

9 Basinghall Street

Ryan's Royal Equestrian Circus opened here from September to December 1832. The building was brightly lit by gas and the police were in attendance at all performances to keep order.



8 Boar Lane

Many circuses have performed on the Boar Lane site over the years, with the first references in 1816 for Mr Adam's New and Elegant Circus. In June 1822 Cooke's Olympic Pavilion opened, regularly presenting performances for the next 20 years.

The circus was often rebuilt and in February 1841 it was announced there would be an 'erection of a spacious circus on the vacant ground between Trinity Street and Bank Street ...for the use of Mr Cooke's superior equestrian stud'.

Other circus companies using this site through to the 1860s included Batty's New Circus Royal; Franconi's Cirque National de France; Pablo Fanque's Royal Circus; Bell's Great United Hippodrome and Circus; and Sanger's Grand Circus.



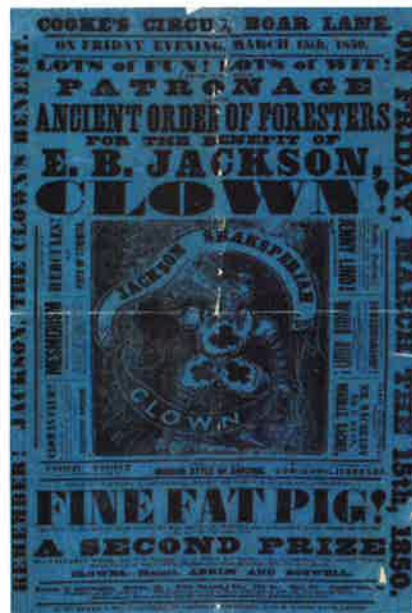
10 King Charles Croft

The earliest circus performance here dates back to September 1773 with Philip Astley, the father of 'modern' circus giving equestrian displays in a 'commodious croft on Lands Lane'.

In October 1842 Mr Cooke announced the erection of a 'circus of magnificent scale' on the site. Ducrow's Circus, Hengler's Circus and Pablo Fanque's Royal Circus all performed here.

During a March 1848 evening performance by Fanque the wooden beams supporting the gallery collapsed causing the circus to collapse inwards. Pablo Fanque searched the building for survivors, discovering that the only fatality was his own wife Susannah, who had been working in the box office below.

She was buried a few days later at St George's Field, thousands lined the streets to watch the cortege pass.



8 Trinity Leeds

Mr Kite erected his New Olympic Circus on ground between Commercial Street and Boar Lane in June 1810. He returned again in 1811 when he opened a 'Commodious Circus' on the same site. As well as running his own circus, Mr Kite was an adept performer and appeared with several companies during his lifetime.

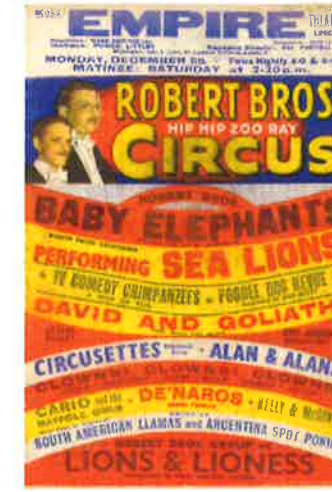


1 New Briggate

Charles Adams ran his Grand Circus here for two years, 1875-1876, until the site and neighbouring land was sold by the Tramway Company to become the home of The Grand Theatre.

2 The Empire Theatre

During the 1930s the Empire Theatre was home to Bostock's Royal Circus, Lord John Sanger's Circus and Chapman's Colossal Zoo-Circus.



3 Vicar's Croft

Spring 1834 - Circus entrepreneur Mr Cooke opened a short lived venue where he presented his New Royal Circus, or Royal Equestrian Circus, as sometimes known. This site now lies below Kirkgate Market.

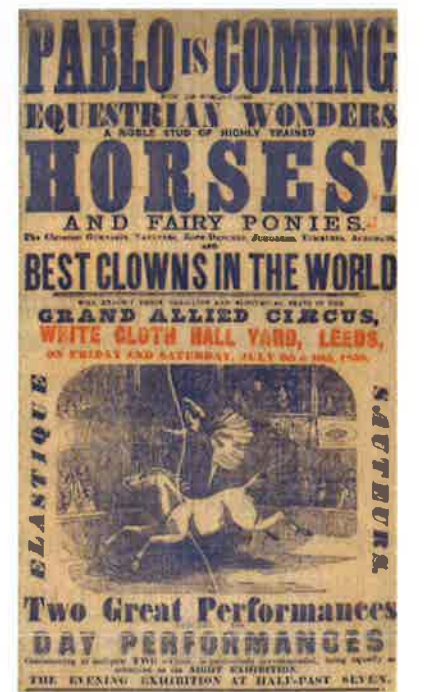
4 New York Street

Now home to a multi-story car park, this site was occasionally used for circus performances. Bertram Mills Circus and the National Circus appeared here in the 1920s and 1930s.

