

Rhodes Information Sheet

This leaflet provides information about Cecil Rhodes, his legacy and why buildings in the borough have been named after him.

Why Rhodes?

The name 'Rhodes' is now mainly associated with Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902). He was a British mining magnate and empire builder in southern Africa who served as Prime Minister of the Cape Colony from 1890-96.

He believed that 'Anglo-Saxon' people were 'the first race in the world', and were superior to people of African heritage. This enabled him to use political, and military force to suppress Africans.

His *British South Africa Company* took the southern African territory (now Zimbabwe and Zambia) despite its occupation by indigenous Africans. The company named the territory Rhodesia.



Cecil Rhodes
(1835-1902)

Thomas Rhodes
1717 - 1787
|
Samuel Rhodes
1736 - 1794
|
William Rhodes
1774 - 1843
|
Francis William Rhodes
1807 - 1878
|
Cecil John Rhodes
1853 - 1902

**Rhodes Family
Tree**

Rhodes in Hackney

The Rhodes family settled in Hackney during the 1700s, leasing and owning land. This land was handed down from father to sons. The family were initially farmers, eventually setting up brickworks. The natural clay on their land was perfect for making bricks.

In time, sections of their farmland were leased to builders who constructed houses and laid out streets, some of which remain today.

Cecil Rhodes is the first family member to have connections to Africa. He was not born in Hackney, nor did he live here, but he retained a strong link with Dalston. When his father died in 1878 Cecil Rhodes inherited land in Dalston. Just a few years later, he considered standing as a Member of Parliament for Hackney Central, the constituency where he owned land. In the 1890s Cecil Rhodes and invested money to provide a gymnasium in Forest Road.

The Rhodes Legacy in Hackney



This map shows some of the land owned by William Rhodes (WR), Cecil Rhodes' father, in 1831. He divided his estate among his nine children including Cecil Rhodes.

With the wealth generated through his exploits in Southern Africa Cecil Rhodes was able to buy out his siblings' shares of the land, becoming the main holder of the Rhodes Estate.

In his will, Cecil Rhodes gave his land in Dalston to the Rhodes Trust Estate, a trust which existed to manage the income from the estate for its inheritors. This is different to the Rhodes Trust at the University of Oxford, an educational charity also set up through Cecil Rhodes' will.

In 1959 Hackney Borough Council bought the whole of the Rhodes Trust Estate, including 12 acres of land between Richmond Road and Middleton Road, to the west of Queensbridge Road, and some other groups of properties in Forest Road, Lansdowne Drive, Parkholme Road and Queensbridge Road for £187,500. The records of this land is in Hackney Archives.

The present Rhodes Estate in Dalston, containing 296 properties and the Rhodes Estate Community Hall were built by the London Borough of Hackney around 1975, after the council demolished all the existing housing on the land. Citing the existence of the name 'Dalston', as a village in Cumbria, various housing blocks in the estate were named after places in the historic Cumberland county. No reason is given in the available records for the naming of the development 'Rhodes Estate' although it is likely a duplication of the Rhodes Trust Estate.



The Provost Estate in Hoxton West (pictured right) was built in 1933 by the London County Council merging a site in Provost Street with the 'Nile Street Clearance Area'. 'Rhodes House' is one of the blocks on the present day Provost Estate.



The Rhodes Name Today

The 'Rhodes' family name is present across two estates in Hackney. It is not totally clear whether they were named after the historical family or Cecil Rhodes himself. However, the fact that in 1899 a local newspaper reports on Cecil Rhodes investment in the Dalston area with reference to 'Mr Cecil Rhodes and his brothers' suggests that his international activities and the wealth they generated, placed him at the forefront of people's minds at this time. Cecil Rhodes remained in the public consciousness into the 20th Century with several biographies published in 1920s and 1930s sharing his strong imperial views including superiority of the 'Anglo-saxon race' over all others.

Researchers continue to make an immediate connection between the name 'Rhodes' as a man whose racist, discriminatory and exploitative actions have continued to affect people of African heritage long after his death. In 2022 The World Bank named South Africa the most unequal country in the world.

The *Rhodes Must Fall* campaign resulted in the removal of his statue from the campus of the University of Cape Town in 2015. Academics are currently researching the full extent of the connection between Cecil Rhodes' Dalston holdings and his businesses in Southern Africa.