

Along the Line

Pinch Farm

Pinch Farm was situated on the edge of a hill with the ground behind it dropping steeply into the valley of Wood Park Brook. It is not clear how old the farm was. It was certainly there long before the canal was built in the 1790s.

It was constructed largely of hand made bricks with a stone flagged roof. At some point it was looked at by someone from English Heritage who felt that it didn't have any features of particular historic interest. It was a bit of a hotch potch with various additions from different periods. Yet it had a sort of romantic charm, partly due to its

A series featuring points of interest along the line of the canal, past or present.

isolated location.

When the Hollinwood Branch Canal was cut through the shoulder of the hill, in a shallow cutting just a few feet from the farm, it cut the farm off from the rest of the site and from its access to Crime Lane. The canal company was therefore obliged to provide an accommodation bridge affording access to the building. The only other access was directly from the towpath.

The original bridge, which was probably constructed of wood, was replaced around 1860 with an attractive riveted latticework wrought iron bridge with brick abutments.



Pinch Farm (on the right) around 1900. The smartly-dressed walkers are undoubtedly taking a Sunday stroll. Note the canoeist who had paddled along from Crime Lake. (Photo: Tameside Local Studies Library)

Pinch Farm was also known as Pinch Hall Farm and, at one time, had the nickname of Pinch Beggars Hall. It is thought that this name derives from the occupants scrounging most of their household needs from passing boats, which suggests that cargoes carried were a lot more diversified than just coal.

It has been suggested that the farm's occupants stole from passing boats although it is questionable how they might have done so unnoticed.

The same boats would have come past regularly and it is more likely that the farmers would have got to know the boaters and may well have worked out 'arrangements' with some of them.

The farm's name existed before the canal was built and it is unlikely that it originated from the slang word for 'steal'. It may be from the surname 'Pinch' which in Middle English meant

a chirpy person, similar to 'Finch'.

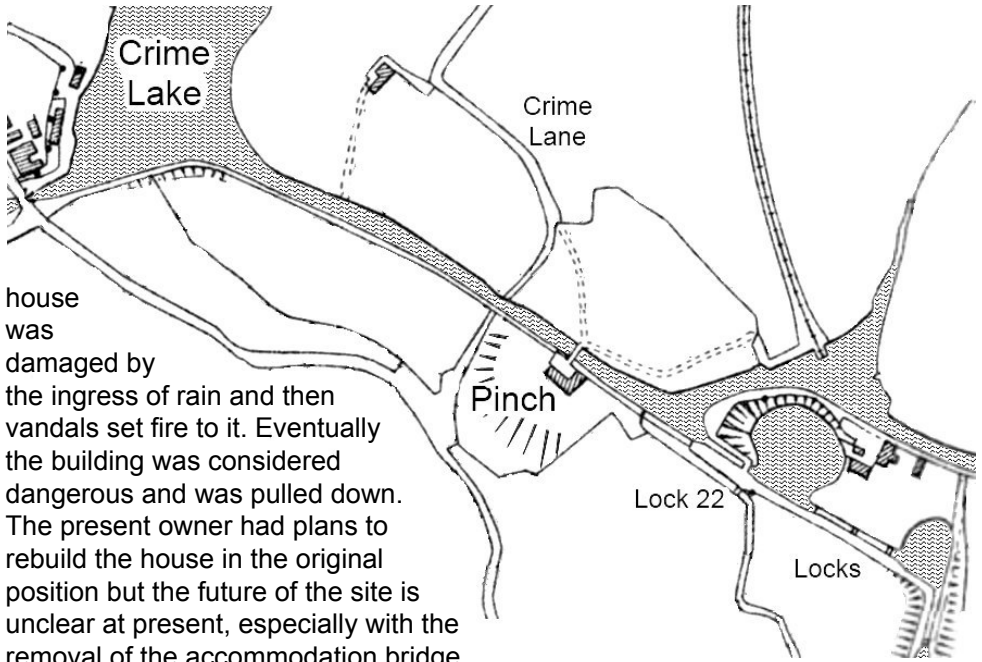
For much of the first half of the 20th century the farmer was Fred Yates, who kept hens, ducks, geese and pigs. He collected food scraps for his pigs from houses in the area and made sure those who gave him scraps got pork for Christmas, which was quite a treat in the war years.

The last tenant in the farm was Cyril Rowbottom, who ran the farm for around 40 years. I have been told that he declined offers of accommodation in an old people's home and soldiered on until he had a bad fall. He then reluctantly took up the care home offer. Having made friends with the lady residents, he is reported to have remarked that he wished he'd moved there when he first had the chance!

The farm remained empty after Cyril's departure and thieves then stole the stone flagged roof. The inside of the



Pinch Farm around 1920. (Photo: Garry Jones of Littlemoss)



house was damaged by the ingress of rain and then vandals set fire to it. Eventually the building was considered dangerous and was pulled down. The present owner had plans to rebuild the house in the original position but the future of the site is unclear at present, especially with the removal of the accommodation bridge in 2016.

Martin Clark



Pinch Farm in 2009 after the stone roof had been stolen. (Photo: Martin Clark)