

A History of Hyde Park

What's in a Name?

The area now known as Hyde Park Corner was originally known either as Wraghorn (sometimes spelt Raghorn) or Wreghorn. The original meaning of the name Wraghorn is lost but there have been several interpretations over the years.

The 1612 Survey of Leeds refers to “Megg-horne styell nunc Regg horn stile.” And the Leeds Manor Rolls 1650-66 refer to “Wreg(g)horne style.” A H Smith in “The Place Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire” informs us that “wrag” means “strive” or “wrangle,” that “horn” means “corner of land,” and that “style” means “stile.” He also points out that in the Durham dialect, “wreg” means “hook.”

According to an article published in the Yorkshire Evening Post in December 1927, in the mid-nineteenth century, the people of Woodhouse referred to Hyde Park Corner as “Wreg’orn.” The article quotes the following from Ralph Thoresby’s “Ducatus Leodiensis” published in 1715:

“Perhaps it may be thought more for our Repute to omit the mention of a place, at the utmost Corner of the Moor, called Wreghorn Style, because the name imports that it was of Old a lurking place of villains, from the Saxon, signifying a Rake Hill.”

It is said that the name “Hyde Park Corner” was coined by local resident John Atkinson and two or three others following a coach trip they made to London. Perhaps Atkinson and his friends were amongst the large crowds who cheered Queen Victoria in June 1837 when she passed Hyde Park Corner in London on the day after her accession to the throne.

Atkinson’s father Nathaniel had farmed at Wraghorn since 1800. John Atkinson inherited the tenancy of his father’s farm and in 1837 obtained the freehold when the Fawcett estate was divided into lots and sold. The 1837 Fawcett estate plan labels the area Hyde Park Corner and White’s Directory of 1837 lists John Atkinson as living at Hyde Park Corner.

There seems to have been a determined attempt to get the name of Wraghorn changed as the 1841 census lists everyone living at Wraghorn as living at Hyde Park Corner. Despite this, the area continued to be known as Wraghorn. It was only after housing began to be built in the 1850s on fields to the west of Wraghorn, in what was called the “Hyde Park” district, that increasing numbers began to use the name “Hyde Park Corner” instead of “Wraghorn.” Presumably this was because the many newcomers to the area assumed that Hyde Park Corner was the correct name for the junction next to the Hyde Park district.

A sign that the name had fallen out of use by this point is that in 1865 the Parish of Wrangthorn was formed and the original spelling of ‘Wraghorn’ was lost.

The Growth of Hyde Park

In 1773, the Brudnells sold off 200 acres of land between Headingley village centre and Woodhouse Moor, the area now known as Hyde Park, to John Walker.

When John Walker's descendant Mary Bainbrigg died in 1805, the estate was split up and the land progressively sold off in large building plots from 1820's onwards initially on sites flanking Headingley Lane which formed part of the Leeds Otley Turnpike after 1754.

A pictorial map of Leeds is in the Armley Mills Museum. It is about six foot across and shows Leeds in the 1880's. It is worth a visit to view the map as it shows Hyde Park Corner at that time with very little housing about it.

Hyde Park Hotel

Until 1860, the Hyde Park Hotel at Hyde Park Corner was known as the Red Lion Inn. An advert which appeared in the Leeds Intelligencer in June 1807 stated that the inn was located in Great Woodhouse and tenanted by Joseph Wright.

An advert which appeared in the same paper in September 1815 stated that the landlord was George Storey and that the inn was located at Woodhouse-Moor-End.

In September 1855, an advert in the Leeds Times reported that the Red Lion Hotel, which it said was located at Hyde Park Corner, Woodhouse, was to be sold by its owner Edward Scholey. The advert stated that the property was a short distance from the Victoria Cricket Ground. The inn was bought by James Mould who in either 1860 or 1861 changed its name to the Hyde Park Hotel.

The original building was demolished in the early 1930s to allow for road widening, which never took place. It was replaced in 1937 by the current building.

