

= Widnes =

Widnes is an industrial town in the unitary authority of Halton and the ceremonial county of Cheshire in Northwest England . In 2011 it had a population of 60 @, @ 221 . Historically in Lancashire , it is on the northern bank of the River Mersey where the estuary narrows to form the Runcorn Gap . Directly to the south across the Mersey is the town of Runcorn . Upstream and 8 miles ( 13 km ) to the east is the town of Warrington , and downstream to the west is Speke , part of the city of Liverpool .

Before the Industrial Revolution Widnes was made up of small settlements on marsh and moorland . In 1847 , the first chemical factory was established and the town rapidly became a major centre of the chemical industry . The demand for labour was met by large @-@ scale immigration from Ireland , Poland , Lithuania and Wales . The town continues to be a major manufacturer of chemicals .

Widnes and Hough Green railway stations are on the Liverpool to Manchester line . The main roads through the town are the A557 in a north ? south direction and the A562 east ? west . The disused Sankey Canal terminates in an area known as Spike Island .

= = History = =

= = = Toponymy = = =

The most usual explanation for the origin of the name Widnes is that it comes from the Danish words vid , meaning wide , and noese , meaning nose and that it refers to the promontory projecting into the River Mersey . However , the Widnes promontory is not particularly wide and another possible explanation is the first part derives from the Danish ved , meaning a wood and possibly referring to a tree @-@ covered promontory . Earlier spellings of the name have been Vidnes , Wydnes and Wydness .

= = = Early history = = =

There is little evidence of any early human occupation of the area although a flint arrowhead was discovered at Pex Hill , suggesting there was some human presence in the Stone Age . Pex Hill is a disused quarry , located to the north of the town . Roman roads by @-@ passed the area but some Roman coins were found where the Ditton railway station stands today . In the 9th century Vikings had invaded the country and Widnes was at the extreme south of the Danelaw . The River Mersey derives its name from the Anglo @-@ Saxon maeres ea , which means boundary river , the boundary being that between the Danelaw and the Saxon kingdom of Mercia . At the beginning of the 20th century it was believed that some earthworks on Cuerdley Marsh had been constructed by the Vikings but an archaeological investigation in the 1930s found nothing to confirm this .

Following the Norman conquest , William the Conqueror granted the Earldom of Lancaster to Roger de Poitou who in turn granted the barony of Widnes to Yorfrid . Yorfrid had no sons and his elder daughter married William FitzNigel , the second Baron of Halton . On Yorfrid 's death the barony of Widnes passed to that of Halton . The current St. Luke 's , a Norman church , was built in Farnworth . Its date of origin is uncertain but it is likely to be around 1180 . In 1500 the South Chapel was added to the church and in 1507 a grammar school was established in Farnworth ; both were endowments from Bishop William Smyth . Until the middle of the 19th century the area consisted of the scattered hamlets of Farnworth , Appleton , Ditton , Upton and Woodend . Nearby were the villages of Cronton and Cuerdley .

In the 1750s the Sankey Canal was constructed . This linked the area of St Helens with the River Mersey at Sankey Bridges , near Warrington and was in operation by 1757 . It was extended to Fiddler 's Ferry in 1762 and then in 1833 a further extension to Woodend was opened . In the same year the St Helens and Runcorn Gap Railway was opened . The railway connected St Helens with

an area in Woodend which was to become known as Spike Island . The termini of the canal and railway were adjacent and here Widnes Dock , the world 's first railway dock , was established . Despite these transport links and the emergence of the chemical industry at nearby Runcorn and elsewhere in the Mersey Valley , the Industrial Revolution did not arrive at Widnes until 14 years later , with the arrival at Spike Island of John Hutchinson .

