**Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington (1769–1852)** was born in Dublin, Ireland, and entered the British Army as an Ensign in 1787. He steadily advanced through the ranks of the British Army and, by 1786, was promoted to the rank of colonel and, later, to major-general. In 1799 he was appointed as the Governor of Seringapatam and Mysore where he was instrumental in consolidating the rule of the British East India Company during the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War, after which the Maratha Confederacy was defeated. His military successes in the subcontinent meant that he was called back to Europe, in 1813, to help defeat Napoleon in the Peninsular War, for which he was promoted to the rank of Field Marshal. In 1815, the British and Prussian armies finally defeated Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo.

A complex figure, he served twice as Tory prime minister and oversaw Catholic Emancipation in 1829, yet opposed the extension of the franchise in 1832. Having served as a colonial governor he had few issues with imperialism. Yet in his role as ambassador to the Congress of Vienna—for which he earned his dukedom—he was instrumental in bringing the abolition of slavery to the forefront of the agenda in the international negotiations.

When the Duke of Wellington died in 1852 the citizens of Leeds raised £1,500 for the construction of a statue to honour his memory. The statue was designed by the Italian sculptor Carlo Marochetti and erected originally outside Leeds Town Hall in 1855, and remained boarded up until Queen Victoria opened the building in 1858. The statue was then moved to Woodhouse Moor in 1937.