Leeds Royal Park

In 1837, Robert Cadman formed the Victoria Cricket Ground on two fields on the western edge of Woodhouse Moor that had belonged to the Earl of Cardigan's estate. All England teams played several matches on the ground.

In 1858, showman and entrepreneur Thomas Clapham purchased the cricket ground and additional land next to Woodhouse Moor. He created a pleasure ground on the site, known for the first few months as Leeds New Gardens.

In September 1858, Clapham changed the park's name to Leeds Royal Park to commemorate Queen Victoria's visit to Leeds to open the Town Hall.

The park had a conservatory, lawns, shrubs, Punch and Judy shows, clay pigeon shooting, balloon rides, firework displays and what was claimed to be the largest dance platform in the world. During the 1860s, the park was home to the annual Leeds Flower Show.

On the 27th July 1861, crowds flocked to the park to watch Blondin, the hero of Niagara Falls, walk across a tightrope with a man on his back.

To keep the park running, Clapham had to regularly sell off small sections of adjacent land he owned for house building. He even offered to sell the park to the council to keep it running.

In 1871, he was forced to file for bankruptcy and on the 4th September 1873, the park, known to many as Tommy Clapham's Park, was sold. Subsequently, the name of Clapham Road was changed to Brudenell Road.

The site continued for several years as a pleasure garden known as the Leeds Horticultural Gardens.

The gardens closed in 1887 and the site was sold for house building. The name Royal Park lives on in the names of streets that were built on the site of the park.

Victoria Road

In 1838, a year after John Atkinson acquired the family farmhouse from his landlord John Henry Fawcett, Thomas Judson, a retired builder and joiner, purchased a lot further to the west from the same Fawcett estate and built the villa Ash Grove on it. It was the first detached villa to be built in the area that, after the 1850s, became known as Hyde Park. The villa later gave its name to a nearby residential street. The land sold to Thomas Judson included a field. Nowadays, this field is known as the Chestnut Avenue playing field. The villa still exists, and so

does its coach house. It's located at the northern edge of the field and its address is 63 Victoria Road. Ash Grove has an 18th century appearance and is grade 2 listed. It was the only villa to be built in brick in that area in the 1840s.

Numbers 3, 5, and 7 Victoria Road are a block of three stone houses thought to have been built about 1840. They have a grey slate roof and external railings. They are grade 2 listed.

Numbers 27 and 29 Victoria Road are stone "semis" thought to have been designed by John Clark and built about 1840. They are sited opposite the entrance to Rose Court, and are in a similar style (Rose Court is also thought to have been designed by John Clark). The central doorways are approached by steps with wrought iron balustrades. The two houses are grade 2 listed.

Chestnut Avenue Playing Field

The school rented the Chestnut Avenue playing field from 1906 until 1924 and used it as a hockey pitch. The school purchased the field for £1,200 in 1924 from Edward William Dawson. At that time it was known as "Dawson's Field."

Because of the shortage of playing fields in the area, the site was given N6 status in Leeds City Council's Unitary Development Plan. This meant that the site was a "protected playing pitch" i.e. protected from development. After the school moved to Alwoodley in July 2008, it submitted a planning application to build blocks of flats on the site. The application was subsequently withdrawn.

On the 5th December 2013, councilors of Plans Panel West refused an application by. But then full planning permission for 24 three and four bedroomed houses in March 2015, after outline permission was given in April 2014. (to be completed)

Woodhouse Reservoir

On the 17th August 1841, water flowed for the first time into a newly constructed service reservoir on Woodhouse Moor. The reservoir was contained within substantial stone walls and lodges were built at both ends. The reservoir's walls and the surviving lodge and gateposts are all listed.

In August 1853, the seven year old son of one of the lodge keepers was blown into the reservoir during a gale and drowned. The reservoir was covered over in 1864 to improve the quality of the water.