= = = Coming of the chemical industry = = =

John Hutchinson built his first factory in 1847 on land between the Sankey Canal and the railway making alkali by the Leblanc process . This was an ideal site for the factory because all the raw materials could be transported there by the waterways and railway , and the finished products could similarly be transported anywhere else in the country or overseas . Further chemical factories were soon built nearby by entrepreneurs including John McClelland , William Gossage , Frederic Muspratt , Holbrook Gaskell and Henry Deacon . The town grew rapidly as housing and social provision was made for the factory workers . Soon the villages of Farnworth , Appleton , Ditton and Upton were subsumed within the developing town of Widnes . Woodend became known as West Bank . The substances produced included soap , borax , soda ash , salt cake and bleaching powder . Other industries developed including iron and copper works . The town became heavily polluted with smoke and the by @-@ products of the chemical processes . In 1888 the town was described as " the dirtiest , ugliest and most depressing town in England " and in 1905 as a " poisonous hell @-@ town " .

Their especial ugliness is , however , never more marked than when the spring is making beautiful every nook and corner of England , for the spring never comes hither . It never comes because , neither at Widnes nor St. Helens , is there any place in which it can manifest itself . The foul gases which , belched forth night and day from the many factories , rot the clothes , the teeth , and , in the end , the bodies of the workers , have killed every tree and every blade of grass for miles around .

The demand for workers meant that , in addition to people from other areas of the United Kingdom , large numbers of workers came from other countries . Initially these were Irish but from the late 1880s significant numbers arrived from Poland and Lithuania who were fleeing from persecution and poverty in their home countries . Immigrants also came from other areas , in particular Wales . In 1890 the chemical companies making alkali by the Leblanc process combined to form the United Alkali Company , later one of the constituent companies of ICI . This involved practically all of the chemical industries in Widnes , which was considered to be the principal centre of the new company . However , during the 1890s the chemical business in Widnes went into decline as more efficient methods of making alkali were developed elsewhere .

= = = Recent history = = =

During the early decades of the 20th century there was a revival in the local economy , particularly as the United Alkali Company began to manufacture new products . Improvements were being made to the structure of the town , in particular the opening of the Widnes ? Runcorn Transporter Bridge in 1905 which gave the first direct link over the Mersey for road traffic . In 1909 the town became the first in Britain to have a regular covered @-@ top double @-@ decker bus service .

By 1919 the health of the residents of the town was improving . In the 1920s and 1930s there was further diversification of the chemical industry and the products it manufactured . Slums were being replaced by more and better homes . After the Second World War more slums were cleared and there was ongoing growth and variation in the chemical industry . By the 1950s the town had 45 major chemical factories .

In 1961 the Silver Jubilee Bridge replaced the outdated Transporter Bridge and in recent years many of the old heavy chemical factories have closed to be replaced by more modern factories . Much of the land previously polluted by the old dirty chemical processes has been reclaimed , and there have been improvements in the cleanliness and environment of the town .

## = = Governance = =

From Saxon times Widnes was part of the hundred of West Derby in Lancashire . Modern local government in the town of Widnes commenced with the creation of the Widnes Local Board in 1865 , prior to which the town had been part of the administrative district of Prescott . In 1892 the town received a Charter of Incorporation giving it borough status . In 1974 , as part of the Local Government Act 1972 , Widnes Borough Council was abolished and its territory amalgamated with Runcorn to form the borough of Halton . This became a district of Cheshire , the outcome of local representation to avoid becoming part of the proposed metropolitan county of Merseyside . In 1998 the borough of Halton became a unitary authority . However , in 2009 the council entered into an agreement with the five metropolitan district councils of Merseyside to form the Liverpool City Region , in effect reversing its opposition to integration in the 1970s ; its unitary status is similar to that of the metropolitan boroughs .

In 1885 Widnes became a parliamentary constituency and elected its first Member of Parliament . The UK parliamentary constituency is Halton and the current Member of Parliament is Derek Twigg . The local authority is the borough of Halton and the town is divided into nine electoral wards . For elections to the European Parliament , Widnes lies in the North West England constituency .

