



Headingley Development Trust

Promoting Headingley

A Headline History of Headingley

Headingley Village

The beginnings of Headingley village are lost in the mists of time. But its situation in a prime location suggests that it might be very ancient. The village is located on the higher, drier ridge between what would have been the less hospitable valleys of the River Aire to the west and Meanwood Beck to the east. And it is in a saddle on the ridge, providing ready access between the valleys. [An off-set cross-roads is still central to Headingley.]

The Anglo-Saxon Era

During the sixth century, the Angles arrived, settling in the north, giving England its name – and also naming the village. Among their number were Headda and his family, who founded, or perhaps occupied, the settlement on the hill, which became known as ‘Headda’s people’s place’ – or ‘Head-ing-ley’. Under Headda’s descendants, the village evidently flourished. [One field remains, on Headingley Hill, now used for grazing.]

The Viking Era

The Vikings colonised the north in the ninth century, and Jorvik Scir (York Shire) became one of the fourteen shires of the Danelaw. The Shire was divided into Ridings (thirdings), each in turn comprising wapentakes (where votes were taken by a show of weapons). The West Riding included Skyrack Wapentake, extending from the Wharfe to the Aire, and named after the Scir Ac (or Shire Oak) meeting place on the edge of Headingley village green. So, a millennium ago, Headingley was the number one settlement in Skyrack Wapentake.

[The oak stood for another thousand years, finally collapsing in 1941.]



The Norman Era

The north did not take kindly to William of Normandy’s conquest in 1066, and rebellion broke out. In response, William carried out the brutal Harrying of the North, looting, burning and slaughtering. The impact is recorded twenty years later in the Domesday Book. Headingley was reduced to two households, and its value plummeted by 90%, from 40 shillings before the Conquest to 4 shillings after the Harrying. (Other settlements nearby were deserted.)

Ilbert de Lacy fought with William at Hastings, and was a major participant in the Harrying. In return, he received vast grants of land in West Yorkshire, including Headingley manor (as well as lands in Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire). He was made Baron of Pontefract (and built a castle there), and was succeeded by his son Robert and his grandson, another Ilbert. The latter’s brother Henry became the fourth Baron.

The manor of Headingley (with other manors) was granted by the first Ilbert to one of his commanders, Walter Poitevin, and Headingley Hall by the Shire Oak was his manor house.

The Monastic Era

Henry de Lacy, fourth Baron Pontefract, fell seriously ill, and vowed that if he recovered, he would build an abbey. Recover he did, and in 1152 Henry laid the foundations of Kirkstall Abbey 'with his own hand'. He endowed the Abbey with lands, later including all of Headingley and its environs.

Abbott Alexander and his successors oversaw the cultivation of their Headingley estate. They built granges, or farms, including New Grange [now Kirkstall Grange, in Beckett Park] (others included Moor Grange nearby). They cleared woodlands, except Weet-wood, Mean-wood and Ridge Cliff, in the steep valley of Meanwood Beck, where a mill was built. Headingley Hall and other lands were rented from the Abbey by tenant farmers, for grazing or cultivation [the legacy of medieval ridge-and-furrow ploughing is still evident in Beckett Park]. Headingley Moor, north of the village, remained common land; a track across it led to the Monk Bridge built over the Beck, providing access for the monks to their lands beyond. Perhaps a hundred people lived in and around Headingley.



The Dissolution Era

In 1539, Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries, and Kirkstall Abbey was surrendered to the crown. But it was not just the Abbey which was dissolved, so too was its great estate, which descended steadily into private hands. The new owners made their mark on the landscape.

Much of the Headingley lands were acquired by Sir Robert Savile in 1564. His estates were inherited by the Brudenell family, Earls of Cardigan, in 1671, who soon after sold Headingley Hill to the Walker family. Over the centuries, the village had revived. Headingley Hall was now rebuilt. In 1619 Headingley's first church was established by the village green, with funds from a local farmer and land from Sir John Savile. In 1783 Lord Cardigan gave more land for a school next door, paid for by local subscriptions. And a tannery and a malt kiln were established on North Lane. At the Dissolution, perhaps a couple of hundred people lived in and around Headingley; but two-and-a-half centuries later, by the end of the eighteenth century, this had increased to some 1300. [A few houses from this era still survive in Headingley centre.]