In 1906, the Cecil Duncombe Observatory was built on the foundations of the southern lodge and was used by Leeds Astronomical Society and astronomers from Leeds University. The building was demolished in 1950.

The northern lodge with its stone façade and blue slate roof was sold by Yorkshire Water in 1992. Even though the building is grade 2 listed, the purchasers were allowed to make substantial additions which were not in the building's original style.

The Churches of Hyde Park

The church of St Augustine's at Wrangthorn was consecrated on the 8th November 1871. It was designed by James Fraser of Park Place in early 14th century decorated Gothic style. Built from rock-faced gritstone and with a very tall spire, the church is a well-known local landmark and is grade 2 listed.

On the 24th November 1886, the New Methodist Free Church was opened on Victoria Road by the Mayor of Leeds. The church was designed in the decorated Gothic style by W S Braithwaite of South Parade. It has a stone façade and a tower. Turrets are located to either side of the gable. The building originally belonged to the United Methodist Free Churches. Today it is known as Bethel Pentecostal Church and is grade 2 listed.

St Margaret's church on Cardigan Road was dedicated by the Bishop of Richmond on the 13th February 1909. The church was designed in the late Gothic Revival style by the architect Temple Moore. After being made redundant by the Church Commissioners in 1995, the building was bought in 2001 by a Christian group and is today used as an arts centre called Left Bank. The building is grade 2 listed.

The Hyde Park Neighbourhood Area contained other impressive churches which today would probably be listed if they still existed. Three of these were constructed from stone in the Gothic style. These were Woodhouse

Moor Wesleyan Chapel at the junction of Hyde Park Road and Brudenell Road, All Hallows Church on Regent Terrace, and Cardigan Road Methodist Church at the junction of Cardigan Road and Burley Road.

Woodhouse Moor Wesleyan Chapel was built on land which had formed part of Leeds Royal Park. The church was opened on the 13th September 1876 and demolished in the 1970s.

All Hallows was consecrated on the 30th October 1886 by the Bishop of Ripon. Built of stone and with green Westmoreland slates, it was burnt down on the 27th April 1970.

Cardigan Road Methodist Church was opened in December 1883. Today the church is gone, replaced by a block of flats.

The Henrietta Street Wesleyan Chapel was located at the junction of Hyde Park Road and Hartwell Road. It opened on the 1st April 1869 and was intended to serve the Burley Fields district. It was brick built in a style similar to several other Leeds Methodist chapels built at around that time. By the 1990s, it had become the Prince's Gym. The building has subsequently been demolished and replaced by a block of flats.

Until the late 1990s, a wooden church existed at the junction of Royal Park Road and Brudenell Road. The church opened on the 19th April 1890 as the Brudenell Road Mission Hall and was non-sectarian. It was Gothic in style and built in sections imported from the United States. The church was the gift of builders B and W Walmsley.

Between 1924 and 1988, the building was used by the Christadelphians and was known as the Christadelphian Meeting Room. Being the only remaining wooden church in Leeds, it was given listed status in 1982. At the time of its listing, English Heritage said, "A particularly well-preserved example of the export mission type of church." In the 1990s, a planning application was submitted for its demolition and replacement. The council initially refused the application on the ground that the building was listed, but changed its mind after being presented with a massive petition in support of the planning application.

The Hyde Park Recreation Club

The Hyde Park Recreation Club was opened by the Lord Mayor Alf Cooke on Friday the 14th August 1891. It was idea of Leeds blind maker William Jones Howell. The building, located at 16 Ash Grove, was designed by Walter A Hobson of Albion Street. It contained a large dancing and concert room, billiard room with three tables, four card rooms, and other apartments. Outside there were lawn tennis grounds, a bowling green, and a quoiting ground.

The Club played an active role in the local community for many years with club members and their wives regularly organising children's parties and other events for local people.

On the 7th November 1996, the clubhouse and former bowling green were sold to a property developer who turned the club into a student bar. In May 2012, planning permission was given to convert the building to flats and to build an extension at the rear.