## = = Geography = =

Widnes is situated on the north bank of the River Mersey . The whole town is low @-@ lying with some slightly higher areas in Farnworth and Appleton . To the south of the town a spur projecting into the river forms the West Bank area of Widnes ; together with a spur projecting northwards from Runcorn these form Runcorn Gap , a narrowing of the River Mersey . Runcorn Gap is crossed by Runcorn Railway Bridge , carrying the Liverpool branch of the West Coast Main Line , and the Silver Jubilee Bridge , carrying the A533 road which then curves in a westerly direction towards Liverpool becoming the A562 . The density of housing is generally high but there are some open green areas , including Victoria Park in Appleton and two golf courses which are geographically near the centre of the urban development . Most of the chemical and other factories are close to the north bank of the River Mersey . A second crossing of the Mersey is planned , to be known as the Mersey Gateway .

Drainage of the Widnes area is into the Mersey via Ditton , Steward 's and Bower 's Brooks . The bedrock of the area is rock from the Sherwood sandstone group . There are a few outcrops of sandstone but elsewhere the bedrock is covered by drift . Most of this consists of till except near the bank of the Mersey where it is recent alluvium . Large areas are also covered by industrial waste .

When borings were made in the 1870s prior to the building of chemical works a deep gorge measuring around 100 feet ( 30 m ) was found in the bedrock which was filled with glacial deposits . From this it was concluded that before the Ice Age the Mersey had flowed in a more northerly course , and when it was blocked by glacial deposits it had made a new channel through Runcorn Gap .

Being close to the west coast and the Irish Sea , the climate is generally temperate with few extremes of temperature or weather . The mean average temperature in the years 1971 to 2000 was 9 @. @ 4 to 9 @. @ 7 ° C , which was slightly above the average for the United Kingdom as was the average amount of annual sunshine at 1391 to 1470 hours . The average annual rainfall was 741 to 870 mm , which was slightly below the average for the UK . The average number of days in the year when snow is on the ground is 0 to 6 , which is low for the United Kingdom . The average number of days of air frost is 2 to 39 , which is also low .

## = = Demography = =

Since the borough of Halton became a unitary authority in 1998 , which resulted in its having one level of local government , demographic statistics have been collated for the authority as a whole , rather than separately for the towns of Runcorn and Widnes . While the two towns have different histories and come from different historic counties , their demographic features are similar .

The estimated population of Halton in 2010 was 119 @, @ 300 . The change in population during the 20th century is shown in the following table .

In 2003 Halton had the largest proportion of the population in Cheshire in the age groups under 5 , 5 to 15 and 16 to pension age and , at 16 @. @ 1 % the lowest proportion of people at pension age or older . At 1 @. @ 2 % the proportion of non @-@ white ethnic groups in 2001 equalled the lowest in all local authorities in Cheshire . At 11 @. @ 5 per 1 @, @ 000 population , the live birth rate in Halton and Warrington , is the highest in the county . At 121 the standardised mortality ratio and at 21 @. @ 5 % the percentage of persons with limiting long @-@ term illness are considerably the highest in Cheshire .

There has been an increase in the number of households from 47 @, @ 214 in 1991 to 52 @, @ 501 in 2006 . The average household size has reduced from 2 @. @ 70 in 1991 to 2 @. @ 44 in 2001 . 89 @. @ 8 % of houses had central heating in 2001 compared with 75 @. @ 8 % in 2001 . The type of housing has also changed with an increase from 15 @. @ 5 % to 19 @. @ 2 % in detached houses from 1991 to 2001 , an increase over the same years in semi @-@ detached houses from 30 @. @ 0 % to 33 @. @ 0 % and a corresponding decrease in terraced houses from 44 @. @ 0 % to 37 @. @ 5 % . The percentage of dwellings in council tax bands A @-@ B is , at 69 % the highest in any Cheshire local authority while the percentages in bands E @-@ F ( 8 % ) and G @-@ H ( 1 % ) are the lowest .