The remaining lands around Headingley were sold in 1583. To the north, the New Grange lands were bought by the Foxcrofts, and sold on to the Wades in 1596, who rebuilt New Grange in 1626, and again in 1752. Further north again, Weetwood was bought in 1620 by another branch of the Foxcrofts, who built Weetwood Hall in 1625. Meanwhile, beyond the Beck, the Whalley family bought the land they had leased from the Abbey, where they built Whalley House.

Headingley Suburb

In principle, Headingley became a suburb of Leeds when the village was included within the new borough's bounds by the Royal Charter of 1626 (in recognition of his support, the borough's coat of arms included owls from the crest of Sir John Savile, lord of the manor of Headingley). But Headingley was separated from Leeds by Woodhouse Moor, and connected only by a narrow country lane: the village was a long way (200 years) from becoming a suburb proper.

A significant step forward was the development of the Leeds-Otley Turnpike from 1755 onwards, which re-routed this highway through Headingley, and opened the village to new connections. Soon, on either side of the turnpike, and sustained by the local and the passing population, two inns were opened, both named after the famous Oak – the Original Oak and the Skyrack.

The early nineteenth century saw increased expansion, fuelled by flight from the industrial pollution of Leeds – Headingley offered a breath of fresh air, and the population of the township (which included Burley, to the south) trebled to over 4,000. In 1835, Headingley was incorporated into the borough of Leeds, when the township became a ward, electing representatives to the Council.

Commuting grew, to the extent that in 1838 a group of Headingley residents formed a company to run a regular horse-drawn omnibus – the first suburban bus service in Leeds [the no1 bus still runs through Headingley]. So Headingley village became Leeds' Number One Suburb.



The Earlier Victorian Era

With the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837, the **foundation** of Headingley as a suburb began. The new Victoria Road (1838) was named in her honour, and the new bus service of 1838 was followed a decade later by the railway (Headingley Station opened in 1849). The increased population necessitated the rebuilding of St Michael's Church, also in 1838, and it was followed shortly by the Methodist Chapel in 1844. Also in 1844, the school was rebuilt [now the Parish Hall].

Landowners saw the opportunities, Lord Cardigan chief among them. In 1829 he secured an Act to enclose Headingley Moor, with remnants of the village green and the road verges. On its completion in 1834, the development of Far Headingley village began, with the construction of Moor Road and Cottage Road, and the opening of two inns, the Three Horse Shoes and the New Inn. On the other side of Headingley village, Headingley Hill was sold for building plots, and new roads running north from Headingley Lane were laid (Grosvenor, Cumberland, North Hill and North Grange Roads). (These two developments encircled Headingley village to the east, separated only by Headingley Hall.)



Villas and mansions were built along Headingley Lane (like Buckingham House), on Headingley Hill (for instance, Grosvenor House) and in Far Headingley (such as Moorfield Lodge and Moor Grange). Alongside the big houses, smaller stone houses and stone terraces, which typify this era, were built, in the middle of Headingley (around the Chapel), on Headingley Hill and in Far Headingley, and following land sales by Lord Cardigan in

1851, in the Claremonts. Meanwhile, the hamlet of Wrangthorn, on the edge of Woodhouse Moor, was re-christened 'Hyde Park Corner' by a local farmer apparently impressed by a visit to London, doubtless to capitalise on the popularity of Headingley.

(Meanwhile, in 1825, the Whalleys' estate in Meanwood was bought by the Oates family. And in 1834 the New Grange estate was bought by the Beckett family, who renamed the house Kirkstall Grange.)

The burgeoning population of Leeds and its suburbs required material and spiritual amenities. The population of Headingley township trebled again in this era, to over 13,000. In 1837 (following a cholera outbreak) filter beds were laid in Weetwood (east of Otley Road) to purify the water supply. In the same year, Headingley residents launched a plan for Zoological and Botanical Gardens, to provide 'recreation for the people'. They opened in 1840,



but were never successful, and finally closed in 1858 [only the surrounding wall and the Bear Pit remain; Cardigan Road now runs through the site]. Meanwhile, in 1857, Leeds bought Woodhouse Moor for the town. And shortly afterwards, next to the Moor, the Royal Park Gardens were opened – but these too were short-lived.

The Later Victorian Era

In the latter half of Victoria's reign, Headingley **expanded** as a suburb – the population of the township trebled again in this period, to over 40,000. One contributing factor was the steady development of transport: Leeds' first horse-drawn tram arrived in Headingley in 1871; in turn, this was upgraded to a steam tram in 1883; and finally the line was electrified in 1899 [the electric tram survived until 1956]. A tram depot was built on Otley Road, in Far Headingley.