Bostock's Circus was once held on vacant ground, now home to the neighbouring bus station, opposite the Lloyd's Arms. The landlord, Thomas McDonald (c1912-1920), allowed the elephants to be scrubbed and hosed down in the stable yard.

5 White Cloth Hall

The White Cloth Hall was once the West Riding's premier cloth market. Dating from 1770, its open yard provided an occasional venue for Pablo Fanque's Allied Circus during the 1850s



6 Queen's Hall

Originally the headquarters of Leeds City Tramways, in 1961 it was redeveloped and opened as a new exhibition hall, renamed the Queen's Hall. In 1963 it hosted Billy Smart's Circus.



Image shows Spuggy, the clown of Billy Smart's Christmas Circus, being treated by Knoble the chimp, and an assistant at Leeds General Infirmary.

7 New Station Street

The Victoria Amphitheatre, was erected on the new road to the Joint Railway Stations in 1882. It could hold two thousand people and had three entrances. The ring was 42 ft. in diameter. The circus was 48 ft. high, with a length of 152 ft. and a breadth of 56 ft. increasing to 100 ft. where the gallery was situated. The circus was built for 'Sir' Robert Fossett's New Grand Cirque. The Fossett name is well known in the circus world and their circuses have gained a worldwide reputation across the years. One branch even has the title of 'Ireland's National Circus'.



Cookridge Street

Mr Newsome presented his Grand Circus on the site of what is now the O2 Academy, with special 11pm 'circus trains' laid on every Tuesday and Saturday to transport the circus goers home to Huddersfield and Halifax. Sanger's Grand New Circus; Pablo Fanque's Mammoth Circus; Tannaker's Great Dragon Company and Japanese Troupe; Hengler's Grand Cirque Variete; and Henry & Adams Grand Circus also used this venue. In October 1876, Charles Adams bought the site from Mr Newsome and redeveloped it, presenting his New Circus. The new building was 122 ft. long and 84 ft. wide, and could accommodate 5000 people. It was later known as the Hippodrome and Circus or the Leeds Circus building and the fascia is still visible today.



Cardigan Fields

Lying to the west of the city centre, Cardigan Fields was an open piece of land in the Kirkstall area. Buffalo Bill's Wild West show used this site on two occasions, 1891 and 1903. Local people were amazed to see a small herd of buffalo grazing on the banks of the river Aire. Earlier, in the 1860s, Tom Sayer's Circus visited the site. Tom Sayer was a famous Victorian bare-knuckle fighter. When he retired from fighting, he invested his money into a small circus and for a short time worked as a clown. Unfortunately his venture lasted little more than a year and he died a few years later in 1865.



Woodhouse Moor (Cinder Moor)

As the city centre developed in the 20th century, vacant ground was no longer readily available.

Woodhouse Moor became a favoured location for many companies. In the post WWII golden age of circus, the industry was dominated by the 'Big Three'; Bertram Mill's Circus, Chipperfield's Circus; and Billy Smart's Circus. All three of these drew large crowds to Woodhouse Moor.

The circus processions, from the Leeds Railway Station up to Woodhouse Moor attracted large crowds, all dressed in their Sunday best to witness the event. In later years, other well-known companies have visited this site; The Moscow State Circus; the Chinese State Circus; Cottle & Austen's Circus; Circus Ethiopia, to name but a few.

Philip Astley – Founder of the Modern Circus

It was during the 18th century that the foundations of the 'modern' circus were laid with Philip Astley commonly credited with its establishment in 1768. When Astley mounted his horse and gave an exhibition of *haute école* and trick riding, he was not even the first to do so. He never used the word 'circus' and he never called his performance area the 'ring'; that would be for others to name. A great imitator Astley was not afraid to take someone else's ideas and develop them into something bigger and better to suit his own purpose. It was this ability to develop ideas into a new style of popular entertainment and to place that within a purpose built venue that gives him the accolade of being the 'founder' of the modern circus.