= = Economy = =

Widnes continues to be an industrial town and its major industry is still the manufacture of chemicals although there has been some diversification in recent years . In 2006 a new freight park , known as the 3MG Mersey Multimodal Gateway , was opened in the West Bank area of the town . This provides a link for freight arriving by road , air or sea to be transferred to the rail network . It is expected to create up to 5 @, @ 000 new jobs . In 2010 the first phase of Stobart Park , a " multimodal logistics service for warehousing and distribution " , and part of the Stobart Group , was opened . This consists of a 520 @, @ 000 square feet ( 48 @, @ 000 m2 ) refrigerated warehouse for Tesco .

In 2014 work began on the new Mersey Gateway bridge and will be complete in 2017 , the project is to build a new six lane toll bridge over the River Mersey between the towns of Runcorn and Widnes that will relieve the congested and aging Silver Jubilee Bridge . It is foreseen that the new route will become a major strategic transport route linking the Liverpool city @-@ region and the north west to the rest of the country and will also support sustained growth at Liverpool Ports and Liverpool John Lennon Airport and improve business productivity throughout the Mersey corridor .

There has been considerable development of shopping areas in the town . The Greenoaks Centre , a mall which was opened in 1995 is adjacent to the long @-@ established Widnes Market which has both a market hall and an open market . Also adjacent is a Morrisons supermarket . In the Simms Cross area an Asda supermarket opened in 2004 . A new shopping development , known as Widnes Shopping Park , opened on 18 March 2010 , the flagship store being a Marks and Spencer shop . Other businesses involved in the development are Next , New Look , Boots , River Island and British Home Stores . The Outfit out @-@ of @-@ town chain outlet incorporates fashion brands , including Dorothy Perkins , Miss Selfridge , Topman , Wallis and Burton . Other businesses included in the development are Wilkinson , Costa Coffee , Halfords , Gala Bingo and KFC .

In Autumn 2011 construction began of a Tesco Extra 24 @-@ hour store . The glass fronted 120 @, @ 000 sq ft store has been built on the old B & Q site next to Ashley Way and was opened in March 2012 . The store was built on stilts allowing a car park to be built underneath the store for around 600 cars .

= = Landmarks = =

As a town with a relatively short history , Widnes has few historical sites . However , reclamation of chemical factory sites and areas formerly polluted with chemical waste has given opportunities for

developments . These include Victoria Promenade at West Bank , alongside the River Mersey , and Spike Island , now cleared of industry , which forms an open recreation area leading to footpaths along the former towpath of the Sankey Canal . Adjacent to Spike Island occupying John Hutchinson 's former Tower Building is the Catalyst Science Discovery Centre .

Much of the architecture of the town is undistinguished but there are a number of listed buildings , many of them in the more outlying areas but some are scattered throughout the town . The listed churches are the Anglican churches of St Luke 's , Farnworth ( and its adjacent bridewell ) , and St Mary 's , West Bank , the Roman Catholic churches of St Michael 's , St Marie 's and St Bede 's , and the two chapels in the cemetery . The railway stations of Widnes North and Hough Green are listed , as are the former town hall and the former power house of the transporter bridge .

#### = = Transport = =

Widnes is on the southern route of the Liverpool to Manchester railway line . There are two stations , Hough Green and Widnes from which services are operated by Northern Rail and East Midlands Trains . Northern Rail operate frequent services to Liverpool and Manchester city centre from Hough Green and Widnes . East Midlands Trains link Widnes station at hourly intervals throughout the day to Liverpool , Manchester , Stockport , Sheffield , Nottingham and Norwich .

However passengers to and from London , the Midlands and the South are likely to use Runcorn station and make the short journey across the Silver Jubilee Bridge by bus or taxi .

The two main bus operators providing local services are Halton Transport and Arriva .

The A562 road passes through Widnes linking Liverpool to the west with Penketh to the east . The A557 road passes though the town linking Runcorn to the south , via the Silver Jubilee Bridge , with the M62 motorway , some 2 @. @ 5 miles ( 4 km ) to the north .

Widnes is 6 miles ( 10 km ) from Liverpool John Lennon Airport and 25 miles ( 40 km ) from Manchester Airport .

