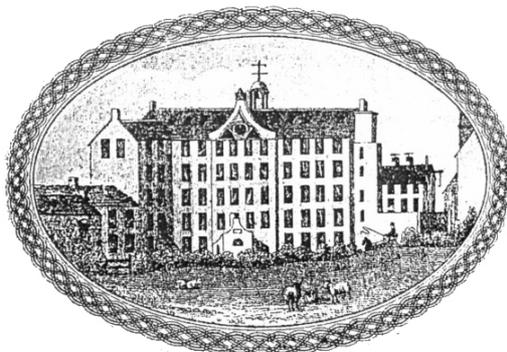


South Ribble Primary Schools

Local History Project

The Victorians: Directory of the Cotton Mills of South Ribble



This document provides additional local material to teachers for the teaching of the National Curriculum (History) in Primary schools and has been compiled by Dr David Hunt. These take the form of teaching notes highlighting local links based around a Time Line. They should be seen as a supplement to the mass of national material available on the Internet and on CD.

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Key:

1923 This is information listed in the 1923 six inch series.

2 Alphabetical index

Bamber Bridge Spinning Company (New Mill or Wesley St. Mill)

Opened in 1907, this was perhaps the most spectacular of the local mills, and with 135,000 spindles it was one of the largest in the Preston district. Though the great tapering chimney is long gone, the spectacular mill engine house (3000hp) survives at the rear of this essentially modern steel-framed building. The mill's closure was announced in 1959.

1923: 150,000 spindles. Super quality Mule yarns, twist and weft. A branch of Crossess & Winkworth of Bolton, Consolidated Mills Ltd: two million spindles, maximum share capital £7 million. Dividend 1920/1 10%.

Bannister Hall Printworks (later `Gatty's), Higher Walton

The works survived the bankruptcy of the Mosney works and by 1786 was successfully taking water from the falls at Red Rocks, Coupe Green. From 1788 John Swainson (1746-1800) and his son Charles (1780-1866) became the dominant force among the various partners who operated the works. Charles Swainson bought-out his partners for £12000 in 1809, and became an important force in the Preston cotton trade. The large meadows around the works were festooned with acres of cloth naturally bleaching in the sunlight, and the firm had a very good name for its high quality printed cloths. By 1910 the Gatty family of Church near Accrington had acquired the firm, and the works supplied the British Army with khaki coloured cloth dyed at Higher Walton.

1923: F.A.Gatty & Co Ltd. Bannister Hall Dye Works. Telephone Bamber Bridge 14. Yarn and Cloth dyers. Capital £25,000, £1 shares, mortgages £25,000.

Brindle Mill

This was a combined spinning and weaving mill, built alongside the railway not far from Gregson Lane. It employed 276 people, who operated 30,000 spindles and 330 looms. The mill was damaged during the 1944 'Flying Bomb' attack, though the fine 1900s engine-house and the workers' houses – Bourne's Row – still survive.

1923: J & W Bournes Ltd. Constituted 25 Nov 1912. 30,000 spindles, 400 looms. Manufacturers of Domestic, Twills, Shirtings etc. Capital £30,000.

Brook Mill, Leyland

Located by the Bannister brook or North brook, Brook Mill was the last built of Leyland's cotton mills (1870). Displays of fashionable ladies' dresses were a popular feature of the displays during the 1951 Leyland Festival of Britain celebrations.

1923: Brook Mill (Leyland) Ltd. Constituted 13 March 1913. Office: 60 Spring Gardens, Manchester. 850 looms. Manufacturers of Artificial Silk Fancies etc. Capital £40,000.

Clayton's Print Works, Bamber Bridge

Edmund Clayton is traditionally recognised as one of the first cloth printers in Lancashire,

and the family enterprise along the river Lostock at Bamber Bridge has an important place in the story of the Industrial Revolution. For many years they had no serious rivals, and George Clayton was an important backer of the Bamber Bridge Canal Tramway. The works seem to have come to an end in the mid-nineteenth century, and was located to the rear of Havelock Road. A sale notice of 1836 describes 'an excellent steam engine of 50hp, water wheels, reservoirs ...together with 14 foot fall of the River Lostock ...the reservoirs are capacious, and capable of supplying abundance of pure and clean water at all seasons'.

