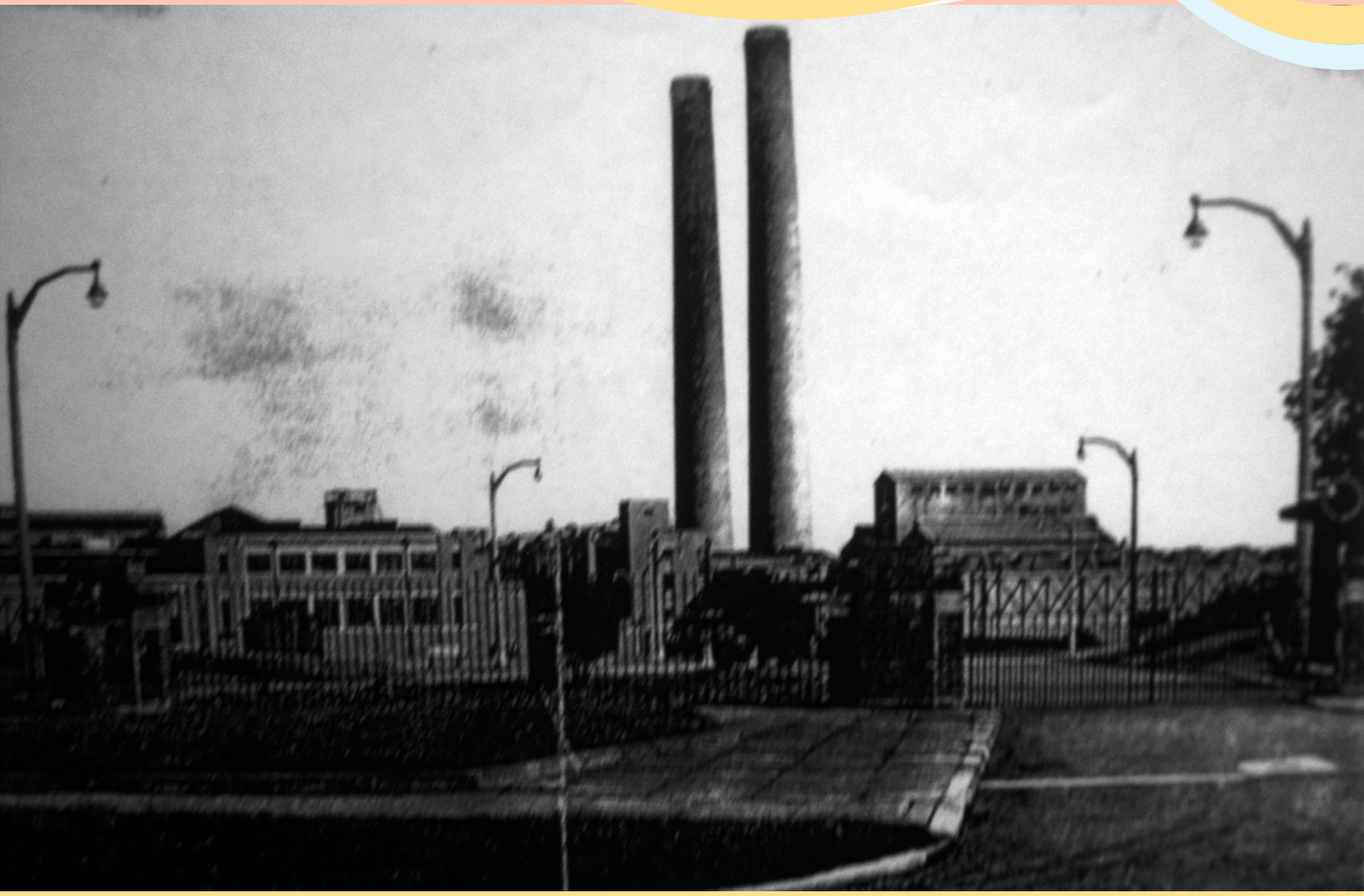
Cotton CONNECTS



An examination of how the textile industry affected the lives of the people of Preston

Picture on Cover: Courtaulds site in its heyday
(Picture courtesy of Preston Harris Museum)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The textile industry has played a central role in the history of Britain for over 500 years. The starting point was centred around wool and later cotton became the major commodity that was influencing the economy.

Through the inventions of people like Richard Arkwright and James Hargreaves, the textile industry received the technological advance that it needed and this in turn pushed Britain into the world's major proponent in the textile industry.

Further expansions continued until the mid 18th century, when the difficulty in obtaining raw cotton and competition from other countries began to mark the decline for the cotton industry in Britain.

Despite this, employment in the textile industry and its contribution to the economy continued to be a major factor well into the 20th century, when alternatives to cotton were beginning to challenge the once supremacy of cotton.

Leading the production of alternatives to cotton was the Courtauld's family, who had arrived in Britain as refugees in the 17th century and soon became one of the major textile industrialists.

The Courtaulds family business focused on rayon production which led them to have at one point the largest market share in the world.

Post second world war, with a shortage of people to work in the factories, people from commonwealth countries were invited to come to Britain and assist in the post war developments and one area which welcomed their arrival was the textile industry.

Within Preston, The Horrocks and Courtaulds families had established large textile factories, which between them employed thousands of people from all walks of life and this is where the majority of people who arrived as migrant workers headed to.

During the 1970's, the textile industry further declined and after 1979, Courtaulds closed its Red Scar factory in Preston and with it over 2,500 people lost their jobs, of whom a third were from a minority ethnic community.

A few years later, all the major textile factories had closed in Preston and so ended a long physical chapter in Preston's history.

Whilst the physical legacy of the textile industry was only to be found in derelict or converted buildings, there still remains a living legacy in the form of people who had worked in the textile industries.

This research projected set about identifying those people who worked in the textile industry and wanted to capture their stories and experiences so that future generations may remember what their ancestors and fellow citizens had once done to make Preston and Britain what it is today.

The project interviewed 100 people from the different communities of Preston and also included some partners and children of people who worked in the textile factories. To assess how much younger generations know about the textile industry, a small sample of interviews was undertaken with young people.

The results were quite enlightening, the majority of people who worked in the textile factories had enjoyed the experience and many felt sad at the closure of the factories. Nearly everyone agreed that the working conditions were not the best, but the friendly atmosphere and support the workers gave to each other made up for this.

When the factories closed, some people never managed to get another job and felt that the memories they had when working in the textile factories were what stayed with them for the rest of their lives.

However, for the majority, the closures of the factories gave them a second career and many went on to work in a wide variety of employment.

The memories of partners and children of those who worked in the factories was mixed. All stated that it was good that they had regular income, but all stated that the working conditions often took its toll on their husbands/fathers and for some the closure of the factories probably prolonged their lives.

It was also interesting to hear from young people, who did not have a parent who worked in the textile factories.

For many, the textile industry was something of the past and in their 'modern' world of electronic gadgets, the thought of working in a 'medieval' looking environment did not appeal to them. Although, nearly all accepted that the people who worked in the factories worked hard and for many this was the only option open to them.

To conclude, the project has been an enjoyable one for everyone involved and for many people recollecting their stories brought back good memories and the opportunity to meet people whom they had not seen for many years.

The textile factories have long gone and the physical legacy is to be found in some areas where the factories have been converted into warehouses or apartments. Whilst other factories have been demolished altogether and there is no record of what existed there before.

Over time, people will remember the buildings for the latter uses and not remember that they were once textile factories and as the years past the living legacies of the textile industry will also fade, as people come to the end of their lives.

