

Joseph Mellor (1827-1888)

Brief biography

Joseph Mellor was the first of 3 generations of landscape painters working in the 19th and 20th centuries. His father moved from Carr Green in the Mapplewell area into Barnsley and the family found work as weavers. Joseph eventually progressed to working as a Jacquard card stamper.

Jacquard cards, a forerunner of computer punch cards, were used to “program” looms to produce fabric with a repeated pattern.

In 1850 he married Mary Thackray at St Mary’s Church, Barnsley. Mary too was a weaver and her father William may well have been involved in the weavers’ attempts to improve their working conditions and pay during the middle of the nineteenth century. With Mary, Joseph had 2 children, William in 1851 and Emmeline in 1854.

During the next few years they moved from Castlereagh Street to Pitt Street and eventually to Racecommon Road and Joseph finally committed himself to a career as an artist. The weaving industry was in difficulties and Mary’s father moved the rest of his family to the industrialised east coast of the USA. Joseph finally moved to Leeds where Joseph’s older brother had a small weaving business. This may have helped William and Emmeline who both found work in weaving in Leeds. Joseph continued to work as an artist, based in Leeds until he and Mary moved to Bradford where his daughter Emmeline lived with her husband Henry Mellor. Joseph died in Bradford in 1888 and was buried in Undercliffe Cemetery. Unfortunately there is no headstone. He was survived by Mary.

Joseph painted mainly in oils on canvas or board and is said to have taught his son William to paint. His landscapes are typically Victorian in style and he painted many rural scenes including Ribblesdale, Barnard’s Castle and around Knaresborough where his wife’s family came from. It is not clear how much more widely he travelled and, although he did visit London, there is no information about Joseph exhibiting during his lifetime. Despite this, many examples of Joseph’s work have been offered for sale in auctions, galleries and antique fairs.