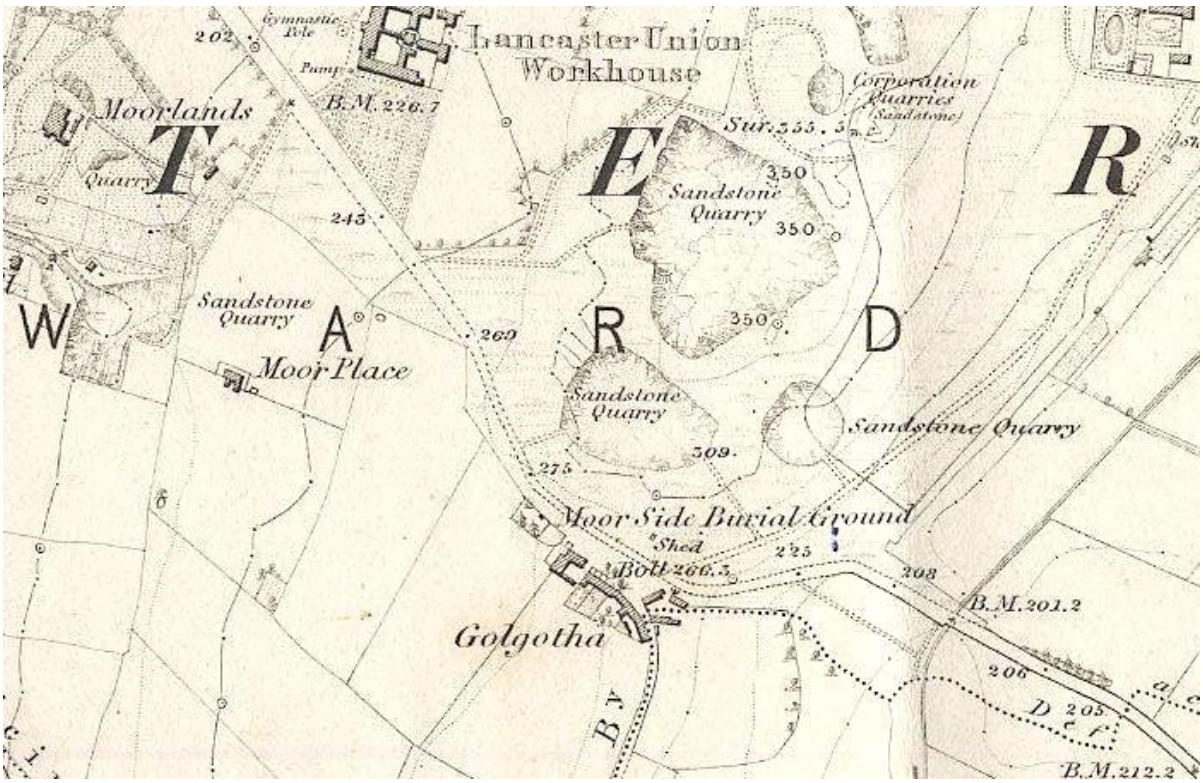
Golgotha is an unexpected name for a small part of east Lancaster. In the Bible Golgotha was literally 'The Place of the Skull' (technically, the cranium) where Jesus Christ was crucified. 'Calvary' has the same meaning, derived from the Latin. Golgotha was outside the old walls of Jerusalem, possibly where the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is now. However, the exact location of Golgotha is debated. Traditionally, though not in the Gospels, Golgotha / Calvary is envisaged as being on the top of a hill.

Which brings us to Golgotha in Lancaster. A credible local association with death might be the Quaker burial ground opened in 1660 next to the current houses of Golgotha. Quakers at that time could not be, or might not wish to be, buried in consecrated (church) grounds and so they needed their own burial place away from the town. It has long ceased this role: burials later took place in the grounds of the Friends Meeting House.

Another possible link is the site of the executions by hanging that took place in public in Lancaster up to 1800, after which they were carried out within the Castle. Being the Assizes town for Lancashire there were many hangings in Lancaster. The location was on Lancaster Moor, overlooking the town but clearly outside it. The exact location may have varied but it has been suggested that it was along Quernmore Road near Highfield or the northern entrance to Williamson Park. The origin of the Golgotha place-name remains speculative and intriguing.

The historical evidence for Lancaster's Golgotha starts with its oldest building, No. 1 Wyresdale Road which dates from the late 17th century, c.1685. No. 2 is early 18th century. When Yates mapped the county in 1788 there was not much to show. The other early maps of the town of Lancaster do not cover this area. The other old houses in Golgotha (Nos 3 to 10 Wyresdale Road) were built around 1800. All are Grade II listed.

The Ordnance Survey 6-inch map of 1844/45 shows not only this row of old houses but also some to the east on the other side of the road.



Golgotha in 1844 (Source: Ordnance Survey 6-inch map surveyed in 1844–5)

The 6-inch Ordnance Survey map of 1890/91 (below) shows more houses in both parts of Golgotha.



Golgotha as shown on the Ordnance Survey 6-inch map of 1890/91

The photograph (below), taken soon after 1903, shows the houses of Golgotha. The group on the left has been demolished to improve the junction of Coulston Road and Wyresdale Road. Note the tram lines.



Postcard (?) of Golgotha soon after 1903. (Source: Sparks J 2013 *Lancaster Through Time*. Stroud: Amberley Publishing. Also, Lancaster City Museum Facebook website, 2 July 2020. Both gratefully acknowledged)



Almost the same view of Golgotha in 2021 (Source: Author)

Some of those who lived in the cottages might have worked in the stone quarries where Williamson Park is now.

We do know that in the 1851 Population Census 12 laundresses lived in Golgotha and, by the 1881 Census, 20 of the 22 houses were occupied by laundresses, often mother and daughter or niece, and mostly born in or near Lancaster.

Golgotha is windy spot, with space to spread out the drying clothes. It is near enough Lancaster to offer a collect-and-return laundry service, but far enough away to minimise thieving of clothes.

All the remaining houses have sizeable outhouses behind them, originally with chimneys, which is where the laundry work took place. The outhouses are also Grade II listed buildings.

By the 1880s commercial laundry shops were being set up in British towns, Lancaster's first being in 1888. They could offer a more convenient service, undercutting the laundresses of Golgotha.

Moorside (Hall) house, shown on the OS maps, is now a care home.

Other guides of interest in this series include:
35 Four Parks in Lancaster and Morecambe
55 The Ashton Memorial, Lancaster

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