Two new Anglican churches were needed – St Chad's in Far Headingley was consecrated in 1868, and St Augustine's Wrangthorn at Hyde Park Corner in 1871 (replacing a temporary iron church of 1867). St Michael's was rebuilt again in 1886. Meanwhile, on Headingley Hill, a Congregational Church was built in 1864, and at Hyde Park Corner, a Free Methodist Chapel in 1886 [now a Bethel Apostolic Church]. The Methodist presence was demonstrated by the construction of the great Wesleyan College [now Hinsley Hall] in 1868.



From 1869 onwards, the Cardigan estates were sold, culminating in a huge auction in 1888. Mansions and villas continued to be built for the wealthy, for instance along Shire Oak Road (such as Arncliffe, 1893), and the development of Weetwood began, on Hollin Lane and Weetwood Lane (where Oxley Hall was built in 1861). But this was the era of the brick terrace. Workers were also moving out of town, and developers bought up fields for housing [they thereby fossilised the field patterns, which also explains the odd angles and corners at the ends of many streets]. Brick terraces were built in Hyde Park and South Headingley, some bearing local names, like the Wrangthorns, the Brudenells and the Royal Parks, as well as the Hessles, the Weltons and the Norwoods, the Manors and Richmonds. They were built around the west side of Headingley village, in the Cardigan Triangle (in the Broomfields, beyond

the Old Gardens), in the Granbys (in the heart of the village itself) and in the Ash Road area, to the west (Trelawns, Grimthorpes, Estcourts). They rose also in the Highburys, above Meanwood Beck.

Amenities followed suit. In 1877, purpose-built shops were erected on Otley Road, next to Wood Lane. A new school, Headingley Primary School, was opened on Bennett Road in 1882. The Royal Park Gardens were lost to terraces (which preserved the name), but Woodhouse Moor was laid out as a park, and Woodhouse Ridge was bought in 1876. In 1890, on land beyond Cardigan Road, bought by three Headingley residents at the great Cardigan Sale, the Headingley Cricket and Rugby Grounds were opened. And two more inns were established, at Hyde Park Corner, and in Far Headingley, the Woodman Inn.

The Edwardian Era

The new century and the new reign brought **refinement** to Headingley. The main new housing development was at West Park, in the arts and crafts style, on land bought at the great Cardigan sale of 1888, along Otley Road and to the west. Villas were still built, like Red Hill on Shire Oak Road in 1901 and Highgarth on North Hill Road in 1902. But a harbinger of new forms of housing was the mansion style block of flats at Grange Court in 1912, overlooking Woodhouse Ridge, the first in Leeds.

A new parade of shops was built at West Park, and another at Hyde Park, The Crescent – both with distinctive Dutch gables. The filter beds on Otley Road were extended to the west, to provide decent water to the expanding population of Leeds. Also serving the wider area were new educational developments. Leeds Girls High School was built on Headingley Lane in 1905, and when the New Grange estate was bought from the Beckett family by Leeds Corporation, a Teacher Training College was built around Kirkstall Grange in 1913. The parkland to the south became Beckett Park, and the fields to the north became West Park Fields.



A striking art deco Church of Christ Scientist [later the Elinor Lupton Centre] was built on Headingley Hill, next to Buckingham House, in 1912. And heralding the new century, no less than three cinemas opened – the Hyde Park Picture House in 1908, the Headingley Picture House on Cottage Road (1912) and the Lounge Cinema in the centre in 1916 [the first two still flourish].

The Inter-War Era

The years between the two world wars saw Headingley **consolidated** as a suburb. Most of the fields and open spaces left by the terrace-developers were in-filled by estates of 'twenties and 'thirties semi-detached houses.

On the slope of Headingley Hill, an estate of small semis was built in the grounds of Buckingham House in the 1920s. Nearby, semis appeared on Woodhouse Cliff, flanking Walmsley Road and on either side of Springbank. The Cardigan Triangle was extended by Newport View, and classic 'thirties semis were built in The Turnways, in fields next to the Stadium. (Cumberland Court on Cardigan



Road is a block of flats of this era.) On one side of Headingley village, the Ash Road area saw semis spreading west, and on the other side, along Alma Road, appeared distinctive art deco 'sunshine' houses.