It will only be through archives, videos and projects like this that the impact of the textile industry to people in Britain and Preston will continue.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Undertaking a project of this nature would not be possible without the input of many people. The project organisers wish to thank the following people and organisations for making this project happen:

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Also a special thanks to all the people who took part in the project, through taking part in the interviews and focus groups. Hopefully, this booklet will let future generations know about what it was like to work in the textile industry.

April 2011

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the project

1.1.1 The aim of the project was to:

"Examine the impact that the textile industry had on communities in Preston, in particular those from the minority ethnic communities"

1.1.2 Reasons for undertaking the project

For many people from the minority ethnic communities in the 1960s and 1970s, life was fairly predictable. The young people went to school or college, the mothers usually were homemakers and the fathers went to work mainly in manual jobs.

As a newly settled community, most of the minority ethnic communities had not started in earnest to impact on the 'mainstream' life of Preston.

One area where slightly more social mixing was occurring was in the workplace. As employment opportunities were often limited to migrant workers, the textile industry proved a popular destination for many to start and end their working careers in.

One such employer was Courtaulds, who were a late comer to Preston, but were to have a big impact on the minority ethnic community that had settled in Preston.

As a textile factory, Courtaulds was a global company and in Preston, it became well known for its rayon production and was a challenger to the more established cotton factories.

Courtaulds also became an employer of choice for many minority ethnic people, who were attracted by the availability of work and the rates of pay being offered.

Although Courtaulds had a fairly high profile existence in Preston, the stories of the people who worked there were not documented much, especially those people from a minority ethnic community.

This research project looked to address this issue and wanted to capture the memories of the people who worked in a textile factory. Indeed, another twenty or so years and there will probably not be many people to share any stories.

▲ *Mr Amirat and friends in the 1960's (Picture courtesy of Mr Amirat)*

1.2 Textile industry in Britain

The textile industry in Britain does not appear to have a definitive start date and although the early textile industry centred around wool, the development of cotton as a material to produce fabrics and clothing was an influencing force.

Cotton was grown, spun and woven in India as early as 500BC, but the Egyptians probably produced it at even earlier period. Indeed, the Arabic name for cotton was 'kutun', where it is assumed the name cotton came from.

One thing accepted by all the experts is that the art of spinning and weaving spread first to the Near East and then into Europe.

When trade with India was opened up in the 17th Century, the cotton textiles produced there rapidly became very popular, being cheap, comfortable and attractive. To fight off this threat, the powerful wool interests persuaded the British government to introduce heavy tariffs on the Indian cotton.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Lancashire families increasingly diversified their income by turning to domestic textile production. A document from 1634 recalled a story of poor people living in rural districts around Preston, who, except harvest time, spun and wove flax all year round.

Between the eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, Britain's cotton textile industry grew remarkably and had become the 'leading sector' in the British economy.

With the inventions of the industrial revolutions, the British cotton industry established a world-wide dominance. Within a generation the Indian industry was destroyed, with exports falling 95 per cent in 30 years. By 1840 cotton supplied a half of Britain's exports represented 80 per cent of the entire world trade.

The American Civil war led to a shortage of raw cotton in the 1860s and this led in some towns e.g. Blackburn to introduce the production of loin cloths for the Indian market. This ensured that the textile industry continued to be a major employer of people.

Despite the impressive growth, the cotton industry became less important relatively in the British economy from the 1870s. Britain's share of the global market was also declining from 82 per cent of world trade in 1882-4 to 70 per cent in 1910-3. During this period, factory based cotton industries also emerged in India.

The 1911 census for Lancashire showed that no fewer than 444,213 people were employed in cotton production, almost one in five of the total workforce.

◀ ***Outside the former Corn Exchange - Symbol for those Cotton Workers who were shot in 1842, whilst disputing working conditions***

The first world war brought severe difficulties for the Lancashire cotton industry. The need for people to join the armed forces led to labour shortages, although this led to more women and girls being employed.

However, during the inter war years the industry made a recovery and prices and profits rose, but this was short lived as in 1921 the boom collapsed. The outbreak of world war two brought further problems and raw cotton imports fell back each year between 1940 and 1945 to only half the pre war levels.

During the immediate post war years, the industry showed a modest recovery, although, due to low wages and poor working conditions, labour proved difficult to attract. A range of measures were introduced in an attempt to overcome the industry's labour shortage. Among them was the introduction of part-time evening shifts for married women and split shifts.

Labour from overseas was also encouraged and initially this involved Polish workers and other Europeans and subsequently, from the late 1940s onwards involved workers from South Asia and the Caribbean.

In his annual report for 1957, the chairman of the Lancashire Cotton Corporation commented that for the first time in two centuries, imports of cotton cloth into the UK exceeded exports.

In the 1960s, companies sought to merge with others to strengthen their position and Coutaulds led the way, fearful that the cotton decline would threaten their sales of rayon fibres to Lancashire spinners.

Despite this, the fall in overseas sales accounted for much of the cotton industry's decline in Britain and the decline in the price of raw cotton over the years made its production more unprofitable. This coupled with an increase in imports of cloth from Europe and Asia led to the further demise of the industry.

Courtaulds, who emerged as a major player in the textile industry throughout the last couple of centuries had begun to specialise in rayon production and were seen as filling the void created by the decline of cotton production.

It was realised in the first few years of the present century that Rayon provided entirely new possibilities. As it was manufactured chemically by man, instead of chemically by Nature, it was the product of planning, not accident. Its qualities could be controlled and predetermined.

However, despite early successes, Courtaulds also began to feel the pressure of worldwide competition and in 1960's sold nearly 40 per cent of its company to ICI.

The decline of both cotton and rayon production continued throughout the 1970's and 1980's, by when most of the textile factories had closed or moved production overseas.

1.3 Textile industry and the Minority Ethnic Communities

The first textile mills were built in Bombay during the 1850s, and many Lancashire-built engines would be destined for these parts. This started the link between Britain and South Asia in relation to the textile industry. There followed a mill-building boom in Bombay.

By 1912-13, India had taken 36 per cent of the British production of cotton piece goods, and by 1926-28, British exports were two thirds of their pre-war volume.

The inter war years brought about increasing demand for independence in India and this included the boycotts of cotton goods from Britain, led by Gandhi. The visit by Gandhi to Britain, including to the Lancashire town of Darwen further showed that the decline in the textile industry in Britain was likely to continue as India gradually became independent and relied more on their own production and consumption.

However, due to unforeseen circumstances, the second world war led to a shortage of people required to work in the textile industries that still existed and the invitations to people from South Asia and the Caribbean to come and work in Britain led to an increase in the number of people from minority ethnic communities working in the textile industry in Britain.

Courtaulds relied on migrant labour at their Red Scar Mill in Preston. Migrant workers first came to the Courtaulds Red Scar Mill in large numbers in 1956, and by May 1965 there were 610 South Asian and 120 Caribbean heritage people working there. Almost all the Caribbean workers were employed in the tyre cord spinning department.

However, not all was well at Courtaulds when in 1965, Courtaulds management decided to introduce new working conditions, which was to have a detrimental effect on the migrant workers.

This led to a walk out by the largely migrant workers, along with some others for a few weeks and after discussions with management, a compromise agreement was reached and the workers went back to work.

Courtaulds hit more trouble

'SHUT-DOWN' WARNING IN RED SCAR STRIKE

Mr Dick Roberts

BY ANDREW SPURRIER

MORE trouble hit struggling textile giant Courtaulds today as more than 200 maintenance men walked off the Red Scar site at Preston in a pay row, despite a "shut-down" warning by the company.

The men started a four-day strike as Courtaulds told the union continued industrial action could lead to closure of the plant which employs 3,000 people.