Cuerden Green Mills, off Watkin Lane

The 'newly erected cotton mill in Walton-le-dale occupied by Wm. Bashall' was recorded in 1799. It was extremely remotely located, on the edge of the Farington Moss and fed by a mill-race flowing from the River Lostock. The mill is listed amongst those employing young children. In 1821 the factory was valued at £219 per year, the mill estate had 50 cottages worth £140 in rents per year, a warehouse, a sizehouse, and Lostock House – a gentleman's residence. It was in short one of the most important of the early nineteenth century mills and the source of the great Bashall cotton fortune that built Farington mill. The mill has interesting links with all the crises, strikes, battles and famines endured by the early Lancashire cotton industry.

In 1861 the mill was taken over by Henry Ward & Sons (hence 'Bashall's Row' was renamed 'Ward Street'- the area tragically bombed in 1940.), and sold to Thomas Moss & Sons in 1888. The factory was extended in 1907 with the addition of a new weaving shed containing 1000 looms. Closed 1967-8.

1923: Thomas Moss & Sons Ltd. With Tardy Gate Mill and Phoenix Mill, Kirkham; part of the Amalgamated Cotton Mills Trust. 4,400 looms. Manufacturers of Cambrics, Casement Cloths, Sateens, Voiles, Pongees etc. Capital £100,000.

Cuerden Mill

This mill emerged from the early Clayton printing enterprise and came to occupy part of their site in the early nineteenth century. By 1871 the mill had been taken over by G & R Dewhurst who greatly expanded the old Cuerden Mill. By the First World War it had become an enormous but elegant factory with its own branch railway line. Cuerden Mill (known locally as 'Down Below') closed in 1936 and the Sainsbury store now occupies the site. A part of the Clayton's estate-farm and a part of 'Dewhurst's Row' are all that survive of a mill which had claimed to possess the biggest spinning floor in the world.

1923: See Moon's Mill.

Earnshaw Bridge Mill, Leyland

1923: John Pilkington Ltd. 809 looms. Manufacturers of Cambrics, Jacconettes, Muslins etc. capital £40,000, subscribed £34,680, paid up ££6,936.

Much of the mill survives in tact, fine spinning block and engine house.

Farington Mill

Farington Mill was unlike any local mill that had gone before: essentially it was a huge spinning mill with rail links and a planned mill village - on a 'Green Field' site. Work was underway on William Bashall's new mill in 1834-5, and spinning was underway in July 1836. At the same time the new railway line from Preston to Wigan was laid out alongside the mill. Thus, although the new mill was rather remotely located in the fields to the south of Preston it was to shortly have superb rail links with all the country, since this little line was to become a link in the main west coast railway from London to Glasgow.

New streets of houses sprung up, all owned by the firm, a large mill school was opened in 1843, and the partners William Bashall and William Boardman built themselves large villas.

The mill was progressively extended, employing 1000 people and running 60,000 spindles by 1860, and Bashall made enormous profits from it – ploughing cash into his collection of paintings. In 1905 the mill was taken over by G & R Dewhurst, which duly became an enormous combine which also ran Higher Walton and Cuerden. Farington Mill closed in 1967, and has largely been demolished though the rows of mill houses survive to tell the tale.

1923: See Moon's Mill

Flatts Mill, Walton-le-Dale

William Calvert (1787-1861) 'Cotton manufacturer, Walton-le-Dale', is listed in a trade directory of 1825. Calvert's Flatts mill is unlikely to have developed much before this time, and for some years the premises were very small, and extended only a short distance onto the Flatts. The expansion of the mill depended on the development of steam power. By the 1860s over 800 people were employed here. In the early 1920s the firm boasted that in a single year they made enough cloth 36 inches wide to wrap around the globe at the equator. The mills completely dominated the village to such an extent that when the company failed in 1931 many people thought it heralded 'the end of Walton'. The buildings became home to a paper works and Haworth & Airey's winery (hence Winery Lane). The enormous canyons of mills were demolished in the early 1980s to make way for the Capital Centre.

1923: William Calvert & Sons Ltd. Constituted 1837. Reconstituted 1901. 23 New Cannon St, Manchester. Flats Mill (Walton) and Aqueduct and India Mills (Preston). 108,620 Mule spindles, 42,844 Ring Spindles, 3211 looms. Capital £250,000 in £10 shares; loanholders nil. Manufacturers of Shirtings and Sheetings.

Gregson Lane Mill, Hoghton

In 1871 William Jackson is recorded as a master cotton spinner employing 214 people. By 1882 Simpson & Jackson were operating 31000 spindles and 216 looms. By 1895 a significant but small community had grown up around the mill. The mill survived the Second World War (as a subsidiary of Horrockses) but had closed by 1951. Surviving buildings were demolished in the 1980s.

