

MARK FIRTH, (1819—1880), steel manufacturer and philanthropist,
Purchased with part of the ‘Mark Firth Testimonial Fund’ in 1880.

Mark Firth was Master Cutler in 1867, 1868, and 1869 and, in 1875, was Mayor of Sheffield.

He was born at Sheffield in 1819, the son of a steel melter at Sanderson Brothers. At the age of fourteen Mark, with his brother Thomas, left school to join their father in the foundry where he was employed, and ten years later the three together started a six-hole furnace of their own, as Thomas Firth and Sons, on Charlotte Street.

The early venture with his father and brother proved successful, and they soon established a large American connection. The huge Norfolk Works was erected at Sheffield in 1849, and others including Clay Wheels near Wadsley. The manufacture of steel blocks for ordnance was the principal feature of their business, and also produced shot and heavy forgings. They installed two Nasmyth steam hammers for the production of steel cores for heavy guns, and for some time they supplied nearly all the metal used for gun making by the British government and a large proportion of that used by the French. On the death of his father in 1848 Mark Firth became the head of the firm.

He died suddenly from a stroke on the 28th of November 1880, aged 61, and was accorded a public funeral.

A noted benefactor to Sheffield

- In 1869 he built and endowed the “Mark Firth’s Almshouses”, at Ranmoor, Sheffield.
- In 1875, when mayor, he presented a freehold park (Firth Park) of thirty-six acres, part of the Page Hall estate.
- £1,500 to Broomhill Chapel,
- £1,000 to the New Connection College at Ranmoor
- £1,000 to the Wesleyan Thanksgiving Fund.
- He founded and endowed Firth College, for lectures and classes in connection with the of university extension scheme, which was opened in 1879
- £5,000 towards its endowment
- £20,000 towards the actual building.
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He was a member of the New Methodist Connection.

His house ‘Oakbrook’, is now part of Notre Dame school.

Artist - W W Oules R.A. OM.

Walter William Oules (1848-1933) was a painter who first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1869. On the advice of Sir John E. Millais, Oules switched from painting subject pictures to portraiture - Thomas Hardy and John Manners, 7th Duke of Rutland and Newman now in the collection of Oriel College, Oxford. Other portraits include those of Charles Darwin and Edward VII. He was considered to be ‘one of the most trustworthy portrait painters’ of the time. He received the Order of Merit in 1902.