And their action came as representatives of other workers were involved in crisis talks over redundan-

The Red Scar tradesmen have said they will not now return to work until Tuesday and their spokesman Mr Jim Conway said they felt so strongly about their pay that they were prepared to see the company shut down the works.

"People here are getting more militant all the time," said Mr Wilson, chairman of the craftsmen's shop stewards' committee.

"They are willing to fight the company whether they close the factory or not. Every time we argue with them they threaten to close the place down.

"It's the old story and we've been listening to it for many years."

The tradesmen, who belong mostly to engineering unions, are responsible for maintenance of the plant which relies on continuous production for seven-days-a-week for production of viscose yarn.

BACKLOG

Today's strike means that breakdowns in machinery will not be remedied until Tuesday morning at least and a backlog of work is expected to build up leading to an eventual shutdown.

The tradesmen are banning overtime and staging

Stocks were piling up at the plant, and the question was how long the company would be able to stand the loss of sales before jobs became seriously threatened.

Mr Roberts said he would be putting this question to members of the board of Courtaulds' viscose division in Manchester today. As well as Mr Atkins, T and G/WU full-time official, Mr Jim Page, was also at the meeting.

About 400 women day-shift workers are currently working one week in four at the plant, but shift-workers have not so far been affected by the slump.

Nearly 300 people at the Telbot Mill, Chorley, will be

▲ *Press cutting of strike of 1965 (Picture courtesy of Lancashire Evening Post)*

2.0 TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN PRESTON

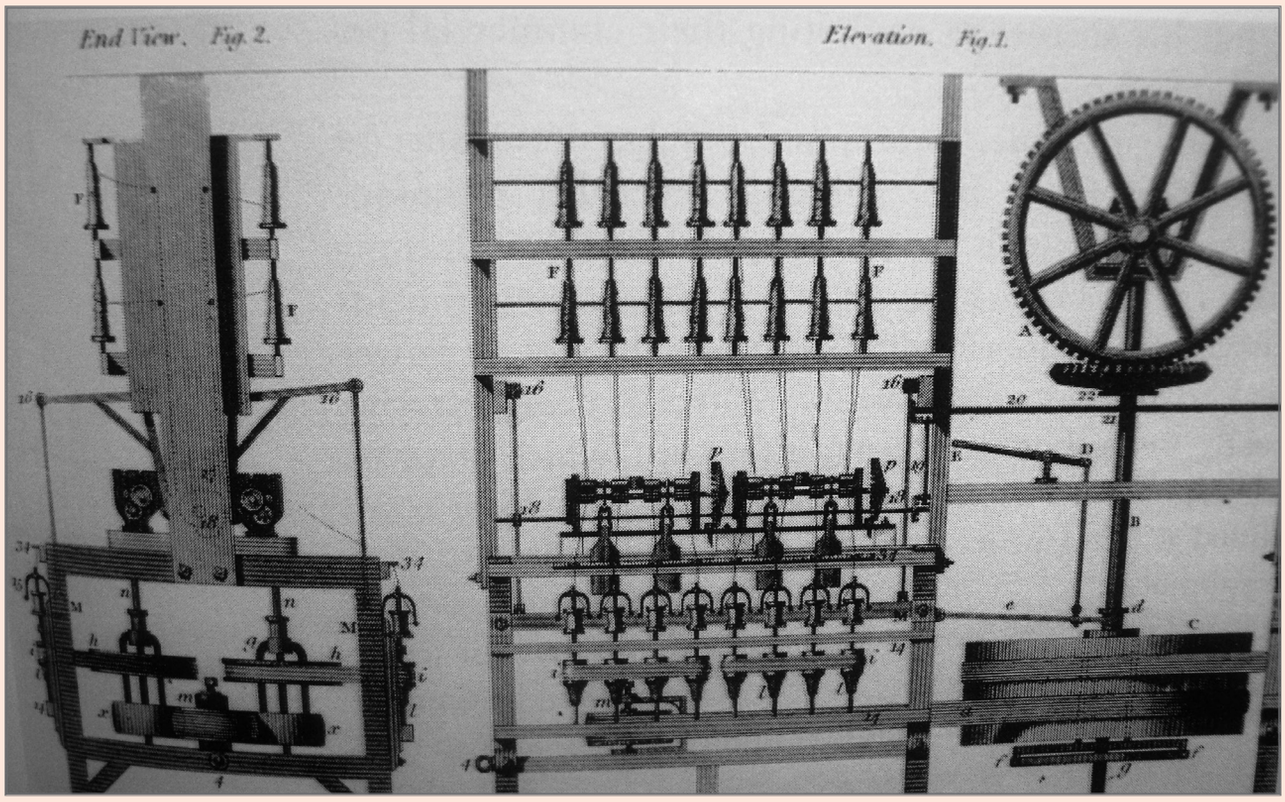
2.1 Arrival of textiles

During the middle ages, the small market town of Preston began to develop a small textile manufacturing trade, especially in wool and linen. Flax and hemp, for the manufacture of linen and canvas respectively were grown locally, while wool was obtained from sheep which grazed on the fells and hillsides behind the town.

Preston 's geographical position in central Lancashire, on the old roadway to Lancaster in the north and Manchester or Warrington to the south, gave it an importance as a market town, and this, together with its administrative role and its legal and commercial business, enabled the community to thrive.

Production of textiles was carried out by hand. Spinning the wool, flax or hemp fibres on a hand wheel was largely, but not always, a rural craft, while hand loom weaving, whereby the spun yarn was made into cloth, was carried out extensively in rural or town areas. Until the middle of the eighteenth century, the woollen and worsted trade, after agriculture, was by far the most important manufacturing trade nationally.

A series of inventions and improvements transformed the industry and changed Lancashire and Preston for ever. In the 1760s a Prestonian, Richard Arkwright began to study the idea of applying mechanical power to cotton spinning. In 1768, after working secretly at night at a building now named after him, Arkwright House, he applied for a patent for his invention, the spinning or water frame. This invention allowed a major increase in the output of yarn.



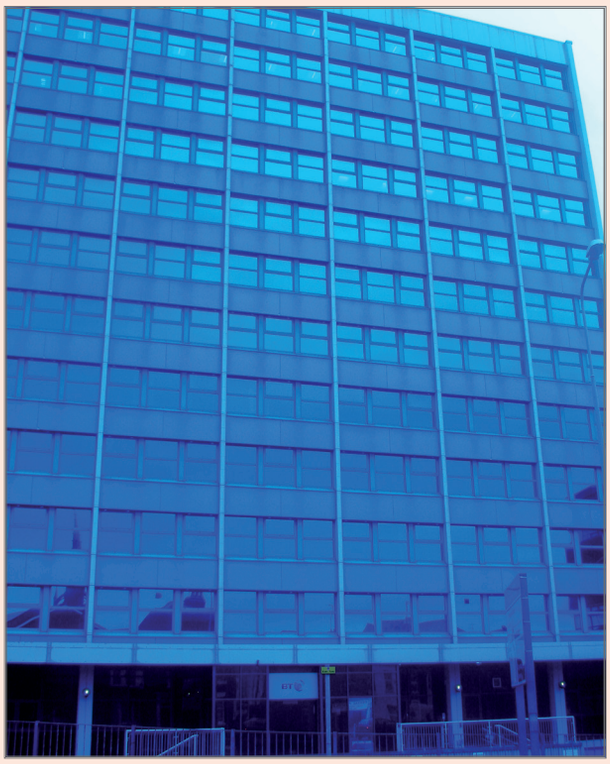
▲ *Arkwright's Waterframe (Picture courtesy of Ree's Encyclopedia 1972)*

The first cotton mill to be erected in Preston was in 1777 at Moor Lane, on the site now occupied by the British Telecom building. It was operated by a partnership of two men, Collinson and Watson, and initially, in the absence of a suitable stream, was driven by a combination of horse and wind power, although it closed soon after.