1923: Gregson Lane Mill Co Ltd. Constituted 31 Jan 1895. 30,420 Mule Spindles, 198 looms. Middling cotton. Capital £10,000 in £5 shares.

Lostock Hall Spinning Company. Stood beside Cuerden Green Mill

Formed in 1874, this was essentially a co-operative enterprise, and the 6500 shares were sold in blocks of 50 £10 shares. The four-storey mill was quickly erected and boasted a 500hp steam engine whose drive-wheel weighed 30 tons. The directors met weekly, had a series of committees, and supervised the mill directly. Closed 1967-8. In a generally good state of repair, chimney and engine house survive.

1923: Constituted 17 Dec 1874. 56,918 Mule Spindles, 2,436 Ring Spindles. Capital £106,000. Dividend 1920 43.75%.

Mexican Mill, Aspden St, Bamber Bridge

A weaving shed opened by Tootal, Broadhurst & Lee in the 1870s. By 1881 it was operating as Richard Aspden & Co, and with adjacent Greenwood and Dean streets formed a little community in its own right.. The firm failed in 1925, and the mill was sold. It contained 282 36inch looms, mill gearing and a horizontal compound tandem-condensing engine. After the Second World War the mill became home to the timber merchants Horsley Smith, and is currently being developed for housing.

1923: Richard Aspden & Co. Constituted 1912. Manufacturers of Mexicans, Long Cloths, Domestic etc. 282 Looms.

'Moons Mill': Higher Walton Mill

'Moon's Mill' originated as a corn mill on the river Darwen. Moon is not a common local surname, and we do not know who this Moon was!. In 1792 'Robert Hilton of Preston, grocer and corn factor', held the lease for the large corn mill 'Adjoining the Turnpike road ... Plentifully and Constantly supplied with water, and capable of grinding more than eight sacks of wheat in one hour, each sack containing 240 pound'. Part of the mill, and some adjacent buildings had been converted for the manufacture of textiles, perhaps with unfortunate consequences for Mr Hilton was declared bankrupt in 1799.

In March 1834 the mill was advertised to let; 'Eligible Cotton Factory to be Let. All that convenient and valuable cotton factory called 'Moons Mill', being in Walton-le-Dale, situate on the old turnpike road leading from Preston to Blackburn ... Also two warehouses and counting houses, a managers house and cottages. The mill is regularly supplied with water by the river Darwen, having two extensive lodges, with a powerful fall. The situation is most excellent for carrying on the cotton business in a most extensive way, and such as is very rare to be met with being in a populous part of the county, the occupier will always be sure to be plentifully supplied with workpeople of all descriptions'.

Miles Rodgett (1782-1872) 'Master cotton spinner' built a second mill alongside the existing one in 1850, when the company was styled 'Rodgett Brothers'. By 1851 'Moons Mill', was described in the local directory as 'Another populous village, with two large cotton mills, one of which is very extensive and was erected in 1850 by Miles Rodgett'. Modern Higher Walton owes much to the Rodgetts:

'Since the property came into the possession of the Rodgetts, they have made wonderful improvements at Higher Walton. They appear to be completely remodelling and modernising the village. Old cottages are being pulled down, and dilapidated houses are being removed, to make way for good substantial habitations. Two immense cotton mills have been erected by the firm of Messrs Rodgett Brothers'.

(Preston Chronicle 1862).

A new church, school and reading room for the workpeople followed, the two separate mills were converted into a single enormous factory, and Higher Walton emerged as a distinct Industrial Village. Viewed from the back the building can be seen to have originated as two buildings! By 1882 the concern had been taken over by G. and R. Dewhurst, forming part of a very large combine which also included Cuerden Mill, Farington Mill, and Arkwright Mill in Preston. The complex was sold to the Lancashire Cotton Corporation in 1932 and taken over by the Preston Tyre Fabric Co in 1937. The mill closed in 1967-8.

1923: Geo & R. Dewhurst & Co. 36 New Broad St, London. Arkwright Mill (Preston), Higher Walton Mill, Cuerden Mill, Farington Mill. 227,194 spindles, 4483 looms. Manufacturers of Shirtings, Twills, Long Cloths etc. Capital £1,500,000.

Mosney Print Works, Walton-Le-Dale

Today Mosney is just a small 'farm' between Higher Walton Road and the river Darwen, but in the early 1780s it was one of the world's most advanced cloth printing concerns with an important role in the Industrial Revolution. Many scholars now believe that the main breakthrough in cloth manufacturing came not from the early spinning machines (the water-frame and spinning jenny) but from advances in the cloth finishing trades. Cloth printing by machine was first perfected and patented at Mosney in November 1783, 'Thomas Bell, of Mosney, in the County of Lancaster, copper plate printer... A new and peculiar art or method of printing with one colour or with various colours at the same time on linens, cottons, silk etc'.

