

Crookes History Booklets

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

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What Crookes was like before development

Before the change brought about by the Reform Land Society starting in 1851, Crookes was a small farming village, with few houses and not much happening. The small fields still used the medieval pattern of strip fields with boundaries of dry stone walls. Some fields contained small stone field barns, used for storing the crops of fruit before it was sent down to market in Sheffield. Animals raised in Crookes were cows, chickens and a few pigs, might sometimes get out and cause a nuisance. The Pinfold, located near the present Wesley Hall, worked as a fore-runner to the present business of towing away of illegally parked cars. If your farm animals strayed from your property, a man called a Pinder would round them up, and put them in the Pinfold, a stone circular enclosure fastened with a padlocked gate. He was obliged to give the animal food and water and look after it, but had no responsibility for letting you know that he had your animal. When you discovered that your animal was not where you expected to find it, you'd have to check if it was 'locked up' in the fold, and ask the Pinder for it to be released; of course, there would be a fee to pay, depending on how long it had been there, plus a 'release fee' for his trouble. The system kept stray animals from doing damage, or causing an obstruction on the roads, gave farmers an incentive to keep them enclosed securely, and gave the Pinder an (irregular, but lucrative) income. Pinfolds survive in numerous agricultural communities, but there are no photographs of the one in Crookes, presumably because they were so common, no-one thought it was worth noting.

There were various farms in Crookes: Beggars Farm was on Steel Bank, another was located where Tasker Road is now, Slinn's Farm was opposite the bottom of Mulehouse Lane, and was recorded in 1790s. There was a farm at the top of Springvale Road, next to where the Punchbowl is now. The biggest and by far the wealthiest farm was called The Poplars on Cross Lane, owned by the Sanderson family. They owned several horses, so provided a 'transport' service, collecting heavy building materials from Sheffield, and taking farm produce down to the market in town.

The Crookes area was noted for the number of market gardens: Holy Gardens (named after the Holy family) was on the corner of Northumberland Road, there were also large worked market gardens off the bottom of Mushroom Lane, the site of the present Ponderosa. In Victorian Crookes there were lots of greenhouses and field barns for storing produce.

Because the farm animals had to be slaughtered, and there was no way of transporting them, an abbatoire was constructed near the bottom of Springvale Road (it has now been extended and converted into a private house). The beasts were walked down the farm track that now forms the

course of Springvale Road. There was a tannery off Cobden View Road, to process the hides of farm animals. Tanneries were smelly places, and when houses stated to be built, it was usually forbidden to operate a tannery on the property – you'll find this as condition of the deeds of older properties.

The 'modern' version of the Ball Inn was built 1851, but the original building dates back to the 1680s, and it has always been the focal point of Crookes, boasting an elaborate bowling green. It was also the location of the village pump. During the Victorian era, it was occupied by Mr Skelton. A Smithy business was carried on round the back. Their opposition was a Temperance Bar, just below the Ball, selling hot Vimto and Sarsaparilla.

The Old Grindstone Inn was built by Joshua Spooner, using Mr Rydal from Cobden View Road as his stonemason.

Crookes Endowed School, was opened in 1791, so was established well before Victorian came to the throne, but it expanded as the population of Crookes grew. At its height, it educated about 500 pupils. Western Road School, as Westways was originally known, did not open until after Victoria's death.

For a while, a private boarding school was run from Crookes House from 1837, taking six young ladies. Later, the same house was owned by Mr John Tasker, who brought the telephone and electric light to Sheffield.

St Thomas' Church was built in 1839, so it was the second church to be built in Crookes, the first being the Wesleyan Chapel on School Road, completed in 1836, which had a vibrant Sunday school, staffed mainly by local tradespeople.