Preston's cotton industry continued to grow. The man responsible for introduction of large-scale cotton manufacturing in Preston was John Horrocks. Born in 1768 at Edgworth near Bolton. He set up a small carding and spinning business in Turks Head Yard, off Church Street. From these small beginnings would grow one of the world's great cotton firms, carrying the name of Horrocks, and of Preston, around the globe, and remaining a key player in the cotton trade for over 150 years.

Richard Arkwright, the famous Prestonian who had by now been knighted, died aged 60 in 1792, leaving an estate valued at over £500,000 (perhaps £100 million in modern terms). By 1799, John Horrocks and his brother Samuel had built five more spinning mills in various locations in Preston.

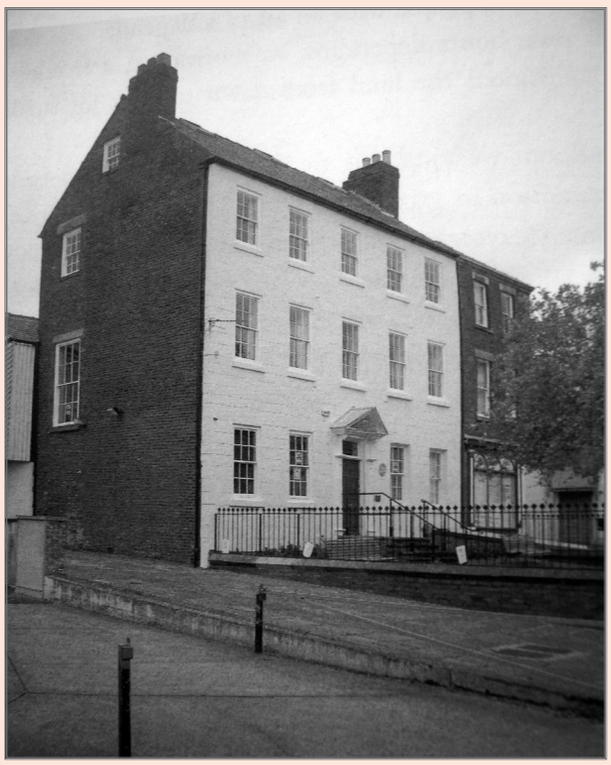
In 1800, with the arrival of steam power in the town, there were 16 spinning mills operating. By now more rural workers were abandoning the cottage crafts of hand loom weaving and spinning to live and work in Preston. This resulted in many of them living in overcrowded houses within the shadow of the mills.



▲ *The site of Preston's first cotton mill, now occupied by BT.*

Hewitson in his 1833 History of Preston refers to India Mill as being the last new mill to be built in Preston for some time. In fact, it would be almost thirty years from the building of India Mill before the next new spinning mill would be erected in Preston, the Centenary Mill.

Myer's 1836 town map of Preston shows in the region of 35 cotton mills and small number of flax mills.



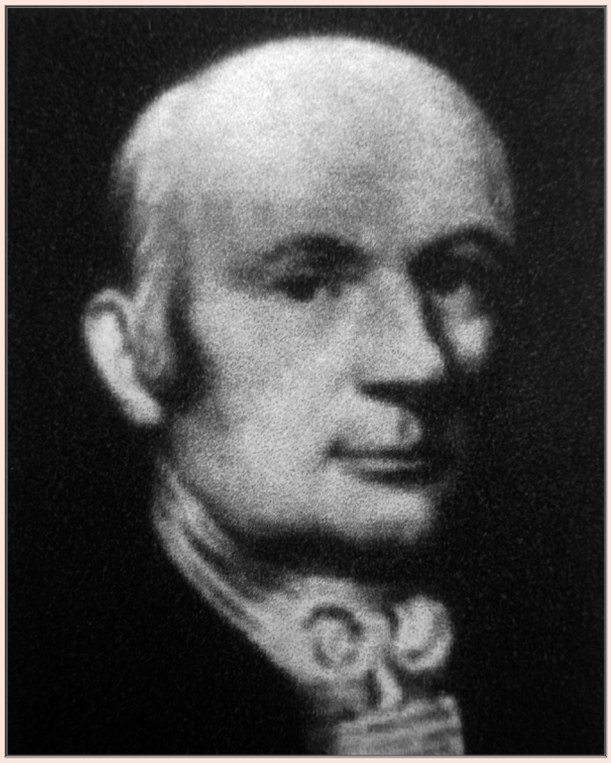
▶ *Arkwright House - Where Sir Richard Arkwright made his spinning frame in 1732. It is now used by Age Concern.*

2.2 Courtauld family

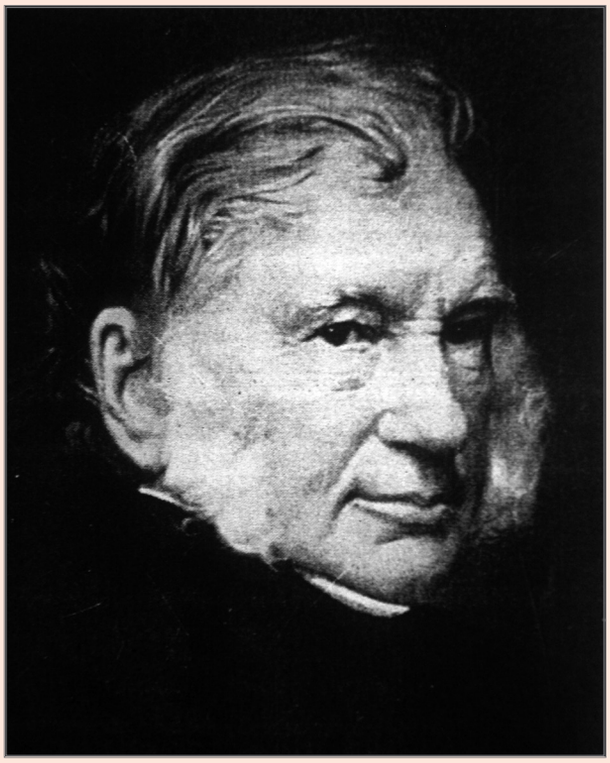
The Courtauld family came to England, as Huguenot refugees, between 1685 and 1700. In France they had been traders; in England they started up in the wine trade. In 1775 its first link with textiles was forged when George Courtaulds(I) was apprenticed to a silk throwster; his master belonged to the famous settlement of Huguenots practising in the silk industry in Spitalfields (London).

The link was not at first a very strong one, for after completing his apprenticeship, George spent several years alternating between the silk business in England and farming in America. Around the turn of the century he was managing a silk-throwing mill in Essex, owned by a London firm.

In 1809 he moved to Braintree to set up a similar mill for another London firm and six years later went into partnership in Braintree. Soon afterwards George Courtauld departed once again for America, where he died in 1823 and the running of the business fell on the shoulders of his son Samuel.



▲ *George Courtauld I*



▲ *Samuel Courtauld III*

At the end of 1819, young Samuel Courtauld III, at the age of 26, was just managing to keep his small silk business alive with the aid of capital and credit from friends, relatives and obliging bankers. Sixty-two years later he died, leaving a fortune of nearly £700,000. For the preceding ten years, simply from his share as senior partner in the business, and wholly apart from his other investments, he had drawn an average income of £46,000 a year, representing an average return on his capital of 35 per cent, per annum.

Also between 1835 to 1885 the firm's capital had grown from just over £40,000 to over £450,000; annual profits rocketed from £3,000 to £110,000 and new mills were built or acquired.