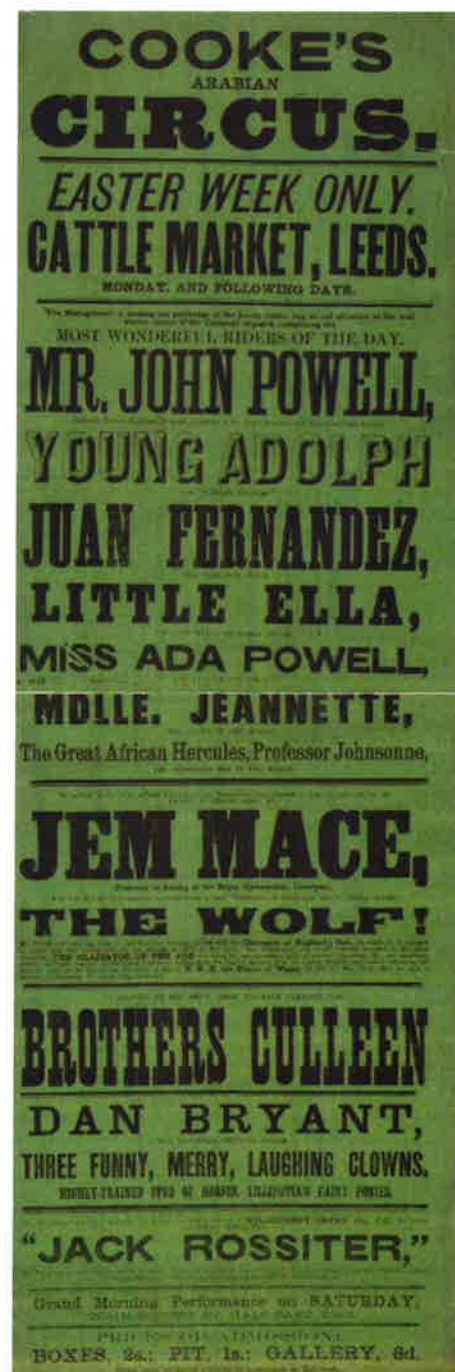
Leeds Royal Gardens

This site, between Headingley and Burley, began life as the Leeds Zoological and Botanical Gardens. Failing to make any money the site was bought in 1858 by a young entrepreneur, Thomas Clapham. He changed the name to the Royal Gardens and placed emphasis upon popular entertainment and fun. During this period both William Cooke's Circus and Pablo Fanque's Circus made appearances here

Cattle Market or Smithfield Market

Situated on North Street on the northern edge of the city, the site provided ample space for visiting circus companies. Sanger's Zoological Hippodrome and Mammoth Circus; Mander's Grand National Star Menagerie; Footit's Great Allied Circus; and Howe & Cushing's United States Circus all visited in the 1860s and 1870s. The latter was one of the first American circuses to visit Britain and the circus parade through the city was led by an enormous organ, mounted on a waggon and drawn by 40 cream coloured horses. A news report of the time states that in turning a corner, the waggon managed to demolish the wall of a shop, and that several children were also injured by falling under the feet of the horses. In 1919 the famous American circus belonging to Barnum & Bailey paid a visit, and in 1922 Frank Bostock's Circus was

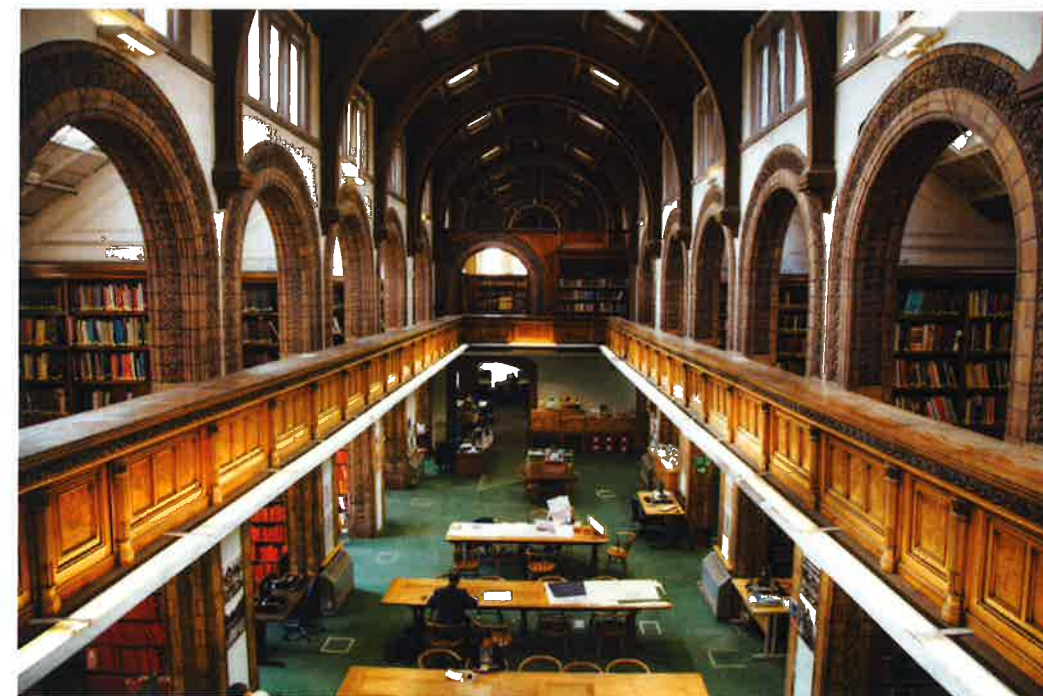
also there. The site of the Cattle Market is now an open space known as Lovell Park.



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Image of Woodhouse Moor courtesy of Leeds Civic Trust

Image of Spuggy the Clown courtesy of West Yorkshire Archives.

Text provided by Steve Ward and the Local & Family History Department.

