

Making a Mark



Michael Marks Timeline

- 1863 Michael Marks is born in the small town of Slonim, in Russian Poland, the youngest of five children. His mother dies shortly after his birth.
- 1881 Tsar Alexander II is assassinated, which provokes a rise in anti-Semitism across Russia.
- 1882 Michael arrives in England as an immigrant and settles in Leeds.
- 1884 Michael meets Isaac Dewhirst, owner of a textile wholesale business at 32 Kirkgate, who lends him money to buy stock. 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.
- 1888 The family moves to a terraced house in Trafalgar Street in Leeds.
- 1888 The Marks' first child, Simon, is born followed by Rebecca (1890), Miriam (1892), Elaine (1902) and Mathilda (1895).
- 1889 Michael takes up a stall inside the covered market that opened on Kirkgate in 1857.
- 1891 Michael and his family move to Great George Street in Wigan – within a short train journey to places such as Warrington, Birkenhead and Bolton where he could expand.
- 1894 Michael meets Tom Spencer, Dewhirst's book-keeper, and the partnership of 'Marks and Spencer' is formally registered.
- 1894 The Marks family moves to Manchester, living above the 'Marks and Spencer Penny Bazaar' at 20 Cheetham Hill Road.
- 1897 Michael applies for, and is granted, British Citizenship.
- 1899 The first Marks and Spencer store opens in Southwark.
- 1899 Marks and Spencer lease a site on Derby Street, near Michael's home on Cheetham Hill Road, for a new central office and warehouse.
- 1900 There are now twenty-four Penny Bazaars in market-halls and another twelve in shops.
- 1901 The Marks family moves to 'Knoll House' on the more affluent Bury New Road in Manchester.
- 1903 The partnership of Marks and Spencer is transformed into a limited company. Thomas Spencer semi-retires in the same year.
- 1907 Following a Christmas Eve lunch at Manchester's Victoria Hotel with his son Simon and Tom Spencer Jnr, Michael Marks collapses and dies shortly after on New Year's Eve. His funeral at the Jewish cemetery is one of the largest ever held.