The works was on a large scale employing many highly skilled London men, and many women printers and 'pencillers'. Rolls of cloth 12 miles long are said to have been 'whitsterring' (bleaching by sunlight in rows in the fields) at any one time. The firm spectacularly failed in 1788 throwing many people out of work, but printing survived at the associated plant at Bannister Hall. By the 1870s virtually all trace of the important works was gone.

Mount Pleasant Mill, Seven Stars, Leyland

1923: Andrew Berry & Sons Ltd. Reconstituted 10 Mar 1920. 1176 looms. Manufacturers of Jaconettes, Cambrics, fancies etc. Capital £225,000, paid up £125,000, debt £40,439.

Much of this mill survives above the brook on which it was carefully located. The engine house is particularly fine

A.S.Orr's Mill, School Lane, Bamber Bridge

Erected near to the corner of Brindle Road and School Lane, this was a family-run combined spinning and weaving mill. This mill - uniquely among the Bamber Bridge mills - modernised to survive until 1979, when it closed with the loss of 800 jobs.

1923: A.S.Orr & Co Ltd. 9780 Mule Spindles, 36,920 Ring Spindles, 529 Looms. Capital £60,000, subscribed £46,000. Manufacturers of Twills, Sateens, Shirtings etc.

Penwortham Factory, later 'Vernons', Middleforth Green

John Watson's second local mill south of the Ribble, 'Penwortham factory', lies just within the Walton boundary near Middleforth Green. Whilst John Horrocks's first mill in Dale Street, Preston, was known as the Yellow Factory, on account of its faded whitewash, Penwortham factory was always the White Factory. It was located on a small stream which later fed an enormous reservoir - 'Vernons Lodge'. Many of the workforce came from Penwortham workhouse, a short distance along factory Lane. A date stone here states that 'This workhouse was erected by permission of William ffarrington Esq. Lord of the Manor, in the year 1796'. Whether this building replaced earlier accommodation is uncertain, for the factory may have existed before 1791. Watson obtained children from workhouses and from local parishes, and these are stated to have been 'housed in a building at Penwortham'.

It had a good location by the line of the Bamber Bridge tramway, and the mill had five different tenants between 1807 and 1851. In May 1811,

'To be Let: The capital and extensive cotton factories with the appropriate machinery therein, situate in Walton, near Preston, formerly in the possession of Mr. Watson and late of Messrs Cooper and Sherrington ... A number of cottages will be let with the mills ... the machinery is ready for immediate use'.

By 1825 the mill was being run by 'Thomas German and Co. Penwortham Mills', becoming German and Petty by 1828.

A small but distinct, community grew up around the mill, and by the 1841 census 250 people occupied the 44 houses. About 1860 Edmund Cockshutt built a new factory. By 1910 the site was occupied by 'Vernon and Co. Ltd. Cotton Spinners and Manufacturers of Surgical Dressings, Cotton Wools etc'. Enlarged in 1920 the mill remained in the same ownership; the last survivor of the cotton mills of Preston and district closed in 2006. The works, with its cluster of factory houses, mill lodge and cricket field, still preserves a lot of the aura of an early nineteenth century cotton mill community.

1923: Vernon & Co. Capital £45,000. Surgical Dressings and Bandages.

Roach Mill, Samlesbury

John Watson, the pioneer of the factory movement in Preston, developed two successful local sites, at Roach on the River Darwen in Samlesbury (1784), and at Penwortham Factory, Middleforth Green.

The potential water power along the deep, narrow gorge of the river Darwen to the west of Hoghton Tower was known to Sir Richard Arkwright, and the first mill here ran his new machinery. The Arkwright system depended on orphan labour, and a suitable stock of 'apprentices' was duly acquired from the London poor-houses. In 1790 Watson built a gallery at Samlesbury church to hold the large number of workhouse orphans he employed. Fires were common at Samlesbury and the six-storey mill burned down in 1801. Watson went bankrupt in 1807, and the apprentices were turned out.

William Sharrock then took over the factory and ran it until John Dall took over in 1834.

The waterfall and spinning block survive awaiting (2008) redevelopment.

