

M&S History



M&S in Leeds Timeline

- 1884 Michael Marks arrives in Leeds as an immigrant from Russian Poland. Michael meets Isaac Dewhirst, owner of a textile wholesale business at 32 Kirkgate, who lends him money to buy stock (Dewhirst still supplies goods to M&S today). Michael sets up his first stall in the Kirkgate open market, using the slogan 'Don't ask the price, it's a penny'.
- 1886 Michael marries Hannah Cohen, also a refugee from Russia, in the Belgrave Street synagogue.
- 1889 Michael takes up a stall inside the covered market that opened on Kirkgate in 1857.
- 1894 Michael meets Tom Spencer, Dewhirst's book-keeper, and the two go into a partnership that ends on Tom's death in 1905.
- 1904 Marks & Spencer opens a Penny Bazaar in eight units of the Cross Arcade, which had newly opened on Boar Lane. These close in 1910.
- 1907 Michael Marks dies on New Year's Eve.
- 1909 A new Marks & Spencer store opens at 76 Briggate. This store is rebuilt in 1925.
- 1914 The First World War breaks out: goods become scarcer, prices rise and Marks & Spencer cannot maintain the penny price limit – the age of 'Penny Bazaars' ends.
- 1935 One of the first Marks & Spencer Cafe Bars opens in Leeds. These restaurants were very popular during the Second World War as customers didn't have to use their ration tokens.
- 1938 The Rialto cinema is demolished at 46 Briggate to make way for a new Marks & Spencer store. But with the war under way, the new building is taken over by the Ministry of Works for storage, and to use the sub-basement as an air-raid shelter!
- 1951 47-49 Briggate opens at last as a new Marks & Spencer 'superstore'. The store at 76 Briggate closes.
- 1984 To celebrate 100 years of M&S, a commemorative clock is unveiled at Kirkgate Market, 200 yards from where Michael Marks set up his first market stall.
- 1989 A new 'satellite' store opens at 64 Briggate; known as the Kirkgate store, it closes in 1994.
- 1998 M&S opens the first of its new coffee shops in Leeds, simply called 'The Coffee Bar'. It was opened by former employee Harry Seddon, aged 85 and was visited by over 8000 customers in the first week.
- 2011 To celebrate over 125 years in Leeds, M&S supports a project to improve Victoria Gardens outside Leeds Art Gallery, Central Library and Henry Moore Institute.
- 2012 The M&S Company Archive moves to Leeds, and the Marks in Time exhibition opens at the Michael Marks Building.