

PEOPLE HEADINGLEY



John Russell, *John Marshall*, 1802
University of Leeds Art Collection



John Russell, *Jane Marshall*, 1802
University of Leeds Art Collection

The Marshall Family Industrialists

John Marshall (1765-1845), domineering and ruthless by reputation, led the way for Leeds to become the world centre of the flax-spinning industry in the early nineteenth century, and went on to amass enormous personal wealth and power. At the same time, the Marshall family played a significant part in local Headingley affairs.

John was the only surviving son of Jeremiah Marshall, a linen-draper who had a thriving business in town. He entered the family business at 16, but on a visit to Darlington he saw newly-invented machines in operation spinning flax. When his father died in 1787, he sold the business, borrowed more money and risked it all to set up in Scotland Mill at Adel (you can still see the remains in Adel woods). Here he toiled away experimenting with new methods, finally achieving success when he took on the talented young engineer Matthew Murray. In 1790 Marshall moved his new enterprise to Holbeck, where he expanded and by 1803 he was employing over 1000 workers. He made a fortune from the war with France, and diversified into financial markets, into stocks and bonds, with a Midas touch.

In 1795, John Marshall married Jane Pollard (1770-1847), daughter of a prosperous Halifax merchant. As the wife of one of Leeds' most successful and wealthy millowners, with an important place in society, she became the mother of distinguished children who made their mark in the world, and mistress of the family's several great houses. But beyond all that she also holds a special place in the literary world as the childhood and life-long friend of Dorothy Wordsworth, William Wordsworth's sister and chronicler of their shared life. Jane had probably known John from youth: he went to school near

Halifax, he shared her father's business interests, and both families were Unitarians. Jane invited Dorothy to their wedding, the couple spent their honeymoon in the Lake District, and became part of the Wordsworth circle of friends.

Like most millowners, John Marshall had always lived close to his mills, but as conditions in town worsened he decided to move his family out, and in 1805 as their wealth increased they moved to the still rural village of Headingley, a healthier place for his



Ordnance Survey 1851

children to grow up in, renting the splendid New Grange mansion (now The Grange, still there in Beckett Park). But the rent was high and a host of servants were needed to run the house. Jane gave birth to twelve children in twenty years, five sons and seven daughters. In 1818 John and Jane decided to give up the expensive lease of New Grange and instead bought nearby Headingley House (built around 1802 on land between Kirkstall Lane and Beckett Park) which they extended to house their ever-growing family, their numerous visitors, and a retinue of servants. Three of Jane's five sisters never married, and after their parents' death, came to live with the family in Headingley.



Headingley House



Headingley Lodge

When his second son, John Marshall Junior, married in 1828 John Marshall decided to buy a neighbouring property for him to live in, Headingley Lodge, set in grounds adjoining his own. In fact Headingley Lodge and the House fitted together well, forming one estate. A joint entrance to the two houses with a gatehouse was constructed on North Lane opposite the end of St Michael's Road, and from there the carriage drive forked, one side leading to Headingley House and the other to Headingley Lodge.



Gate House

Four of John's sons joined the business, allowing him more time for his many intellectual interests - education, social politics, geology. He was a founder member and first president of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, and supported the Mechanics' Institute. He established schools for the children employed in his mills. A Liberal with a strong interest in reform, he briefly entered politics, and in 1826 was the first millowner to be elected MP for Yorkshire, representing its increasingly significant commercial life.

John Marshall Junior (1797 – 1836) was an active partner in the business, together with his brothers. He was elected one of the first two MPs for Leeds in 1832. He also took on local roles, taking his turn as Headingley Overseer of the Poor and Surveyor of the Highways, among other activities.

James Garth (1802-1873) was John's third son. He was to become a leading figure in the firm, responsible for significant improvements in machinery and working practices. When a new larger mill was required it was he who recommended the unique single-storey plan finally adopted, with its vast two-acre space, its innovative ventilation and lighting system – and famously sheep grazing on the roof! Temple Mill opened in 1840 and was a wonder of its age. Concerned about the conditions of the poor, he believed that extending the vote would lead to improvement. In 1841 he helped to found the Leeds Parliamentary Reform Association and offered Temple Mill for a mass meeting. His novel ideas on proportional representation won approval from his friend, the philosopher/economist John Stuart Mill. He was MP for Leeds from 1847 to 1852. Like his father he took a strong interest in social reform and put some of his ideas into effect locally. In 1843, at a time of severe distress because of economic depression, he gave four acres of land in Headingley for garden allotments for the benefit of the working classes, on the principle of a 'Labourers' Friendly Society' (they were covered by St Anne's Road in the 1930s). He was a prime mover behind the Headingley Mutual Improvement Society, set up in 1849, which met at the Glebe School and provided evening lectures and study facilities for young men seeking to improve themselves.

John's other son involved in the business, Henry Cowper Marshall (1808 - 1884), lived a little further out, at Weetwood Hall. [p148] He was Mayor of Leeds 1842–1843. John's youngest son, Arthur, never married, and when James Garth died in 1873, he lived alone in Headingley House, though with a full complement of servants.

