

Wakefield's Waterfront

- 6 The Calder and Hebble warehouse is the last survivor of the warehouses where waterway companies stored goods in transit. It has been refurbished for office use.
- 7 The Hepworth Wakefield art gallery has been built on a site where in the 1800s working boats were built. Across the river there is still a boatyard building and repairing boats.
- 8 The Upper Mill next to The Hepworth is an 18th century mill shrouded in wrapping awaiting refurbishment on a site where there has been a mill since the 1300s. It retains its water wheel inside.
- 9 When the Manchester and Leeds Railway reached Wakefield, it became possible to transfer goods between railway and river, using a hydraulic lift that no longer survives.
- 10 Hirst's Mill is the last of many corn merchants' mills once sited on the waterfront.
- 11 The Bethel Chapel opened in 1871 to serve the waterfront community. It is now used as a motor cycle repair shop.
- 12 The Wharfside Inn, formerly the Jolly Sailor, is the last of the pubs built in the 1800s to serve the waterfront community.
- 13 This malthouse from the late 1800s still retains its original exterior.

Wakefield developed as an inland port from 1702 when the Aire and Calder Navigation was established and the River Calder was made navigable as far as the medieval Wakefield Bridge and its chantry chapel.

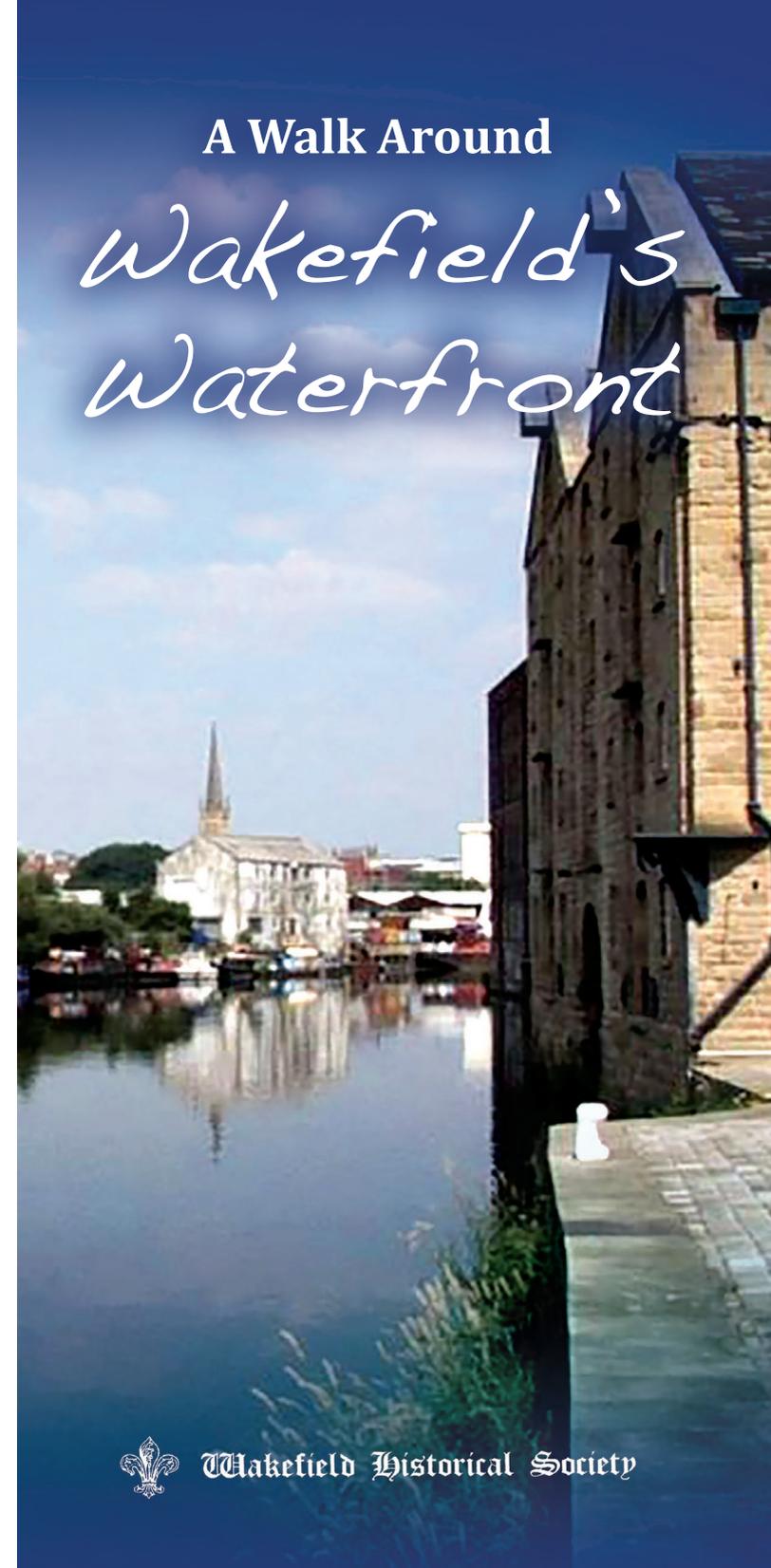
The Fall Ing cut of 1761 brought vessels upstream of the bridge and weir and led to the creation of trans-Pennine waterways. Among principal cargoes were corn, coming to Wakefield from the eastern counties, and coal going downstream from collieries in the Wakefield area.