Hyde Park Schools

Next to the Queen's Road Recreation Ground is the site of the former Royal Park School. On the 28th September 1892, Queen's Road Board Schools were opened by Mr Grosvenor Talbot, chairman of the Corporation's Finance Committee. Mr Talbot used a gold key for the purpose at a ceremony attended by the MP Sir James Kitson. The building, of red brick with stone dressings, was designed in the Arts and Crafts style by Leeds architect William Landless with a capacity for 1,323 children. It was built on farmland which had been part of the Hill Top estate.

In 1972, the school's name was changed to Royal Park Middle School. "Royal Park" was a reference to the Royal Park Gardens which had been located on the other side of the road from the school.

The council closed the school in 2004 promising that the building would be made available to the community. Despite a long campaign by the community to save the building, the council demolished it in 2014, promising that the site would become public green space.

Brudenell School was opened on the 19th October 1899 by Mr F O Dodgson, the chairman of the School Attendance Committee. The impressive building with accommodation for 1,480 children was designed by W S Braithwaite. It was located at the junction of Welton Road and Norwood Grove and was demolished around 1990 to be replaced by the current building.

Woodhouse Town Hall

On the 12th March 1902, a new police station and public library were opened at the junction of Clarendon Road and Woodhouse Lane. The Lord Mayor of Leeds used a gold key adorned with diamonds, pearls and rubies to open the door and was the first person to borrow a book – a collection of Tennyson's poems. The new building is in the Italianate style and composed of red brick with stone dressing. It has a domed clock tower, and a green Westmoreland slate roof. Because of its impressive appearance, the building became known as "Woodhouse Town Hall." In 1994, the building was sold to the developer Rushbond and the brewer Ind Coope. In 2010 it was acquired by Stonegate Pubs, a company based in the Cayman Islands. The building is grade 2 listed.

Hyde Park Corner Post Office

On the 11th February 1907, a new post office and sorting office opened at Hyde Park Corner on Woodhouse Street. They were housed in a building designed in the Baroque Revival style and constructed from red brick and stone. In 2000, the Post Office offered the sorting office for sale. Then on the 4th December 2003, the Post Office announced that the Hyde Park Corner post office would also be closing, along with twenty three others, including the main post office on City Square. Today, the former Hyde Park Corner post office and sorting office are owned by Samara Properties, a local property company based in Jersey, and rented out as flats. The building is grade 2 listed.

Hyde Park Corner

It was Leeds architect Thomas Winn who designed the building that replaced Atkinson's farm at Hyde Park Corner. After the farm was demolished in 1905, an impressive building fronted in Marmo was built on the site. Marmo was a type of white terracotta which resembled Italian Carrara marble. It was developed by the Burman-tofts Pottery, which later merged with other companies to become the Leeds Fireclay Company. This impressive building was demolished in the late 1960s to make way for the Headingley Expressway, which was never built. This key site is still vacant. Today it's unlikely that permission would be given to demolish a building fronted in Marmo these days as it was a Leeds product and there are so few examples of it remaining.

Hyde Park Picture House

Thomas Winn also designed the Hyde Park Picture House for Henry Child at the junction of Queens Road and Brudenell Road. The building opened in 1908 as a private club with billiard rooms, meeting rooms, a card room, a reading room, and a flat on the top floor. The club was converted to a cinema during the First World War. The building is of red brick and the entrance features Ionic columns. The building is still used as a cinema and is grade 2 listed.

Woodhouse Moor

Although the Moor was owned by the Lords of the Manor prior to the council purchasing it in 1857, until quite recently it was considered by many to be common land. Local people continued to use it to graze their animals until the 1860s. In the 19th century, prehistoric remains were found in the park. Election hustings used to be held there. And trade union rallies have taken place there since the start of the 20th century.