#### = = Education = =

There are nineteen primary schools in the town and three nursery schools . The three secondary schools are Saints Peter & Paul Catholic College , Ormiston Chadwick Academy and Wade Deacon High School . The former colleges , Halton College and Widnes and Runcorn Sixth Form College , merged in 2006 to form Riverside College . There are three special schools . Also in Widnes is the Woodview Child Development Centre in Crow Wood Lane . Kingsway Learning Centre offers opportunities for Adult Learning , Basic Skills and Skills for Success .

As part of the Building Schools for the Future programme , Fairfield High School closed down in 2010 and merged with Wade Deacon High School . The school was founded in 1507 as Farnworth Grammar School by Bishop William Smyth and a school has been on the site since the 16th century . In the 1960s two separate @-@ sex secondary schools amalgamated and the school took the title Fairfield High School from 1974 up until its closure . When it closed in August 2010 , the schools pupils were transferred to Wade Deacon High School , though still operating from the same site , this continued until March 2013 when Wade Deacon High School 's new build was completed . Demolition of the school began in August 2013 and was completed by the end of 2013 , the site will be developed into a housing estate and a cemetery .

#### = = Religion = =

The 2001 census showed that of the people living in the borough of Halton , 83 @. @ 8 % declared themselves to be Christian , 8 @. @ 7 % stated that they had " no religion " and for 7 @. @ 0 % their religion was not stated . Those declaring other religions ( Buddhism , Hinduism , Jewish , Islam , Sikh and " other religions " ) amounted to 0 @. @ 5 % .

The Anglican churches are administered by the Diocese of Liverpool . The longest established church is St Luke 's , Farnworth . The other Anglican churches are St Mary 's in West Bank , St Paul

's in Victoria Square , St John 's in Greenway Road and St Ambrose in Halton View Road . The Anglicans share the building of St Michael 's in Ditchfield Road with Hough Green Methodist Church . The Anglicans also share the building of All Saints in Hough Green Road with the Catholic Church of St Basil 's .

The Roman Catholic churches in Widnes are part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool . There are eight churches in Widnes , namely St Bede 's in Appleton , Our Lady of Perpetual Succour in Mayfield Avenue , St John Fisher in Moorfield Road , St Marie 's in Lugsdale Road , St Michael 's in St Michael 's Road , St Pius X in Sefton Avenue and St Raphael 's in Liverpool Road . Owing to a shortage of Catholic Priests and the " Leaving Safe Harbours " project in effect throughout the Archdiocese St Marie 's was closed , the last Mass was celebrated on 6 January 2007 . The church is a listed building , but it has been placed on the Buildings at Risk list by the campaign group Save Britain 's Heritage and was identified by The Victorian Society on their 2008 annual list as being one of the ten most endangered Victorian buildings in Britain .

Trinity Methodist Church is in Peelhouse Lane and there are Methodist churches in Farnworth and Halebank . There is a Baptist church in Deacon Road and Evangelical Christian churches at The Foundry in Lugsdale Road and in Ditton . The Jehovah 's Witnesses have a Kingdom Hall in Moorfield Road and The Widnes National Spiritualist Church is in Lacey Street .

= = Sports = =

The major sporting body in the town is Widnes Vikings Rugby League Football Club . Cup kings of the 1970s and 1980s , they were World Club Champions in 1989 , after defeating Australian side Canberra Raiders at Old Trafford . More recently , they were winners of the Northern Rail Cup in 2007 and 2009 . Their home ground is Select Security Stadium in Lowerhouse Lane , which is owned and run by Halton Borough Council . In addition to being a sporting ground it has facilities for conferences and banqueting . In October 2007 the club was defeated in the National League One Grand Final . Following this , and because of the club 's financial situation , its board decided to put it into administration . It was subsequently purchased by Steve O 'Connor , a local businessman . Stobart Stadium Halton was also the temporary home of St Helens RLFC , they were using the stadium for the 2011 season while their new stadium - Langtree Park - in St Helens was completed .