The old cloth industry was in decay; many of the small silk firms which came to the area failed to survive; but Samuel Courtauld & Co stayed to become the largest employers of manufacturing labour in the region. The firm built schools and cottages for its workers. Reading rooms and libraries and coffee-rooms were started; the Mechanics Institute was supported, and hospitals endowed. Pensions were paid to long- service workers; skilled men and salaried staff had paid holidays.

The Courtaulds mills had a long history of relying on women, young people or in later years migrant workers and this was the case in 1838 when over 92 per cent of Courtaulds workforce were young females.

By 1850, Courtaulds employed over 2,000 people in three silk mills, and had recruited partners including (in 1850) his brother, George Courtauld II (1802-1861) and in 1849 fellow Unitarian social reformer Peter Alfred Taylor (1819-1891). By this time, Samuel Courtauld III was a very wealthy man but was also suffering from deafness. He planned to spend more time on his country estate Gosfield Hall near Halstead, but could not convince himself to retire, and continued to play an active role in the company until just before he died in March 1881.

After 1885 the warm glow of prosperity and contentment began to fade. Crape prices, like other prices, fell sharply; sales in the early 1890s were almost 40 per cent down on the mid-1880s; profits tumbled. In 1894 the business made a loss; and in 1896, a worse loss. The capital had to be drastically written down.

Some part of the difficulties in which the firm found itself in were due to certain changes in the British economy as a whole. Falls in prices, sales and profits were features of certain sectors of the economy at this time, and so in one way Samuel Courtauld & Co were simply caught up in wider movement. In part too, the firm's troubles arose from a change in English fashion. Although Queen Victoria's continued presence upon the throne went far to ensure a continued high regard for formal crape-laden mourning, there were many signs of a move towards greater freedom and less formalism in this matter. But in the last resort the firm suffered from a failure of business leadership.

Tetley was put in charge of leading Courtaulds and he proceeded to not build in the traditional textile districts of Lancashire or Yorkshire, but the Midlands and by July 1905 the company's new Coventry factory started work.

In 1921 Tetley died and the leadership of Courtaulds passed into the hands of a very different sort of man. For the next year quarter of the century, the chairman of the company was Samuel Courtauld IV. He was 45 when he succeeded Tetley; and he remained the dominant, highly-respected leader of Courtaulds until the year before his death in 1947.

Samuel Courtauld left his imprint on the firm by creating and endowing the Courtauld Institute of Art.

The manufacture of "artificial silk"- which from the late 1920s onwards came to be called by the less derogatory term "rayon"- expanded in various ways. Output was increased by the entry of new firms into the industry; and by the pioneer firms not only growing at home but also setting up subsidiaries in other countries. New qualities and types of rayon were introduced, thus extending the market in sundry directions.

In the years between the two World Wars, 1919-39, world output of rayon rose from 29 million to over 2,200 million, an increase of 7,600 per cent. Moreover, as competition grew fiercer and as costs were cut, prices fell sharply, much more than those of silk, cotton or wool. Cheap woven or knitted fabrics and hosiery, in rayon or rayon mixtures, tapped new social levels of demand.

Although Courtaulds' total rayon output fell by about 25 per cent from 1928 to 1930, it had more than recovered by 1932 and in 1939 was well over three times what it had been in 1929.

It was under this backdrop that Courtaulds opened its rayon factory in 1939 at the Red Scar site in Preston. The factory was the largest of its type in Europe and operated 24 hours a day and on full production produced about a million pounds weight of viscose rayon per week.

▲ ***Red Scar site - The Red Scar site prior to its conversion to the Courtaulds rayon factory (Picture courtesy of Lantern Images)***

In 1945, Courtaulds remained one of the four groups which dominated the man-made fibre industry in Europe.

With the election of a Labour Government in 1964 the emphasis turned to the maintenance of employment in Lancashire. It was during the period that the Courtaulds became more interested in maintaining the viability of the cotton industry as an outlet for its man-made fibres. The aims of the government and Courtaulds were apparently in accord.

The interventions of Courtaulds in the Lancashire textile industry assured the company of a market for its man-made fibres. Thus that intervention was essential for its profitability, though periodically it was necessary for the company to appear to be primarily interested in the maintenance of employment in the area. It was this justification that enabled it to influence government policy

and union attitudes. By 1970, the factory employed 3,500 people and was the largest rayon factory in the world.

Courtauld profits on upward trend

By JOHN HEFFERNAN

COURTAULDS' capital commitments at March 31st this year were £18,400,000—up nearly £10,000,000 on last year.

I understand that over £12,000,000 of this was for the Northern textile division, mainly in Lancashire and covering the old Lancashire Cotton and Fine Spinners' group. The capital spending largely reflects a major weaving expansion.

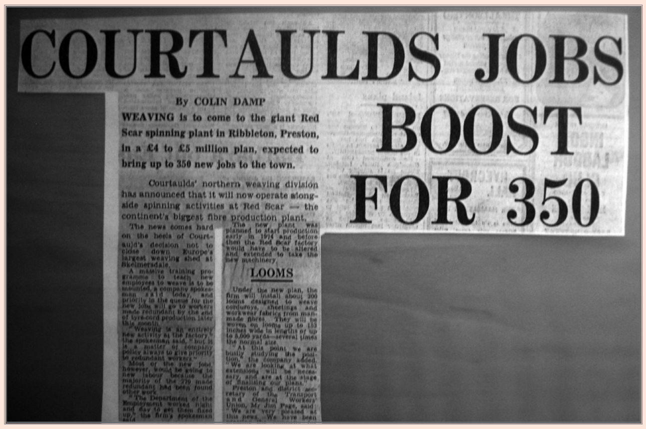
The figures for capital commitments are given in the Courtaulds' annual report. While the report gives no hint capital programme, combined with the £63,000,000 which Courtaulds spent on acquiring 15 companies last year, suggest that the trend of profits his year will continue strongly upward.

Last year, the biggest boost to profits came from "Celon," produced at Aintree and Spondon and used in items like lingerie and shirts.

On the rayon side, with which Redscar, Preston is mainly concerned, March production of rayon staple was the highest level ever recorded.

But there was a sharp fall

14.6.65. L.E.P



COURTAULDS JOBS BOOST FOR 350

By COLIN DAMP

WEAVING is to come to the giant Red Scar spinning plant in Ribbleton, Preston, in a £4 to £5 million plan, expected to bring up to 350 new jobs to the town.

Courtaulds' northern weaving division has announced that it will now operate alongside spinning activities at Red Scar — the continent's biggest fibre production plant.

The news comes hard on the heels of Courtauld's decision not to close down Europe's largest weaving shed at Skelmersdale.

A massive training programme to teach new employees to weave is to be mounted, a company spokesman said today, and priority in the queue for the new jobs will go to workers made redundant by the end of tyre-cord production later this month.

"Weaving is an entirely new activity at the factory," the spokesman said, "but it is a matter of company policy always to give priority to redundant workers."

Most of the new jobs, however, would be going to new labour because the majority of the 270 made redundant had been found other work.

"The Department of the Employment worked night and day to get them fixed up," the firm's spokesman

The new plant was planned to start production early in 1974 and before then the Red Scar factory would have to be altered and extended to take the new machinery.

LOOMS

Under the new plan, the firm will install about 200 looms designed to weave corduroys, sheetings and workwear fabrics from man-made fibres. They will be woven on looms up to 153 inches wide in lengths of up to 5,000 yards—several times the normal size.

"At this point we are busily studying the position," the company added. "We are looking at what extensions will be necessary, and are at the stage of finalising our plans."