A Green Community

Woodhouse Moor

Woodhouse Moor is a park of 25 hectares, which was acquired by Leeds City Council in 1857 from the Lords of the Manor of Leeds. It is the oldest and most intensively used park in Leeds and has been designated by Leeds City Council's Parks and Countryside Service as a "community park." Community parks are intended for the use of the local community, as opposed to the much larger "city parks" which are intended to be used by everyone in Leeds. Greater resources are allocated to city parks because of this.

The park includes three bowling greens, two of which are no longer used. It also includes temporary allotments, which were created as part of the Dig for Victory campaign during the Second World War, six tennis courts, a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) and a skate park. The skate park and MUGA replaced twelve tennis courts, which weren't maintained. The park also includes a cricket ground, which was also used for football until the mid 1950s, when it was designated as a heliport, which was never built. Although this section of park was designated as "Public Open Space" in 1973 (like the rest of the park), it was not restored as a cricket and football ground.

The Moor is a "dark park" and is visited by amateur astronomers because of this. In 1906, Leeds University's Duncombe Observatory was built on the foundations of the South Lodge at the southern end of the covered reservoir. The observatory was demolished in 1950.

Until the 1940s, all of Woodhouse Moor was accessible to the public and used as public open space. Since then, areas of the park have been fenced off and used for other purposes, even though there's a shortage of public open space in the area. The Forum aims to return these areas of the park to parkland.

The part of the Moor nicknamed Monument Moor forms the start of the Meanwood Valley Trail, and the Dales Way. A circular trail called the North West Leeds Country Park Green Gateway Trail crosses both the main Moor and Monument Moor before continuing to Woodhouse Ridge.

The council's Unitary Development Plan designated the entire park as N1 green space. The council's Site Allocations Plan divides the park into sections labeled Woodhouse Moor Park, Cliff Road Green Space, Woodhouse Lane Green Space, Woodhouse Cliff and Woodhouse Street Recreation Ground.

Chestnut Avenue Playing Field

This playing field originally belonged to Thomas Judson, a retired builder and joiner who had bought it from the estate of the Reverend Richard Fawcett. Mr Judson's villa was called Ash Grove. It still exists, and so does its coach house. It's located at the northern edge of the field and its address is 63 Victoria Road. The villa's facade faces south and today looks out across the Chestnut Avenue playing field.

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Because of the shortage of playing fields in the area, the site was given N6 status in Leeds City Council's Unitary Development Plan. This meant that the site was a "protected playing pitch" i.e. protected from development. After the school moved to Alwoodley in July 2008, it submitted a planning application to build blocks of flats on the site. The application was subsequently withdrawn.

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In October 2015, Maple Grove Developments and Yorvale submitted a planning application for 262-bedroomed gated student accommodation to be built on the site. The application (15/05863) was for the erection of 7 purpose built student accommodation blocks, 3 storeys in height. The application was refused and the developer appealed. The appeal failed.

Queens Road Recreation Ground

The Queens Road Recreation Ground is sometimes known as the Royal Park Public Open Space, Royal Park Green Space or Royal Park Green. The site was originally farmland forming part of the Hill Top estate. In the 1880s, terraced housing was built there on roads called Holderness Place, Holderness Avenue and Edwin Road. The terraced housing was demolished in the mid 1970s as part of a slum clearance programme. Landscaping of the area followed in the 1980s. Today, the area is a small public park with grass and trees, railings, play area, picnic tables, and a multi use games area. The Forum would like the site to be used for outdoor sports to address the shortage in the area.

Burley Lodge

In October 1968, local residents were given details of a scheme to improve housing in the Burley Lodge Road area. It was called the Burley Lodge Road Improvement Area scheme. The plans included demolition of terraced houses to create an area of green space called Burley Lodge. The green space called Burley Lodge by Leeds City Council is called Burley Lawn on current Ordnance Survey maps. It is covered with grass and there are a number of trees. Railings and fixed play equipment were added in the 1990s.

