

**Housing the Workers**

**Early London County Council Housing  
1889-1914**

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August 2015**

**Part 3 – the schemes in detail**

**10 – Brooke’s Market, Holborn Scheme**



## Brooke's Market scheme, Holborn

### Cranley Buildings, 1897

### Built under Part II of the Housing of the Working Classes Act 1890

This small scheme was to develop a run-down area in Holborn between Brooke St and Leather Lane. The condition of the area was first brought to the attention of the MBW in 1875 as part of a larger scheme to redevelop 10½ acres in the District. The scheme included much street widening as well as slum clearance. The original scheme was not approved but individual areas were considered and this resulted in the Brooke's Market Scheme in 1890. The area was only ¼ acre but contained many people and much dilapidated housing. In this ¼ acre were considered to be 55 people and the new housing had to house 60 people of the working classes. The scheme was carried out under Part II of the Working Classes Act, 1890 and therefore required approval by the Local Government Board.

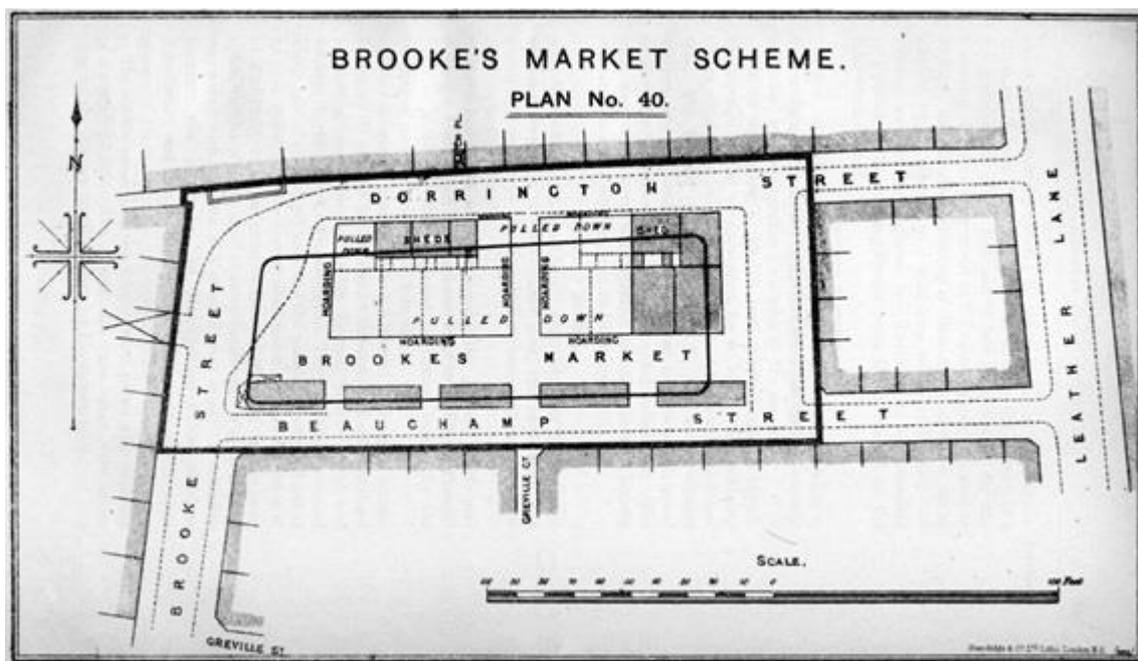


Fig. 1: Brooke's Market area prior to clearance and road widening<sup>i</sup>

The scheme was approved in 1892 and included a considerable widening of the street surrounding the area, inside which the new buildings, to be called Cranley Buildings, would be built. The name of the building probably followed the Council trend at that time of naming housing after rural Surrey towns, although the town is now spelt Cranleigh. The cost of purchasing the existing property, by claim and arbitration, amounted to £7,025 and was completed in 1893, and Holborn District contributed a further £3,000 in 1897. The Council decided not to put the land for sale and to erect the new property themselves. The Local Government Board sanctioned this on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1896 and the plans drawn up for a 3 storey building to house 60 persons in 6 two-roomed and 6 three-roomed tenements. The buildings cost £2,846 to construct and this included laying out adjoining land as open space. The surrounding streets cost £1,528 to construct.

The resulting buildings, opened in 1897, were fairly ordinary visually, although only 3 storeys when 5 storeys were the norm at this time. There is no indication in any surviving documentation as to why they are only 3 storeys so it is assumed that this was all that was

needed to house 60 people in the available space and to prevent the building overpowering other buildings surrounding the new marketplace.

The 1901 census shows a great diversity of occupations and a low occupancy per tenancy. The diversity is such that it makes interesting reading. The twelve tenements housed: a commercial traveller; widow (dress maker); widow (charwoman); market constable; compositor; cycle/general engineer; newsagent; market porter; hospital nurse (single occupant); unoccupied; translator/typist (single occupant); and a licensed victualler. The total occupancy being 41.

The occupancy is very similar from the 1911 census and also with a great diversity of occupations: solicitor's clerk, meat salesman, commissionaire, greengrocer, jewellery designer, brass finisher, newsagent, the market constable (different person than in the 1901 census), ironmonger, umbrella maker, cellarman and silversmith. Few of these tenants were local people and the jewellery designer and umbrella maker were German nationals. Just two tenements were overcrowded, but both those by just one person, and both had an infant in the family.

The costs of the Brooke's Market development are as follows:

	Outgoings	Income	
Cost of land and buildings	£7,505		
<b>TOTAL CLEARANCE COSTS</b>			<b>£7,505</b>
Street works	£1,528		
Cost of construction	£2,847		
<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>			<b>£11,880</b>
Contribution from District		£3,000	
<b>NET COST</b>			<b>£8,880</b>
Cost per person (based on 60 persons)			£148pp
Balance of accounts, 1913-1914	£280	£242	£38 (15%)

Table 1: Brooke's Market development costs

The cost of £148 per person is not excessive for a central London site, but was helped considerably by the £3,000 from Holborn District. Without that contribution the cost per person would have been £190. In 1913 the small dwellings were showing a good return on income at 15%. No original photographs can be found but those from 1970 in Fig. 2 Fig. 3 below show the building in its unaltered state.



Fig. 2: Cranley Buildings frontage, 1970  
(LMA ref: SC/PHL/02/0787)



Fig. 3: Cranley Buildings rear view, 1970  
(LMA ref: SC/PHL/02/0787)



Fig. 4: Cranley Buildings front, 2009



Fig. 5: Cranley Buildings rear, 2009

Fig. 4 and Fig. 5 show that the building has changed little since 1970 with the only visible external change being two rear doors (unfortunately, modern aluminium ones) replacing windows.

The building across the road from the front entrance to Cranley Buildings was completely destroyed by bombing in WW2.

## Footnotes

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<sup>i</sup> C. J. Stewart; The Housing Question in London; The London County Council; 1900; p236