



History Nugget for January 2019 : Robinson Crusoe

Tooting Hall was just north of Arnold Road, off the west side of London Road, near the Tooting end of Mitcham. The Ordnance Survey map of 1895 shows it just within the boundary of Tooting. Nearby stood Crusoe Farm.

Daniel Defoe had written the story of Robinson Crusoe in around 1720 and it was believed that he once lived in Tooting, at Tooting Hall, despite this having been built 50 years after his death. As the late Eric Montague put it in his Mitcham Histories book "North Mitcham": *in the 1880s Tooting Hall was occupied by a Holborn bookseller called Bumpus who can be imagined to have promoted his residence being linked to such a distinguished literary figure.*

Nevertheless, the nearby dairy farm called Crusoe Farm got its name from this local legend before that in around 1867, as described in a newspaper article of 1922: *A descendant of Captain Cook, the explorer, and the oldest inhabitant of Mitcham, Mrs Taylor, aged 96, has died in the house in which she established a one-cow dairy 55 years ago. Mrs Taylor named her dairy "Crusoe Farm Dairy."*

The roads of houses that now cover this area retain names from the Robinson Crusoe story. In addition to Robinson Road that connects to Colliers Wood High Street, there is also Crusoe Road, Pitcairn Road, Island Road and Friday Road. Also, Taylor Road may have been named after the Mrs Taylor, of the Crusoe Farm Dairy.

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