

## Crookes History Booklets

These short explorations of local history topics were compiled by Constance Hallwright

Also known as 'The Bustle Lady'

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### Food shops in Crookes, and where people bought their groceries

The Victorian residents of Crookes did most of their shopping from Crookes businesses, and the numerous corner shops sold every kind of basic commodity. Because of a system of 'Retail Price Maintenance', all the pre-packaged goods such as soap, candles, salt, washing soda, cocoa etc were the same prices wherever you went, so it made sense to always go to your nearest corner-shop. Retail Price Maintenance covered not only groceries, but drugs and patent medicines, and tobacco. Goods such as flour, sugar, raisins, and tea were sold loose, so customers relied on the reputation of the shopkeeper in terms of quality. Tea bought from a larger shop might be sold in six grades, ranging from the best, to the dust at the bottom of the box, but your local shop-keeper knew you and your budget, so would give you the same grade without having to be asked.

Other corner-shops specialised in selling a particular type of foodstuff: butchers sold not only meat, but the by-products of the meat trade, like lard or suet. Bakers sold cakes and fruited buns as well as basic bread. However, dairy products like cheese, butter and milk would be bought either directly from the farm, or from the dairy, located just behind the brickworks on Sackville Road.

There was a weekly market located at the corner of Sackville Road, which sold fresh vegetables, fresh fish brought into Sheffield by train from Grimsby, and a wide range of things you'd need only occasionally. The large sign on the corner of the Indian Chef conceals the inscription that this was the location of the Crookes Marketplace.

The Baker delivered bread using a hand-cart. If you were considered to be of 'good standing' you didn't have to pay for the bread as you bought it, the delivery boy had a book kept in a leather pouch, and every item was entered into it. On Saturdays, you went to the shop and settled your account.

Just below the Ball Inn was a cottage selling soft drinks, snuff, herbs and cigarettes, run by Mrs West. It seems to have been a very 'informal' business, as, apparently, customers would knock on the window, and she would serve them through the open window.

Mr Spir ran an off-licence from a shop on the corner of Albine Terrace. On Northfield Road, there was a tripe shop; customers brought their own bowl, and hot tripe in onion gravy was ladled into it – a fore-runner of the many take-away food shops in Crookes. Other food sellers were corner shops who would buy in a large leg of bacon or ham, boil or roast it, and serve it by the slice, ready to eat with bread and butter.