



Isabella Crozier – Murderer

Sunderland's first parish workhouse for the poor was built in 1740 in Church Walk next to Sunderland Parish Church.

The Workhouse was built to house 90 people and Isabella Crozier was one of its most notorious "inmates". Isabella would leave the workhouse every day to go begging door to door for work in these East End streets. Few people had the money to employ her, but one day a stone mason called Richard Thompson needed help because his wife was sick and couldn't look after their one year old daughter. He employed Isabella for 2 shillings a week. Shortly after starting to work for the Thompson's, Isabella took the child to the shops but never returned. A few weeks later Isabella turned up at the Bishop Auckland workhouse with the baby but it was dead; its head had been caved in.

Isabella was later found not guilty of murder by reason of insanity and was sentenced to a lunatic asylum to be detained at "Her Majesty's Pleasure".

The Sunderland Workhouse was built to house 90 "inmates", but 800 was the highest number of inmates that actually lived there.