

Tanning in Whitwell

The tanning of animal hides for the production of leather was an important activity in the old parish of Whitwell throughout the nineteenth century although the origins of the two town tanneries here seem to date back much farther. There is some evidence to suggest that there may have been a third tannery in Hackford parish at Hackford Vale.

White's Norfolk Directory of 1845 notes Robert Leamon of Whitwell Hall as a farmer and tanner and also Stephen Leeds of Whitwell Green near Whitwell Common. These two tanneries and possibly the third in Hackford parish are all situated on the same small beck which runs through Hackford and Whitwell parishes, and supplied the quantity of water necessary for the tanning processes.

The 1851 Census returns list the two tanners of Whitwell:

Robert Leamon, Tanner employing 17 men, 1 woman, 5 boys and Farmer of 340 acres employing 21 men and 5 boys.

Stephen Leeds, Tanner employing 10 men and 3 boys and Farmer of 880 acres employing 30 men, 16 boys, 3 carpenters and 1 blacksmith.

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