The Sculptures on Woodhouse Moor

The park's four grade II listed statues used to be located in the city centre but were removed to the Moor to make way for road schemes. A memorial to Queen Victoria is located at the main entrance to the Moor. A statue of Mayor Marsden is in the section of park on the other side of Woodhouse Lane. A statue of Robert Peel is at Hyde Park Corner. And a statue of the Duke of Wellington is at the junction of Moorland and Clarendon Road. The memorial to Queen Victoria is considered to be the second most significant memorial to the late queen in this country, and it is on English Heritage's "At Risk" list. Part of the statue was vandalized twenty five years ago, and since then has been stored in a council shed. Bronzework has also been damaged. The Forum aims to restore the memorial and also the statue of Mayor Marsden from which a panel is missing.

The Victoria Memorial was sculpted George Frampton and unveiled by the Lord Mayor on the 27th November 1905. Paid for by public subscription, and originally located in front of the Town Hall, it was moved to Woodhouse Moor in 1937 when the Headrow was created. The Memorial comprises a large bronze statue of the queen seated on top of a 30 foot high plinth of Portland Stone, flanked on either side by large bronze figures representing Peace and Industry, which are inset into the plinth. The statue representing Industry was pulled from the Memorial by vandals in the mid 1980s. Since then, the council has kept it in storage. The bronze orb is missing from Queen Victoria's hand. The bronze work which decorates the plinth is damaged. And the plinth's Portland Stone is regularly daubed with graffiti. The Memorial is grade 2 listed and is on English Heritage's "At Risk" register.

Following the death in 1850 of the former Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, 26 statues were erected in his memory. One of the first was the statue inaugurated on the 20th August 1852 on a site near the Leeds Courthouse on Park Row. It was sculpted by William Behnes and cast in bronze at the Statue Foundry in Pimlico. The plinth is of finely dressed red Aberdeen granite and is inscribed with the name "Peel." The statue was paid for by public subscription. In 1897, the statue was moved to Victoria Square in front of the Town Hall. In 1937, the statue was moved again, this time to a site at the Hyde Park Corner entrance to Woodhouse Moor. The statue is grade 2 listed.

Sculpted by the Italian Baron Carlo Marochetti, the bronze statue of the Duke of Wellington in field marshall's dress was erected in front of the future Leeds Town Hall in 1855. In 1937, the statue was moved to its current site on Woodhouse Moor near the junction of Moorland Road and Clarendon Road. The statue is grade 2 listed.

Henry Rowland Marsden was born in Holbeck in 1823. In 1848, he emigrated to the United States, where he developed a stone crushing machine and made a fortune. Returning to Leeds in 1862, he set up a factory to make stone crushing machines. He joined the Liberal Party and became mayor in 1873. Following his death in 1876, the public paid for a statue to be erected in his memory. The statue was carved from a block of Italian Carrara marble originally intended for use in the Albert Memorial in London. The sculptor was John Throp of Leeds. The statue was unveiled on the 2nd March 1878 by Marsden's widow on a site at the junction of Albion Street and Woodhouse Lane. The pedestal is of polished red granite.

On three sides of the pedestal are sculptured panels representing Education, Industry and Benevolence. Education shows Mayor Marsden distributing prizes to school children. Industry gives a representation of his stone-breaking machine. Benevolence shows him giving alms to the lame, the blind and the destitute (one of these panels has been missing for a number of years). On the front of the pedestal are the words "H R Marsden 1878." In 1950, the statue was moved from its site at the top of Albion Street and placed in storage. In June 1952, it was re-erected on Woodhouse Moor in the section nicknamed Monument Moor, after the monument to Mayor Marsden. It was placed in the centre of a circular flower bed that had been established for the visit of the Festival of Britain Land Travelling Exhibition to Woodhouse Moor in 1951. The statue is grade 2 listed.

Situated on Woodhouse Moor, on the grass verge on the north east side of Woodhouse Lane, are a milestone and a stone mounting block. These should probably both be listed.