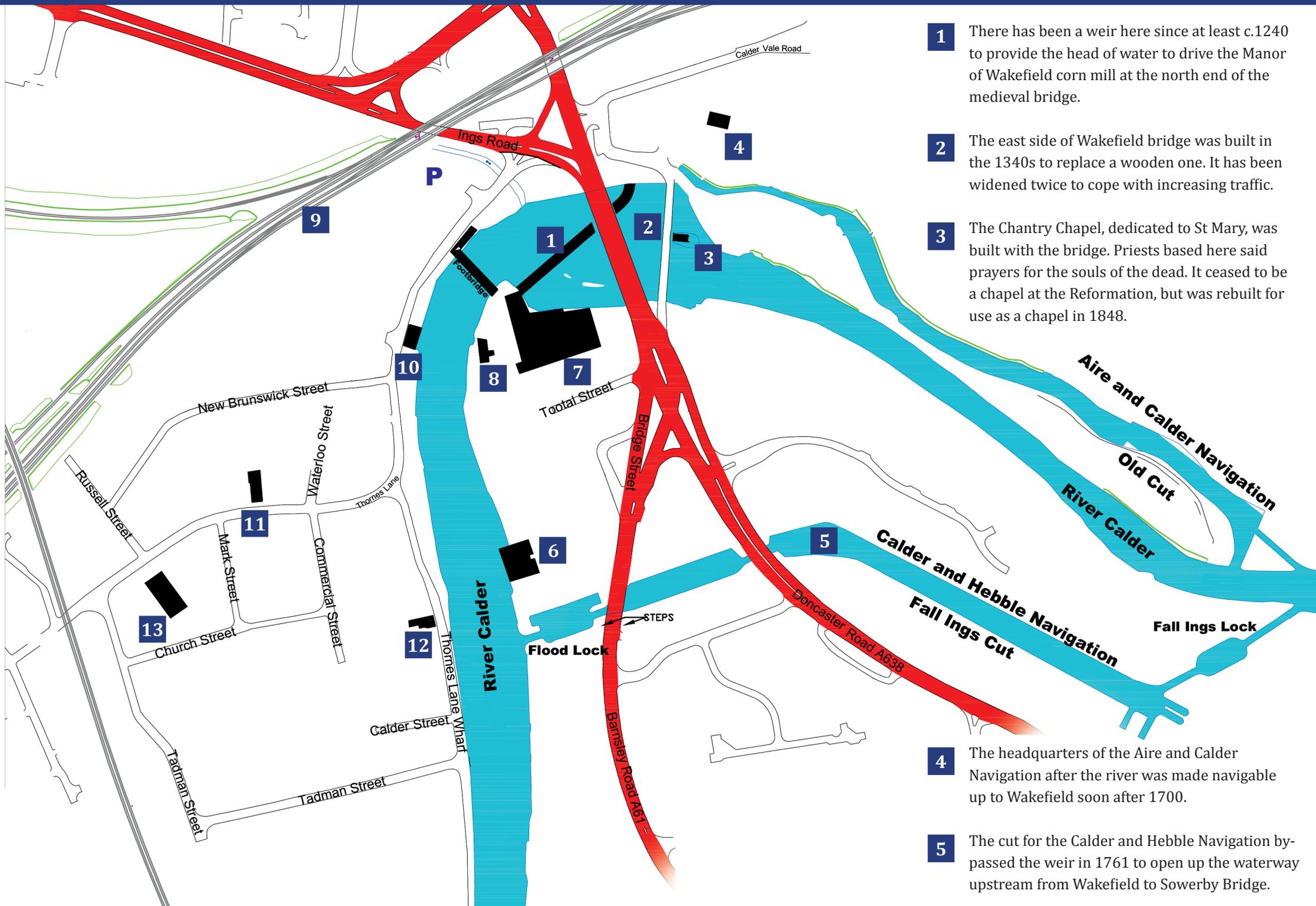
The river above the weir became flanked with buildings, primarily warehouses and maltings, and, later, textile mills. There was some boat-building, with a dry dock, on the headland. Cheap housing was built close to the river, with attendant public houses, places of worship, and schools.

The end of commercial traffic on the river in the mid 1900s, and other economic and cultural changes, saw the loss of many buildings including most of the housing. New undertakings, including the Wakefield Shirt Company, established waterside premises and in 2011 the Hepworth Wakefield was opened on the headland.

*Compiled by Wakefield Historical Society,
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A Walk Around Wakefield's Waterfront





1 There has been a weir here since at least c.1240 to provide the head of water to drive the Manor of Wakefield corn mill at the north end of the medieval bridge.

2 The east side of Wakefield bridge was built in the 1340s to replace a wooden one. It has been widened twice to cope with increasing traffic.

3 The Chantry Chapel, dedicated to St Mary, was built with the bridge. Priests based here said prayers for the souls of the dead. It ceased to be a chapel at the Reformation, but was rebuilt for use as a chapel in 1848.

4 The headquarters of the Aire and Calder Navigation after the river was made navigable up to Wakefield soon after 1700.

5 The cut for the Calder and Hebble Navigation bypassed the weir in 1761 to open up the waterway upstream from Wakefield to Sowerby Bridge.