Preston and district secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, Mr Jim Page, said: "We are very pleased at this news. We have been

▲ *Press cuttings showing good times (Courtesy of Lancashire Evening Post)*

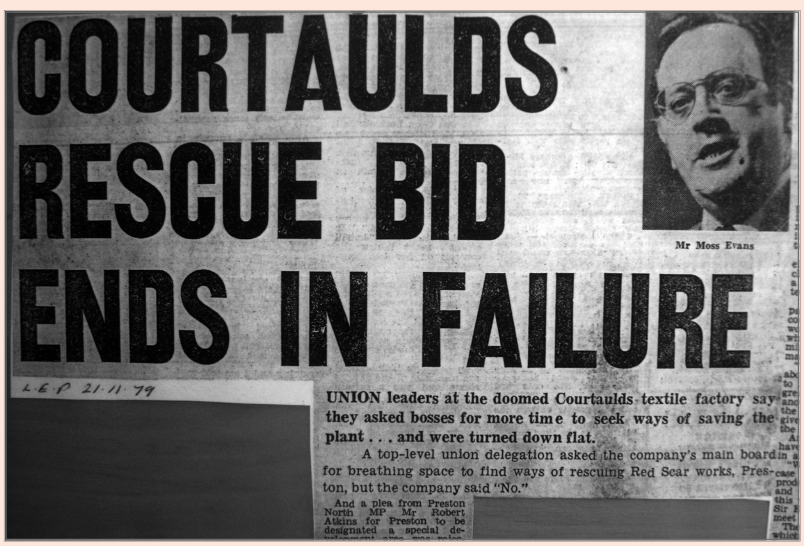
Courtaulds controlled 35 per cent of the spinning capacity in Lancashire by 1970. In the weaving sector it was a little more hesitant though, as a by-product of further acquisitions, it owned weaving mills in Frostholme, Burnley and Colne. The company had considered this sector to be more fragmented, and had found the private companies involved in weaving to be less 'susceptible to acquisition'.

However, Courtauld's profit figures fell to £13.5 in 1975/8 (having been £19 million in 1945) and its share of the textile yarn market fell from 76 per cent to 63 per cent over the same period. The man-made fibre producers in a joint memorandum to the Board of the Trade confirmed this trend, saying 'the future indeed is dark'.

1979 marked the beginning of the end for the Red Scar factory. In September 1979, 370 people were made redundant and by 1980 the factory was closed, making 2700 people redundant, of which one third were from a minority ethnic community.

Courtaulds began closing other factories down and moving operations abroad and in 1990, Courtaulds split into two parts; Courtaulds textiles and Courtaulds plc, which dealt in the chemical business.

Courtaulds textiles became the biggest producer of lingerie and underwear, but in 2000, Sara Lee acquired Courtaulds and it became a subsidiary of it.



COURTAULDS RESCUE BID ENDS IN FAILURE

Mr Moss Evans

L.E.P 21.11.79

UNION leaders at the doomed Courtaulds textile factory say they asked bosses for more time to seek ways of saving the plant . . . and were turned down flat.

A top-level union delegation asked the company's main board for breathing space to find ways of rescuing Red Scar works, Preston, but the company said "No."

And a plea from Preston North MP Mr Robert Atkins for Preston to be designated a special de-

▲ *Press cutting showing the end (Courtesy of Lancashire Evening Post)*

The name Courtaulds plc disappeared in the chemical merger with Akzo Nobel and in May 2006, Sara Lee announced the sale of Courtaulds textiles to PD Enterprise Ltd and thus came to an end the brand that was Courtaulds, which began in 1794.

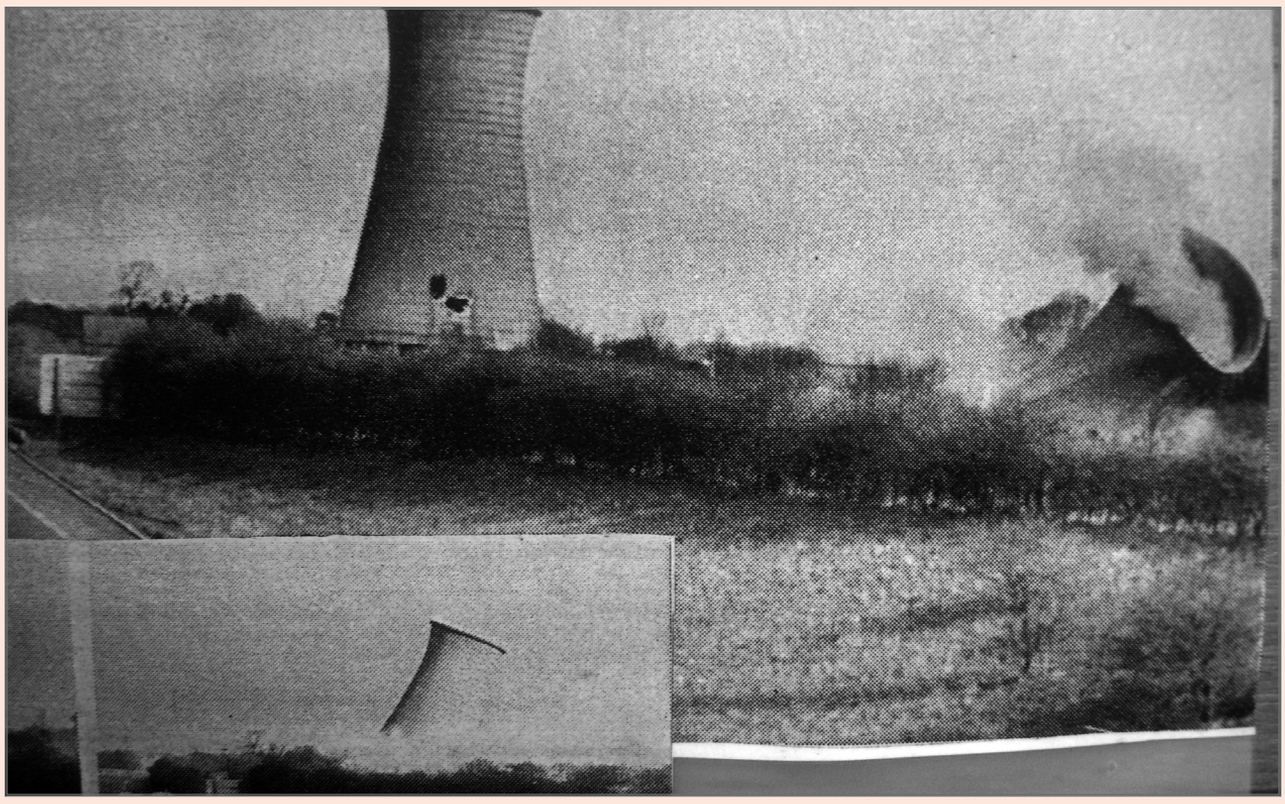
2.3 Decline of the textile industry

In Preston, the cotton famine had set in toward the end of 1861 and would last until nearly mid-1865, which caused years of distress during which thousands of men, women and children received help from the poor law guardians.

In 1864, two more cotton factories appeared on the Preston scene; India Mill and Manchester Mill. built in close proximity to one another, just off New Hall Lane on its northern side, the mills were operational by 1865.

The economic progress of Preston's textile industry throughout the 1870s would be low- key. With no new spinning mills erected in these years or those of the next decade, and in contrast to the Oldham industry, the Preston one was the bastion of private enterprise. In essence, it had not fully recovered from the blight of the cotton famine, and the mill-building programmes of the 1850's and early 1860's were not to be a feature of the 1870's, although, by 1883, there were reported to be 80 mills in Preston.

By 1900, some 80 per cent of Preston's population was linked with the textile industry for its livelihood.