In Heath Road is a rugby union club , Widnes Rugby Union Football Club ( otherwise known as " the wids " ) , an amateur sports club which is managed and administered by volunteers . The players are all club members and pay subscriptions . The club welcomes and encourages the development of rugby within all sections of the local community by promoting links with local schools , local authorities and the Rugby Football Union constituency body .

Widnes Cricket Club ( WA8 9LA ) was founded in 1865 and have its ground in Beaconsfield Road . Moorfield Sports & Social Club in Moorfield Road hosts sports including Football , rugby league , cricket and bowls . In Highfield Road is a private golf club .

Widnes Tennis Academy is located on Highfield Rd , WA8 7DW , sharing an entrance with St Peter and Pauls School . This is a privately operated facility consisting of 3 in @-@ door courts , six floodlit outside courts and a gym . It is a Beacon facility and has many links with schools , the local authority and the LTA to promote and develop tennis in the area . It is the home of Lane Tennis Club ( Est 1876 ) which has a number of men 's , women 's and junior teams playing competitively in the Warrington District League . Other sports facilities are available .

In March 2012 it was announced that a new football club Widnes Vikings F.C. had been formed , after the club formerly known as Widnes Dragons joined the Vikings Sports Brand . The club currently plays in the North West Counties Football League . In June 2014 , the club became known as Widnes Football Club , after distancing themselves from the Vikings brand .

Since May 2013 there has been an Ice Hockey club Widnes Wild based at the Silver Blades ice rink which plays in the English National Hockey League Laidler Conference .

= = Culture = =

The Queens Hall opened in 1957 , it was originally Victoria Road Wesleyan Methodist Chapel . It was in use as a theatre and concert hall until the opening of The Brindley in Runcorn in 2004 . The Queens Hall was demolished ( December 2011 ? February 2012 ) . Adjacent to the hall , in Lacey Street , is the Queen 's Hall Studio , originally built as a Sunday School in 1879 . It was a venue for music and live performance but closed in 2004 . After years of campaigning by the volunteer group Loose , and with the support of the Community Assets Fund / Big Lottery Fund and WREN and other donors , it re @-@ opened on 17 April 2010 .

There is a tradition that the song Homeward Bound was written by Paul Simon at a Widnes station . A quote from Paul Simon reads as follows : " If you know Widnes , then you 'll understand how I was desperately trying to get back to London as quickly as possible . Homeward Bound came out of that feeling . " Also , the song " Stars of Track and Field " by Scottish indie rock band Belle and Sebastian , from the album If You 're Feeling Sinister makes reference to the town of Widnes in the lyrics , as does the song " Watch Your Step " by Elvis Costello from his album Trust .

= = Community facilities = =

The main library in Victoria Square has been refurbished . In addition to the normal services provided by a library , this library holds a large collection of material relating to railways . There is a branch library in the Ditton area of the town .

The Queens Hall Studio , now known as the Studio , is in Lacey Street and is a community venue . Live music and theatre events take place , and the ACCESS ALL AREAS project is based there for young people interested in music and associated creative activities , funded by the Big Lottery Fund .

Victoria Park is in the Appleton area of the town and has a number of attractions , including a cafeteria and refreshment kiosk , a bandstand , model boating lake , tennis and basketball courts , bowling greens , a skateboarding facility , glasshouses with a pets ' corner and a butterfly house . Hough Green Park is in the Ditton area of the town . Crow Wood Park is in the eastern part of Widnes and Sunnybank is a large area of open ground also in the eastern part of the town . There are a number of nature reserves . Pickerings Pasture is an area of wildflower meadows overlooking the River Mersey which was built on the site of a former household and industrial landfill . The other nature reserves in the town are Clinton Wood and Hale Road Woodlands .

Kingsway Leisure Centre , Places for People , has a swimming pool and a gym in addition to a sports hall . There are a number of football , cricket and rugby league clubs in the town . St Michael 's Golf Course was a municipal golf course which was built on reclaimed industrial waste land but high levels of arsenic have been found in the soil and at present it is closed . There is a private golf club in Highfield Road .

