



1874 – University: The first student

The first student of the Yorkshire College was Shadrach Stephenson, a miner. One of his textbooks, signed by him, is in the University archive.

1884 – City: Marks and Spencer start business

The famous 'penny bazaar' started as a stall in Leeds market, and went on to become one of the UK's largest chains.

1888 – Research: Beginning of association of Barr & Stroud

The Admiralty asked professors of Engineering (Barr) and Physics (Stroud) to design a short-base rangefinder for infantry use.

The successful design led to the beginning of the first University 'spin-out' company.

1893 – City: Leeds becomes a city by Royal charter

Leeds had been a wealthy town based on trading wool, but it became a city when Queen Victoria granted it the new status in 1893.

1903 – City: The Black Prince in City Square is unveiled

The Black Prince statue by Thomas Brock is many travellers' first sight of Leeds as it stands proudly in City square outside the railway station. The imposing statue took seven years to complete and had to be cast in Belgium because it was too large for any British foundry.

1904 – University: The University of Leeds is born

The Yorkshire College became the University of Leeds when it was granted a Royal Charter as an independent body by King Edward VII.

1911 – City: Houdini fails to escape

Leeds brewery Tetley's challenged escape artist Harry Houdini to escape from a padlocked metal cask of Tetley's ale. Houdini rose to the challenge but failed the task, and had to be rescued from the cask before he drowned.

1915 – Research: William Bragg jointly awarded Nobel Prize in Physics

As Cavendish professor of physics at the University, Bragg invented the x-ray spectrometer. He founded the new science of x-ray analysis of crystal structure with his son, and they were jointly awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics.

1920 – University: Arrival of JRR Tolkien at Leeds

Tolkien became a reader in English Language at the University and was appointed to a chair in 1924. During this time he lectured and contributed to a variety of University publications, as well as telling his children bedtime stories – the start of the Lord of the Rings.

1925-1926 – Research: Cancer research department founded

A new department in cancer research is created, led Professor R.D.Passey, Chair in experimental pathology.

1934-1935 – University: New Students' Union building

The University received a gift of £25,000 from Riley Smith for a new Students' Union.

1937 – Research: Astbury takes first step in unravelling the structure of DNA

William Astbury studied DNA at the University of Leeds, conducting vital research towards finding its structure. This laid the groundwork for research by Wilkins and Franklin, and led directly to Francis Crick and James D Watson famously discovering the double helix in 1953.

1941 – University: Hiding sheep from the authorities

During the second world war, notice was given to the warden that a live sheep was being kept in the basement of the Agriculture building.

1946 – Research: Our first female professor

As professor of Botany, Irene Manton was the first female professor at the University of Leeds. She held the Chair in Botany until 1969 and was the first female head of department here too. Professor Manton later became the first female president of the Linnean Society of London.

1951 – University: The Parkinson building officially opened

Work started in 1938, but the building was taken over by the Ministry of Food and used as a store room during WW2. The Parkinson building was eventually opened in 1951 by HRH the Princess Royal.

1953 – University: We obtain Mozart's and Beethoven's hair

The University Library received the Novello-Cowden Clarke collection, with 900 artefacts from the worlds of music and literature. It's an eclectic collection with remarkable exhibits including locks of Mozart's and Beethoven's hair.

1956 – Research: The first kidney dialysis

On the night of 30th September 1956, Professor Frank Parsons performed the first ever kidney dialysis. This marked the opening of the first artificial kidney unit in the UK, the forerunner of all British renal services.

1956 – University: A jazz-playing Nobel prize winner

During his time as a student at Leeds, Nigerian writer, poet and playwright Wole Soyinka was well known to other students for his skills as a jazz musician. He went on to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.

1957 – Research: One of the first computers

Our first computer was an enormous contraption called Lucifer, one of only a handful in the world. The £50,000 machine was installed in a disused chapel with a solid concrete floor to take its weight. Lucifer led to the UK's first research project in computer assisted learning in 1969.

1957 – University: Brutally bold architecture

Chamberlin, Powell and Bon, one of the most avant-garde British architecture practices, and leading proponents of the British Brutalist style, started transforming our buildings for the modern age.

1962 – University: The longest corridor

The EC stoner building was built, containing one of the longest stretches of corridor in Europe. At over a fifth of a mile long, it's still a long way now.

1965 – Research: Discovering the role of folic acid during pregnancy

Richard Smithells' lifelong work was preventing disease in children, including research into links between vitamin deficiency and problems in childhood.

He found that folates cut the risk of mothers having malformed babies, and in 1991 the MRC concluded all women who bear children should have an adequate amount of folic acid.

1970 – University: The Who live at Leeds

The Who recorded a concert on 14 February in the Refectory, later to be released as the seminal album 'Live at Leeds'.

1975 – City: Leeds United – end of a golden era

Leeds United had been at the top of their game for almost 10 years and came runners up in this year's European cup. The success came in spite of Brian Clough's chaotic management which lasted just 44 days at the start of the season.

1984 – Research: Pioneering transport studies project

Our work led to London Transport adopting the world's first full bus driver scheduling system in a major city. The revolutionary scheduling software from Leeds brings the benefits of faster scheduling, cost reduction and the ability to evaluate different operating scenarios. The traffic modelling software is used by over 300 cities.

1995 – City: Royal Armouries museum opens

The Royal Armouries moved north into a new museum, housing an overflow collection of armour and weaponry. With jousting, sword fighting and elephant armour from 400 years ago, Leeds had never seen anything like it.

1996 – City: Harvey Nichols opens

Harvey Nichol's first store outside London opened in the historic Victoria Quarter. The store, with five floors, has become a must-visit destination in the city centre.

1997 – Research: Disarming biological weapons

Professor Alistair Hay's campaigning research encouraged governments around the world to outlaw the use of chemical and biological weapons. The disarmament measures are enshrined in the Chemical Weapons Convention which came into force in 1997, and the treaty has now been adopted by 182 countries.

2000 – City: Millennium Square opens

Millennium Square was Leeds' flagship project to mark the year 2000. Built at a cost of £12m, it's now a venue for concerts, seasonal markets and an ice rink.

2004 – Research: Celebrating differences in the English language

Professor Clive Upton joined the BBC to drive forward its 'Voices' project, the UK's biggest ever examination of speech variation. The public recorded their own unique dialects, creating an unprecedented resource to document the rise of English as a global lingua franca.

2006 – University: The rise and fall of Oscar Wilde

We acquired rare documents, thanks to generous benefactors, marking the rise and fall of Oscar Wilde. Wilde's lecture notes from his 1882 tour of America mark his rise to fame. In contrast, a rare copy of 'The Chameleon' was used as evidence in his trial for indecency and contains the line 'the love that dare not speak its name'.

2008 – Research: Diagnosing pre-eclampsia

A team developed a world-first blood test for diagnosing pre-eclampsia, a serious high blood pressure condition which affects one in 10 pregnant women and kills 1,000 babies a year.

It's not a cure, but the earlier we diagnose, the better we can control the disease, and the more chance we have of keeping the pregnancy going for longer.