

The Leeds Extension Act of 1912. 'The Runaway Ratepayers of Roundhay' become part of Leeds.

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The passing of the 1912 Leeds Extension Act marked the demise of the Leeds Rural District, when Roundhay, Shadwell, Seacroft and Crossgates became part of the municipal borough of Leeds. For Roundhay ratepayers, this was the end of a lengthy campaign (dating from 1895) to remain outside the Leeds boundary and to keep their independence.

In November 1903 the *Yorkshire Evening Post* reported on a special meeting of Leeds City Councillors called to consider the proposed extension of the city by the inclusion of several townships, of which Roundhay was one. It was said that some 15,000 acres and a population of about 18,000 would 'greatly add to the size and importance of the city', increasing its total rateable value to £1,972,065. The matter was discussed behind closed doors, despite representations that the proceedings should be 'as public as possible'. But although the plan was turned down the following year, the idea of annexing outdistricts of Leeds persisted.

On 29th September 1911 the *Leeds Mercury* said, A Greater Leeds, it seems, is not yet to be. Last night a meeting of the ratepayers of Roundhay emphatically declined the offer of the borough.' This offer stressed as potential advantages: increased postal and telegraphic facilities, supply of electricity for lighting, construction of tramways and an assurance that rates would not rise for at least 15 years. But the following proposal made by A. G. Lupton and seconded by J. H. Armitage was carried unanimously:

'That this meeting of the ratepayers of Roundhay views with disapproval the proposal of the Leeds Corporation to include the Roundhay area in its borough, and expresses its strong adherence to the local self-government it at present enjoys.....'

The article concluded by commenting on 'making up the leeway ... both in regard to size and population' between Leeds and Sheffield, a city 'far in advance of Leeds' on the last census; the inclusion of Shadwell, Seacroft, Roundhay and Crossgates would not quite enable Leeds to 'regain her old position as the most

populous Yorkshire city, but she would be well on the way'

January 1912 saw a 4-day enquiry into the proposal by Leeds to extend its boundaries, held at Leeds Town Hall. More evidence against the scheme was presented; building in Roundhay had been 'very small' during the last four years and had almost ceased, the previous increase noted at the 1904 inquiry being because Roundhay was 'the only suburb served by electric cars.' A.G. Lupton (Pro-Chancellor of Leeds University) said that there were very few 'working-class dwellings' in Roundhay, where houses had to be built of stone and there was 'a £400 minimum for houses placed on the whole area.' The clerk to the Parish Council produced a petition against annexation signed by nearly 500 ratepayers and property owners - adding that a former Lord Mayor had been one of the first signatories. A civil engineer said that the districts proposed to be added were 'well looked after now.' The clerk to the West Riding County Council asked the enquiry to consider 'what were the real aims and the real policy of Leeds'.

But despite the vigorous opposition to the annexation, in May 1912 it was reported that the application had been granted almost in its entirety. The Leeds Mercury of 6 May 1912 reported that whilst Shadwell had agreed to the plan, Roundhay, Seacroft and Crossgates had 'vigorously opposed the scheme', which was backed by all parties of Leeds Corporation. It was Alderman Wilson who was 'largely responsible for the earlier and unsuccessful attempt' at annexation, and who 'since then kept constantly pegging away to achieve his object of a larger Leeds'; he had described the people living in these areas as 'runaway ratepayers.'

The report concluded that 'feeling there [in Roundhay] is very sore at the success of the scheme', and the last word went to Arthur Greenhow Lupton, who said: 'It is one of the most ludicrous farces I have seen for some time. Leeds is desirous of getting more acreage than Sheffield. The whole thing springs from that. The extension is a most costly thing to the ratepayers, and will continue to be so. They will get nothing out of this but a discontented population.' And so, despite vigorous local opposition, Roundhay became part of the Borough of Leeds on 9 November 1912.