▲ *The chimney at Courtaulds is brought down in 1983 (Courtesy of Lancashire Evening Post)*

The cotton industry reached its peak around 1914, but after World War One it began to decline because of overseas competition. The last cotton mill to be built in Preston was the Embroidery Mill in 1913.

Fewer than 10 mills remaining in operation in the 1980s and only two local textile companies were actively engaged in this sector by the early 1990s.

In 1980, Courtaulds closed their mill at Red Scar and Horrockses moved work from Centenary Mill to the Red Scar site. This proved short lived and a few years later the Horrockses operation also stopped and the site was later developed into a business centre.

▲ ***Red Scar site now - former workers revisit the site***

In 1986, Centenary Mill was taken over by private businesses from within the South Asian heritage community and they introduced the manufacturing of Jeans and a few years later, 50 per cent of the UK's jean manufacturing was done in Preston with the sector employing some 2000 workers.

A regeneration plan for Centenary Mill was made in 1996 involving restoration and setting up training courses for NVQ at Preston College, however, this did not materialise and gradually most textile businesses ceased operating in Preston and moved temporarily abroad and finally closed down altogether.

In 2005 it was decided the Centenary Mill building would be converted into apartments and subsequently this was what happened.

This brought about the physical closure of the chapter in Preston's textile history. This project now embarked on capturing the living history of Preston's textile industry.

▲ *Centenary Mill today; the site of apartments and a hotel*

▲ *Tulketh Mill today; the site of local businesses*

3.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 Research methods

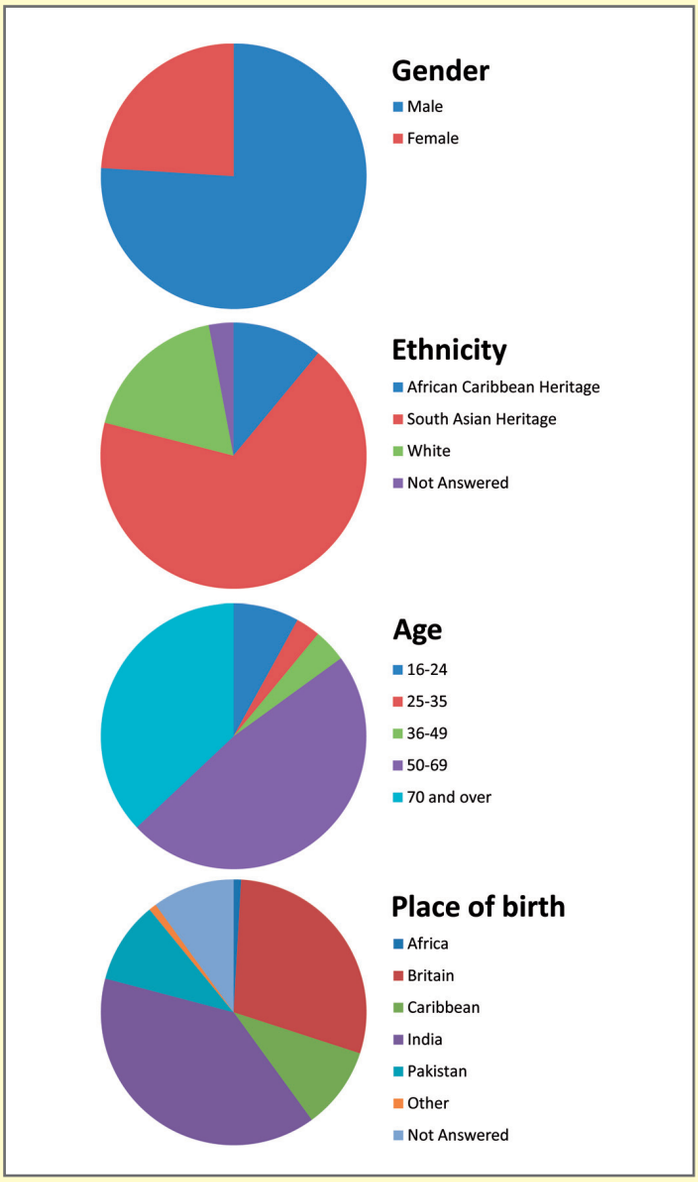
In carrying out a project of this nature, it requires a mixture of research methods. The following methods were used to gather the information for this report:

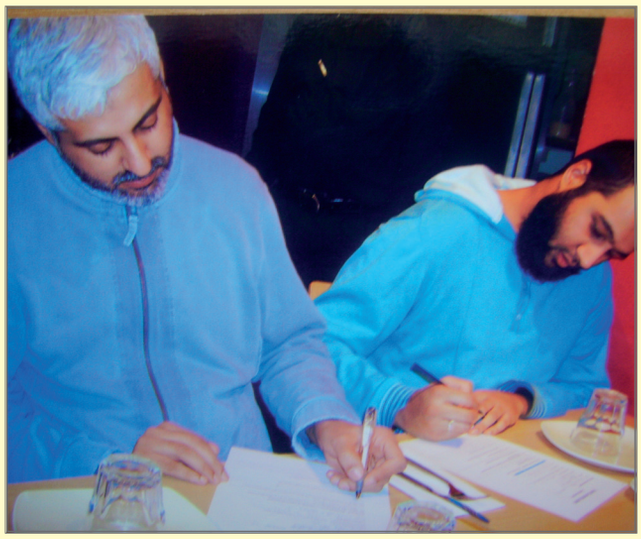
(i) Desk research
Initially, desk research was undertaken to obtain background information. This was undertaken via the website, Lancashire record office, Lancashire library in Preston.

(ii) Questionnaires
The questionnaires comprised a series of open and closed questions and looked to obtain information from people who worked in the textile industry, their children and partners. A further questionnaire was used to obtain information from young people, in order to assess the level of knowledge amongst people who were either too young or not born when the textile industry factories ceased to operate in Preston.

In total, 100 people completed the questionnaires as follows:

	%
Gender	
Male	76
Female	24
Ethnicity	
African Caribbean Heritage	11
South Asian Heritage	68
White	18
Not Answered	3
Age	
16-24	8
25-35	3
36-49	4
50-69	48
70 and over	37
Place of birth	
Africa	1
Britain	32
Caribbean	11
India	43
Pakistan	11
Other	1
Not Answered	11



▲ *Facilitators and Participants*

(iii) Focus Groups
A total of four focus groups were held. Two aimed at South Asian heritage people and one each for African Caribbean and White people.

The focus groups used trained facilitators to lead the group through a series of questions, which encouraged discussion. A total of thirty-three people took part in the focus groups.


▲ *Focus Groups*

(iv) Interviews
In order to obtain 'life stories', eighteen people from a variety of backgrounds were interviewed one to one. A series of questions were asked to encourage discussion.

(v) Production of a play
Pupils at Moor Park High School researched and produced a short play about the textile industry in Britain. The interviews and play were filmed in order to capture information for the archives and were compiled into DVD's.

3.2 First thoughts

Minority ethnic respondents

For those people who came to this country, 62 per cent said the main reason for doing so was to work and improve their standard of living. Whilst for 13 per cent of respondents, the reason for coming to this country was to join a family member.

Most respondents (37 per cent) who came to this country were under 20 years of age, whilst a further 30 per cent were aged between 21-30 yrs when they arrived in this country.

The help needed to come to this country varied between respondents. 25 per cent stated that their father had helped them to come to this country , whilst a further 28 per cent stated another family member helped them. It is interesting that 13 per cent of respondents stated that they came to this country from their own initiative and only 1 per cent mentioned that an agent had helped them come to this country.

A significant number of respondents (40 per cent) mentioned that Britain was not what they were expecting, although 35 per cent did feel it was what they were expecting. 26 per cent commented on the cold and dark winter nights as their first impressions of this country.