Samlesbury Bottoms Mill

A cotton mill run by 'Smith, Slater and Co. Cotton Twisters', existed upstream from Roach Bridge at Samlesbury Bottoms as early as 1784. This mill was destroyed by fire in 1819, and the following year John H. Dall took over the small water driven spinning factory. In 1834 Dall moved on to Roach. Samlesbury Bottoms Mill was destroyed again by fires in 1856 and 1857, rebuilt and run by James Parker, until a fire in 1861 threw 120 hands out of work and caused £20,000 of damage. By 1869 the mill was running again, and by the end of cotton spinning here in 1873, was operating 16000 spindles. The site was then redeveloped as a paper mill and much of the site - with a very fine weir on the R.Lostock - survives today.

Shruggs, Broadfield Bleach Works, Leyland

Once woven the cloth needs to be finished by bleaching or printing. This became an important part of the manufacturing process. The trade has very early origins in our district, being pioneered at Bamber Bridge in the 1760s.

Leyland had two works established by the 1780s, at North Brook and Broadfield. The latter was taken over by John Stanning & Son in 1871, and developed by John Stanning junior into Leyland's largest employer, surviving into the late-1960s. Though the works and Stanning's tasteful residence (Broadfield House) have been entirely removed, much of the extensive watercourses and lakes which fed the plant (and the old medieval manor corn mill at seven Stars) survive as the Shruggs Wood Nature Reserve.

Leyland Museum has a collection of cotton mill samples including items printed at Shruggs.

1923: John Stanning & Sons Ltd (Bleachers Association). Broadfield Works. Bleachers and Dyers.

Stone Mill, School Lane, Bamber Bridge

Established by Richard and Edward Ashworth by 1851. Subsequently run by Thomas Eccles and closed around 1930.

1923: Thomas Eccles & Sons & Co Ltd. 46,156 Mule Spindles, 5000 Ring Spindles, 914 Looms. Manufacturers of Shirtings etc. capital £32,000.

Tardy Gate Mill, Coote Lane, Tardy Gate

Built in 1908 by the Tardy Gate Manufacturing Company to house nearly 500 looms, it was taken over in 1911 by Thomas Moss & Sons and expanded to house over 1100 looms. The mill survived into the mid-1960s and much of the original building survives including the spectacular mill chimney.

1923: See Cuerden Green Mill.

Walmer Bridge Mill, Little Hoole

A weaving mill.

1923: Crewdson & Grierson Ltd. Constituted 18 May 1898 (Telephone Longton 5). 1100

looms. Manufacturers of Plain and Fancy goods. Capital £70,000, £100 shares, fully paid up, loan-holders nil.

Withy Trees Mill, 'Old Billies', Station Road Bamber Bridge

The precise origin of Withy Trees Mill is confused; it may date from 1816, probably from before 1828, but almost certainly by 1834 when Thomas & William Eccles & Co are recorded at 'Withen Trees'. The mill stood adjacent to the Walton-le-dale workhouse, whose inmates may have worked in the mill. A good description of the mill is provided by a sale notice of the 1840s:

'All that substantially built cotton mill, called Withy Trees Mill. With the engine-house and boiler-house, mechanics shop, sow-house, and warehouse adjoining to the said mill, together with the steam engine of 50 horse power, four boilers, and the mill gearing therein and belonging thereto; and also the watch-house, counting-house, gas-house, and cotton warehouse, and twenty four cottages near to the said mill. And also the several closes of land, formerly called Workhouse Field and lane, Further Meadow, Second Field and First Field (all now in one close) and Nearer Meadow; with the farm-house, garden, outbuilding, and fold belonging thereto ... The two large reservoirs are in the close formerly called Workhouse Field. All that capital newly erected mansion house'.

The mill closed during the virtual collapse of much of the Bamber Bridge cotton industry between 1926 and 1932. Prior to demolition in the mid-1980s the buildings were home to corn merchants Ingham & Tipping.

Demolition in the late 1980s revealed the mill to have been carefully aligned over a small stream. Underground this waterway survives, to flow along St.Mary's Road, turn right down Aspden Street to re-emerge behind Brownedge Club. From whence the 'lost river' of Bamber Bridge makes its way through the Duddle Lane and Cinnamon Hill estates to enter the Ribble by Walton Green - just as land deeds suggest it did 800 years ago!

1923: William Eccles & Sons Ltd. 26,320 Mule Spindles, 5,680 Ring Spindles. Capital £45,000. Manufacturers of Shirtings and Bleaching Cloths.

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In 2006 South Ribble Borough Council was awarded a grant to run an educational programme by the American Alcoa Foundation. The objective was to provide key source materials to teachers to supplement the teaching of Local History at Key Stage Two with information which they may not otherwise have the time to locate themselves.