

Bramhall's boundaries over time

Bramhall's boundaries marks where Bramhall starts and finishes. But, where is Bramhall? What is Bramhall? How many identities has it had and does it have? How have the boundaries changed over the past 1,000 years?

Firstly, going back to the Domesday book of 1086, the manor of Bramhall exists, held by Brun and Hacon, who had also held it prior to the 1066 Norman conquest. No delineation of boundaries is given. The manor must have had boundaries, but no maps exist from so early a date.

The date of the formation of the parish of St Mary's, Stockport is not known. Peter Arrowsmith in his book *Stockport, A History* suggests that it was formed in the 2nd half of the 12th century and it was certainly in existence by 1230 when there is reference to it. Like many parishes in the north of England it covered an extensive area and it incorporated 14 manors (presumably taken from adjoining parishes such as Cheadle and Mottram in Longdendale). Bramhall formed the south-western corner of the parish with Bramhall's western boundary adjoining the parish of Cheadle, and its southern, the parish of Prestbury. These constituent parts of the large parishes were known as Townships.

Over the medieval period the old feudal system of government and the power of the barons declined and was replaced by the embryonic House of Lords and House of Commons. Local government started to become county-based and within the counties the next layer down was the parishes. When the Tudor poor laws for relief of the poor were enacted in 1597 and 1601 and then amended in the 1660s, it was the parishes that were chosen to be the local government units of administration, or in the large northern parishes, the townships. Earlier (in 1555) the responsibility for maintaining roads was transferred from manors to parishes and townships.

The local boundaries remained fairly stable for the next 200 years but there were changes afoot in the 19th century.

Tithe Map Boundaries

Maps showing boundaries become accessible from the 1830s when the detailed mapping of the parishes and townships were made for the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836. Stockport's maps were produced township by township, Bramhall being mapped in the early 1840s.

The Bramhall maps show:

- the northern boundary of the townships as running north of part of Garners Lane and then along Kennerley Road (just north of Davenport station now) across to the A6,
- then the eastern boundary went south down the middle of the A6 through Hazel Grove to Hatherlow Lane (just north of Hazel Grove station now). It then wiggled its way across south-westwards to just east of Distaff farm on Woodford Road (the one leading from Jacksons Lane to Chester Road Woodford).
- The southern boundary continued up Chester Road to just before is joining the road from Poynton and then followed field boundaries travelling slightly north of due west and following the footpath that it now immediately to the north of Queensgate Primary

School. The boundary line changes to more northwesterly in direction following what is now the boundary of the back gardens of the Syddal Green/Eskdale Road houses

- the western boundary goes through what is now the grounds of Moss Hey Primary School and follows the line of the back gardens of the houses on Whitehaven Road. It crosses Moss Lane near where Acre Lane goes off and up such that Ashley Drive would be in Bramhall, but the estate with roads named after abbeys would be in Cheadle Hulme. After a very convoluted part with detached bits, it follows the western boundary of what is now Bramhall Golf Club and up through the roads just to the west of Bramhall Park. Then it is just behind the built-up area of to the west of Bramhall Lane South and then up into current-day Davenport, finishing north of Garners Lane before turning to the east and forming the northern boundary.

Civil Parishes

As the century moved on, there was some tidying up of the boundaries and Bramhall acquired yet another identity – in 1866 the secular functions of a parish/township were separated from the ecclesiastical functions and a new entity, the civil parish, was created to take over the secular function of the parishes/townships so Bramhall as well as being a township of the parish of St Thomas's became a civil parish and on the 1872 ordnance survey map it is the boundaries of the civil parishes that are marked rather than the ecclesiastical boundaries (which started as identical but could be independently adjusted).

Further legislation was enacted in 1875, 1888 and 1894 such that by that by 1894 civil parishes were grouped into districts which were either "Urban districts" if they covered an incorporated borough (which gave them quite a powerful local government set up) or otherwise, rural districts. From 1894 rural civil parishes were able to apply to the Local Government Board (a governmental body) for urban district status which is exactly what Cheadle and Gatley did in 1894. Urban districts had wider responsibilities but more powers and more funding.

In 1900 five local civil parishes which were part of the Stockport Rural District applied successfully to break away and form an urban district.

The 5 were:

- Bosden
- Bramhall
- Norbury
- Offerton
- Torkington

and the new District was named Hazel Grove and Bramhall Urban District. It could be argued that the eastern boundary of Bramhall ceased to exist at that point

However, Stockport was also seeking to expand in 1900 and via an Act of Parliament in 1901 the Stockport Extension Order gave Stockport the whole of Reddish and parts of other adjoining authorities including that part of the old civil parish of Bramhall from the northern boundary down to the Heaton Mersey to New Mills railway line which was in process of construction, hence Davenport and Woodsmoor were moved out of Hazel Grove and Bramhall UD into Stockport borough.

In 1934 Stockport was again looking for expansion and was threatening to absorb the whole

of Hazel Grove and Bramhall UD (together with Poynton) but was able to get approval only for the transfer of Offerton.

In 1939 the parish of Woodford was transferred into Hazel Grove and Bramhall UD which meant that much of Bramhall's old southern boundary was no longer shown on maps.

Post codes and Royal Mail addresses

It was during the late 1960s that the postcoding system was rolled out in England. The postcode SK7 was allocated to Hazel Grove and Bramhall Urban District and the postcode SK8 to Gatley and Cheadle Urban District. The Royal Mail addresses whether to include Bramhall or Cheadle Hulme follows this postcode split. Hence even following the 1974 local government changes (see below) a western Bramhall boundary can be defined by postal address.

1974 Local Government Changes

The Local Government Act of 1972 resulted in the creation, in 1974, of the nine metropolitan boroughs which made up the county of Greater Manchester. Thus Hazel Grove and Bramhall UD became part of the Metropolitan Borough of Stockport (the name Stockport comfortably winning the vote against the name "Norchester") and most of the inherited boundaries ceased to have meaning from a local government point of view.

However Stockport has a council of 63 members comprising 3 members for each of 21 wards. The wards form a jigsaw covering the whole of the area of the Metropolitan Borough of Stockport and the councilors have responsibilities to look after the local concerns of the areas covered by their respective wards. The wards have been given names indicating their geographical location, but the wards are supposed to be the same size as regards electorate and therefore their boundaries have to be adjusted as populations ebb and flow, which means that the boundaries are fluid.

The Stockport ward boundaries were last adjusted 15 years ago and we are currently in the middle of a review process which will result in amended boundaries next year after a consultation process which should be starting in May 2021.