In October 2011 the Hive Leisure Park opened in a new development as part of the Widnes Waterfront . Its facilities include Reel Cinema , a five @-@ screen multiplex cinema , a Frankie & Benny 's bar and restaurant , Super Bowl UK Widnes containing a 16 @-@ lane ten @-@ pin bowling centre , a children 's play area , licensed bar , a Nando 's restaurant , a Premier Inn , Brewers Fayre pub opened in February 2012 and also a brand new Ice Rink operated by Silverblades opened on 21 December 2012

= = = Health = = =

There is no hospital in Widnes . For acute medical care patients go to Warrington Hospital which is run by Warrington & Halton Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust or to Whiston Hospital which is run by St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust . Halton Clinical Commissioning Group is responsible for NHS services in the area . They established the Widnes Urgent Care Centre in 2015 to ease pressure on local accident and emergency units . General practitioner services are provided in health centres and in separate medical practices . There are dental practices providing a mixture of National Health Service and private dental care .

See also Healthcare in Liverpool

= = Notable people = =

Three men born in or near the village of Farnworth achieved prominent positions in the Anglican church . They were William Smyth ( c.1460 ? 1514 ) who became Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield , then Bishop of Lincoln and who built the grammar school in the village , Richard Barnes ( 1532 ? 1587 ) who became Bishop of Carlisle , then Bishop of Durham , and Richard Bancroft ( 1544 ? 1610 ) who became Bishop of London and then Archbishop of Canterbury .

During the late 19th century a number of prominent chemists and industrialists lived in Widnes . Amongst these was Ludwig Mond , co @-@ founder of Brunner Mond & Company . He lived in The Hollies , Farnworth and there his two sons were born , both of whom became notable . Sir Robert Mond ( 1867 ? 1938 ) became a chemist and archaeologist and his younger brother Alfred Mond , 1st Baron Melchett ( 1868 ? 1930 ) became an industrialist , financier and politician .

Charles Glover Barkla ( 1877 ? 1944 ) who was born in Widnes was the winner of the 1917 Nobel prize in physics . Born in the village of Farnworth was Roy Chadwick ( 1893 ? 1947 ) , the designer of the Avro Lancaster bomber . Thomas Mottershead ( 1893 ? 1917 ) , also born in Widnes , joined the Royal Flying Corps during the First World War ; he was awarded the Victoria Cross and the Distinguished Conduct Medal posthumously for his gallantry . Another Widnes man , Thomas Wilkinson ( 1898 ? 1942 ) of the Royal Naval Reserve , was awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously in the Second World War .

Jack Ashley ( 1922 ? 2012 ) was born in Widnes and was a local councillor there . He was then a Member of Parliament for Stoke @-@ on @-@ Trent for many years . He became a Companion of Honour in 1975 and was invested as a Privy Councillor in 1979 . In 1992 he was made a life peer as Baron Ashley of Stoke , of Widnes in the County of Cheshire . Gordon Oakes ( 1931 ? 2005 ) who was born and educated in Widnes became a local Member of Parliament and a government minister .

Vince Karalius ( 1932 ? 2008 ) , international rugby league player , was born in Widnes . Andrew Higginson ( b . 1977 ) is a professional snooker player from Widnes . Melanie Chisholm ( b . 1974 ) , who was born in Merseyside and went to school in Widnes , is a former Spice Girl known as Mel C or Sporty Spice . Actor David Dawson ( b . 1982 ) was born and raised in Widnes . The composer and multi @-@ instrumentalist Ian Finney ( b . 1966 ) is from Widnes . Former Tour de France rider Paul Sherwen was born in Widnes . George Nicholls ( born 14 May 1944 ) born in Widnes , played rugby league for Great Britain and England , and in 1972 was in the team that won the Rugby League World Cup . The distinguished Victorian cricketer John Briggs , the only man to have taken a hat trick and scored a century in Ashes cricket , lived in the town from 1877 until the 1890s . John Bowles ( darts player ) is a professional darts player from Widnes .

The singer / musician Jane Weaver was brought up in the town .

= = Further bibliography = =