The Marshalls were concerned for the physical well-being also of their workers. In 1833, John Marshall gave evidence to Parliament's Select Committee on Public Walks. Responding to a range of questions, he stated that the only open spaces in the town were the three moors at Woodhouse, Holbeck and Hunslet (for a population that was now 72,000), and he believed that the Corporation would be prepared to levy a rate to establish public walks, or alternatively wealthy individuals living in the town would be willing to subscribe to such a project. When asked if the working classes should pay an admission charge, his vehement answer was that charging would be 'impractical'.



In 1837, the idea of establishing public gardens in Leeds was launched, on the model of similar gardens in other major cities around the country. A committee was formed to oversee the project in Leeds, which went ahead and the choice of site fell on Headingley. The register of shareholders in the Gardens Company shows that the principal supporters of the project were the three wealthy Marshall brothers, James Garth and Arthur Marshall in Headingley House, and Henry Cowper Marshall at Weetwood Hall. Between them they held 65 shares. Eventually, the Zoological and Botanical Gardens opened in 1840.

Zoological and Botanical Gardens, 1851

In the 1840s, Railway Mania hit Leeds – and Henry Cowper became Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Leeds & Thirsk Railway Company. The railway was forced by the intransigence of local landowners to take a line well to the south of Headingley village, which meant it was not so convenient for residents in the well-to-do areas around the village. The landowners were actually Henry Cowper himself and his neighbour, Christopher Beckett, the new owner of New Grange. The Station (initially named Headingley & Kirkstall) ended up in the middle of fields, a mile away from Headingley village! The completed line through Headingley finally opened on 9 July 1849 when three trains carried 2000 shareholders from Leeds to Thirsk and back.



Headingley Station

Meanwhile, the Zoo struggled. John Marshall was proved correct, charging was 'impractical', and the Gardens failed to make ends meet. In 1848, they were offered for sale, and were bought by a banker, John Smith (original Treasurer of the Gardens Company), and then sold to one of the original movers of the scheme, Henry Cowper Marshall. He leased the Gardens to the entrepreneur showman Tommy Clapham. It was useful that Henry Cowper was powerful in the Railway Company. Headingley gained a second station when he organised the Royal Gardens halt at the southern end of the Gardens, to ameliorate problems of access. Regrettably, the Gardens still struggled, and the halt closed in 1857, shortly before the Gardens themselves closed the following year.



Headingley Old Gardens Estate, 1908

Henry Cowper reverted to the earlier idea of developing the area for housing. In his possession they were opened on occasions to the public until 1869 when they were finally sold for building development. When finally developed they became the Headingley Old Gardens Estate. A new road named after Lord Cardigan was laid through, and building plots on either hand were sold.

John Marshall died in his Lakeland home in 1845. His sons remained in Headingley, though they too had other homes and great estates in the Lakes. Their interest in the business began to wane and Marshall's failed to keep up with competition. The flax industry in Leeds stagnated in the 1870s and then declined, and John Marshall's grandsons turned their backs on the business which had been the source of their wealth. Finally, in 1886, the great flax-spinning firm which John Marshall had founded collapsed, and the next generation of Marshalls left Headingley for good.



Ordnance Survey, 1908

In 1888 Headingley House and the surrounding land were put up for sale; the estate was bought by Joseph Hepworth, the clothing entrepreneur, but then sold for development,

in 1900. Headingley Lodge was sold separately to the current tenant, Thomas Richard Leuty, another linen manufacturer, and survived into the 1950s. Both estates were developed for housing, and now comprise the Ash Road area. The site of the gatehouse was sold to the Baptist Church, which moved from South Parade in town to North Lane, bringing its name with it; the drive at the side was named South Parade, and the lodge was moved there in 1908.



South Parade Baptist Church



Gate House

Memories of Headingley House, Headingley Lodge and their various residents have died away. But much of the Marshalls' legacy remains: [Headingley Station](#) is still in use, and remains of the [Zoological Gardens](#) survive (the Bear Pit, the walls, and other features), along with the layout of the Headingley Old Gardens Estate along Cardigan Road, the little gatehouse in South Parade, and perhaps the evocative Lake District names of Derwentwater and Langdale given to some of the streets in the [Ash Road area](#), a link with the Marshalls' other much-loved landscape to which they finally escaped.

Note: John Marshall's eldest son William (1796 – 1872) became MP for several constituencies, and John's daughter Julia Anne (1809–1841) married Rev. Henry Venn Elliott in 1833 and wrote the words for several hymns in her husband's publication *Psalms and Hymns for Public, Private and Social Worship* (1835). Two other daughters made interesting marriages: Cordelia to the polymath William Whewell of Cambridge, and Mary Anne to Thomas Spring-Rice, 1st Baron Monteagle, Chancellor of the Exchequer - which shows the status the Marshalls had achieved and the circles they moved in.

Eveleigh Bradford

Local Historian 2008-2018, revised 2021

For more info, see Chapter Nine, 'The Marshalls', in Eveleigh Bradford, *Headingley* (2008), and Eveleigh's short biographies of John Marshall (2009), Jane Marshall (2012) and James Garth Marshall (2018) in 'They Lived in Leeds', on The Thoresby Society website, at <https://www.thoresby.org.uk/content/people/people.php>. For the portraits, see the University of Leeds Art Collection, [John Russell](#).