

Kirkham Treasures

Celebrating Kirkham's Heritage

Tudor & Elizabethan Kirkham

Did You Know?

During the 16th Century Kirkham was home to a regular market and Moot Hall. Rumour has it that witch trials even took place in the area.

Tudor and Elizabethan Kirkham

16th Century Kirkham looked very different to how it looks today. In 1296 Kirkham was granted a Royal Charter and allowed to hold weekly markets in the market place which you still see today. At that time many residents of Kirkham were farmers and came to market every week to trade. Farmers in the area grew corn, flax and hemp. Flax was later used to create sails for ships whilst hemp was used to make rope. The farmers often kept cattle and often had a trade such as blacksmithing alongside their farm. At that time the town market would have been a lively and loud experience with farmers trading their stock.



Just outside the Market Square stood a market cross and the local Moot Hall (above), a place where shopkeepers could sell their wares and butchers set up shop selling local produce. Above the shops were the offices where all decisions about the area were made and also the Court Leet. The Moot Hall stayed open for many years, near the present Market Square, before in 1795 it was shut down when shopkeepers failed to improve the hall's foul conditions caused by the local butchers.

During the 16th Century Kirkham Grammar School was established offering education to the people of Kirkham. The School began as a small chantry school within the grounds of St Michael's Parish Church but later a school house was built on the site which is now St Michael's Primary School. Its walls were made of cob and clay, and it had a thatched roof and a clay floor.

During this period the plague swept through England reaching Kirkham on the 14th July 1631, taking its first victim. Over the following 10 months 304 people died, wiping out a large proportion of the town's inhabitants. Since the 13th Century there is also said to have been a cucking stool (dunking stool) in Kirkham where during Tudor and Elizabethan times witch trials would still take place.

Let's Imagine...

Can you imagine living in Kirkham in the 16th Century? What might life have been like for children?

Task

We need you to imagine that you're a child living in Kirkham during this era. Your task is to create a postcard from them to someone living in modern day Kirkham. On the front you will need to draw a picture showing what they might have seen back then. That may be the market, the school, farms, people, events or surrounding area. On the back you will need to write a short postcard message telling the people of modern day Kirkham what life was like.