

The Iron Works

The Headly family was one of the major iron-founding families in Cambridge, and has a history of casting iron in the town longer than anyone else. The Headly iron works foundry was located on Market Hill on the site that is currently being occupied by Marks & Spencer. By the 1840s, the foundry had passed through two generations to two brothers, James and Edward. During the 1840s, their business grew extensively, expanding backwards from the street to Trinity churchyard. A devastating fire struck the foundry on 28 February 1846 and destroyed part of Market Hill and consequently they moved the foundry to a site by the railway on Mill Road. The brother's partnership ended after an argument in 1852. James remained at the foundry teaming up with John Manning, an ironmonger from Mill Road and up until 1858 they produced a pump, one of which used to stand on Peas Hill and is now in the Folk Museum, the railings around Great St Marys Churchyard and the first steam engine, *The Eagle* at Messrs Gurteens in Haverhill. James continued running the foundry on his own after Manning's departure and built a horizontal engine which worked Evans Tannery at Sawston and has now been restored and is in full working order at the Museum of Technology in Cambridge. From the 1860s onwards, James contributed to the flourishing coprolite industry with the assistance of relatives in Coton whose land was dug for coprolite. Coprolite is fossilised faeces and it became an important source of phosphate to be used as fertiliser in the mid-1800s. The Headley business continued from the 1880s making weather vanes, radiators and agricultural tools. By 1907, however, there were no longer any Headley's involved in the company and it went into liquidation in 1932.