North of the village, encroaching on the park, the largest estate of semis was developed at Beckett's Park. More were built beyond St Chad's in the Church Woods and Drummonds. And across Otley Road, the Moor Parks were built in the grounds of large houses (on Castle Grove Avenue, there are more art deco semis).

In West Park, there was substantial development of semi estates south of Welburn Avenue, and west beyond Spen Lane, on Moor Grange fields. There was also substantial development in Weetwood, especially east of Weetwood Lane, and further north, the Foxhill estate.

The impact of the new University of Leeds (established in 1904) began to be felt – Weetwood and Oxley Halls in Weetwood were acquired for student accommodation, and in 1928, Devonshire Hall was built on Headingley Hill.

New amenities in the neighbourhood included South Parade Baptist Church, built at the end of North Lane in 1925, Lawnswood School built beside Otley Road in West Park in 1931, and another park, The Hollies, given to the city in 1921 by William Brown in memory of his son, Major Harold Brown DSO, who was killed in the Great War.



The Modern Era

After the Second World War, there was little initial development in Headingley. In 1950, Leeds University acquired Moorfield Lodge and Moor Grange for their Tetley Hall residence. West Park School was opened in 1952. And Beckett Park College became part of what is now Leeds Beckett University. The last of the parks encircling Headingley, Meanwood Park, was bought from Captain Oates' brother in 1954. Later, a new station was built on the trackside at Burley Park.

It was not really until the 'sixties that more housing development got under way, when The Hollins in the south of Weetwood and the Foxhills to the north were extended. But Headingley had become so consolidated that most new development actually took the form of **re-development**. New housing estates have been built on previously education sites – for instance, Victoria Gardens on the Leeds Girls High School site to the south on Headingley Lane, and the Tetley Hall site to the north in Far Headingley. Another is on the site of West Park School, closed and demolished in 2014. Meanwhile, the western filter beds have become surplus to requirements, and have been developed as Central Park.



Some redevelopment, of sites or buildings, has been for dedicated housing. Affordable housing, for instance, on Cardigan Road (on the site of the Old Gardens) includes Bear Pit Gardens, Cardigan Court and Valley Court. Headingley Hall now provides accommodation for older people, as do many other residences – the old tram depot has been replaced by retirement housing, Orchard Court and St Chad's Court. And new student residences have been built on Headingley Hill, at James Baillie Park and the Lupton Residences.

As well as sites, individual buildings have been redeveloped. Many of the old detached villas and mansions, like Buckingham House, have been converted into apartments. And a good many smaller semis and terraces have been turned from family homes into houses in multiple occupation (shared houses) (though there is a steady trend to re-conversion).

Some redevelopment has been for commercial purposes, like Headingley Office Park (originally all offices, some of the blocks have in turn been further developed as apartments). And the local economy has benefited (not always architecturally) from new shopping parades, like the Arndale Centre (renamed Headingley Central) and St Anne's Parade, in Headingley Centre, and the parade on Butchers Hill – all developed on existing sites in the 'sixties. Pubs have also made use of existing buildings, like the Arc (in the former Lounge Cinema) or the Taps (in an old pumping station) or the Box (in offices). And the Stadium has been progressively redeveloped.



With the turn of the millennium, Headingley residents have sought to emulate their predecessors (who pioneered the first school, the first bus, the Old Gardens, and the Stadium) in order to redevelop the community. Community associations have arisen, and Headingley Development Trust has redeveloped Headingley Primary School on Bennett Road as a community centre, Headingley Enterprise and Arts Centre, the HEART of Headingley.

Dr Richard Tyler, 2018

Further Information

Information on individual parts of Headingley and its neighbourhood may be found on the [Headingley & Hyde Park](#) and the [Far Headingley, Weetwood & West Park](#) pages on the *HeadingleyLeeds* website, at <https://www.headingleyleeds.com/> These accounts are taken from the two Neighbourhood Design Statements for *Far Headingley, Weetwood & West Park* (2005, revised 2014) and for *Headingley & Hyde Park* (2010); copies of both are available at HEART.

For historic photographs, go to [Historic Headingley & Our Neighbours](#) also on the website. The two essential histories of the area are Eveleigh Bradford's *Headingley: A Pleasant Rural Village* (Northern Heritage Publications, 2008) (also available at HEART) and David Hall's *Far Headingley, Weetwood and West Park* (Far Headingley Village Society, 2000) (thanks to both for their advice). Further details are in Michael Collinson's *Chapters in Headingley History* (privately printed, 2016).