On arriving in this country, everyone found a job fairly quickly and for the majority (60 per cent), their first job was in a textile factory, with 25 per cent starting their working careers in Courtaulds textile factory.

For most of the respondents (67 per cent), their first job was outside of Preston, usually the surrounding towns, although some had started work as far away as London (5 per cent).

3.3 Getting started

Minority ethnic respondents

The majority of the respondents (38 per cent) joined Courtaulds before 1965, with 4 per cent of respondents having joined Courtaulds before 1949.

A friend or a family member was seen as the best people to introduce respondents to Courtaulds (65 per cent). A few respondents (7 per cent) mentioned that they had found work at Courtaulds themselves and only 2 per cent mentioned reading about a vacancy in a local newspaper.

In terms of employment hours, 55 per cent stated that they worked between 40-50 hours per week and that they worked a shift system of 6am-2pm, 2pm-10pm and 10pm-6am. A smaller number (17 per cent) worked more during the daytime, which suited them more.

White respondents

For the majority of respondents (55 per cent), working in a textile factory was their first job. A majority (65 per cent) starting their first employment in Preston.

Having been born in Britain and on average being older, the majority of respondents (50 per cent)

had started their working careers between 1920 and 1949.

Again, similar to the minority ethnic community respondents, a friend or family member (55 per cent) was seen as the best person to introduce the respondent to working in a textile factory.

◀ ***Participants from the Age Concern Friendship Club***

3.4 Life in textiles

Minority ethnic respondents

Relationships with managers was good and 57 per cent of respondents stated that they got on well with their managers. A few respondents (6 per cent) mentioned that the relationship was sometimes strained and they did what they had to do and kept themselves to themselves.

A significant majority (89 per cent) stated that working relationships with other workers was good.

Even at the end of their careers, 56 per cent of respondents stated their relationship with their managers was good. Some respondents (5 per cent) did mention that it was more strained and sometimes problems occurred with supervisors.

However, even towards the end of their careers, 86 per cent felt their relationship with their co-workers was good.

A key reason for working at Courtaulds was the relatively high wages that someone who had come from abroad with limited qualifications could earn with 48 per cent stating that this was the main motivator for working at Courtaulds. The friendships built up over time appealed to 23 per cent of respondents as the best thing about working in Courtaulds.

The working conditions (smell, working with acid, noise) was the main reason that most respondents 70 per cent stated that they did not like about Courtaulds. A smaller number of respondents (12 per cent) commented on the shift work required to earn a decent wage and that this was not a good way of working.

White respondents

Slightly more respondents (76 per cent) thought their relationship with their managers was good. Whilst 87 per cent felt their relationship with fellow workers was good at the start of their careers.

Towards the end of their careers, 62 per cent had felt that their relationships with their managers was good, whilst 92 per cent felt their relationships with fellow workers was good.

There was more of a mixture of responses as to what respondents felt was the best thing about working in a textile factory, although, 47 per cent felt that meeting new friends and the support workers gave one another was the best thing about working in a textile factory.

Again, similar to the responses from minority ethnic respondents, a majority 56 per cent felt that the working conditions (noise, unsocial hours, smell) was the worst aspect of working in a textile factory.

▶ ***Weavers at a Mill in Darwen 1953 (Picture courtesy of Ron Freethy, Countryside Books)***

3.5 Young people responses

▲ ***Young people completing questionnaires***

All the young people were under the age of 33 yrs and only a couple were born when Courtaulds closed down. This probably reflected the answer that only 27 per cent had heard of Courtaulds and only 10 per cent knew where Courtaulds had been located. Indeed, only 33 per cent stated they knew where any textile factory had been located in Preston.

Of those responding that they had heard of Courtaulds, this was as a result of having a family member who worked their.

Not surprisingly, 73 per cent of respondents had not visited a textile factory, although all indicated that they would visit one if their was an opportunity.

When asked what their thoughts were towards people who had worked in the textile industry, 50 per cent of respondents felt that it looked like hard work, whilst the other respondents were not sure what it would be like. When asked what their thoughts would be if they were asked to work in a textile factory, only 10 per cent of respondents replied that they would see it as a challenge, whilst the remainder of respondents would refuse to work in a textile factory.

However, when asked what their thoughts were for the people who worked in a textile factory, 90 per cent replied that people worked hard for the money they received and that they had respect for them.

There was a mixed response to whether the young people felt there should be a record of people who worked in the textile factory, with only 37 per cent saying that there should be a record.

3.6 Responses from children of textile workers

All the respondents were born in Britain and having parents working in a textile factory was something that they grew up with.

For all the respondents, the earliest memories of their parents was that they were tired when returning from work and often their clothes smelled. There was also memories of the Christmas parties that Courtaulds organised.

The attitude to their parents working in a textile factory was that of necessity and that the job paid the bills and maintained the family.

Most of the respondents were too young to fully remember the impact of Courtaulds closing down. One respondent replied:

" When my father stopped working, I got free school dinners and we got a colour television from the redundancy money, so I thought it was ok"

Most families coped with their parents losing their jobs at Courtaulds and most parents managed to find other work, so the impact on the family was minimal.

For most of the respondents, seeing their parents work in a hard job with poor working conditions motivated them to work hard themselves in order to get a better job than their parents.

For most respondents, the textile industry played a central role in their lives, while they were growing up and without them life would have been more tougher in the early years of their lives.

▲ ***Participants and organisers of the project at one of the Focus Groups***

4.0 LIFE AFTER THE TEXTILE FACTORIES

4.1 Closure of textile factories

Minority ethnic respondents

Once it was announced that everyone was to lose their jobs, the initial reaction from respondents at the time was one of being upset (54 per cent) at the prospect of being made redundant. Although, a lucky few (15 per cent) managed to get another job before the closures and so avoided the anxiety of losing their job.

Having spent most of their working lives working at Courtaulds, being made redundant could have been the end of their careers and for a significant number (25 per cent) it was. They were not able to hold down another full time job. However, the majority (75 per cent) used this as an opportunity to try something different and for some (11 per cent), working for themselves was the option they took, whilst the remainder found jobs in a variety of occupations ranging from bricklaying, sales and mail worker.

Despite the poor working conditions, the majority of respondents (60 per cent) felt that they were sad that Courtaulds had closed down and that they had made many friends whilst working there and it offered them security.

A small number of respondents (10 per cent) were glad that it closed down and that had it kept open longer their health would have suffered more.


DEATHS AT TOWN MILL —CALL FOR PROBE

VERNMENT medical experts have n urged to investigate the manufac- ing process at a big Preston mill owing concern over the sudden deaths five people who had worked there.

By ROGER BEAM and ANDREW SPURRIER

CHECKS

PROPER

When asked about what memories they had of Courtaulds, respondents replied:

" it was a good environment and we made good friends"

"there was always a job at Courtaulds before it closed"

"getting up early in the morning and working at night"

"going on strike for better working conditions"

"the work was hard and working conditions were not good"

"there was a family atmosphere"


It's an ill wind that smells no good

70

car Works at Ribbleton have been the nts from local residents.

ds have made the problem worse over prompted the complaints from people he smell over the years.

mbert-road, said: "As soon as we can ill be having fine weather." His Wife live with it now and only complain now

our Mrs Gwen Dunn said the smell was like gas

Mrs Joan Pratt

▲ ***Press cuttings showing conditions at the factories (Courtesy of Lancashire Evening Post)***

White respondents

A majority of respondents (54 per cent) were sad when it was announced that the textile factory they were working in was closing down.

One respondent commented:

"All the adults in my family worked in the same textile factory and when it closed, all of us lost our jobs at the same time"

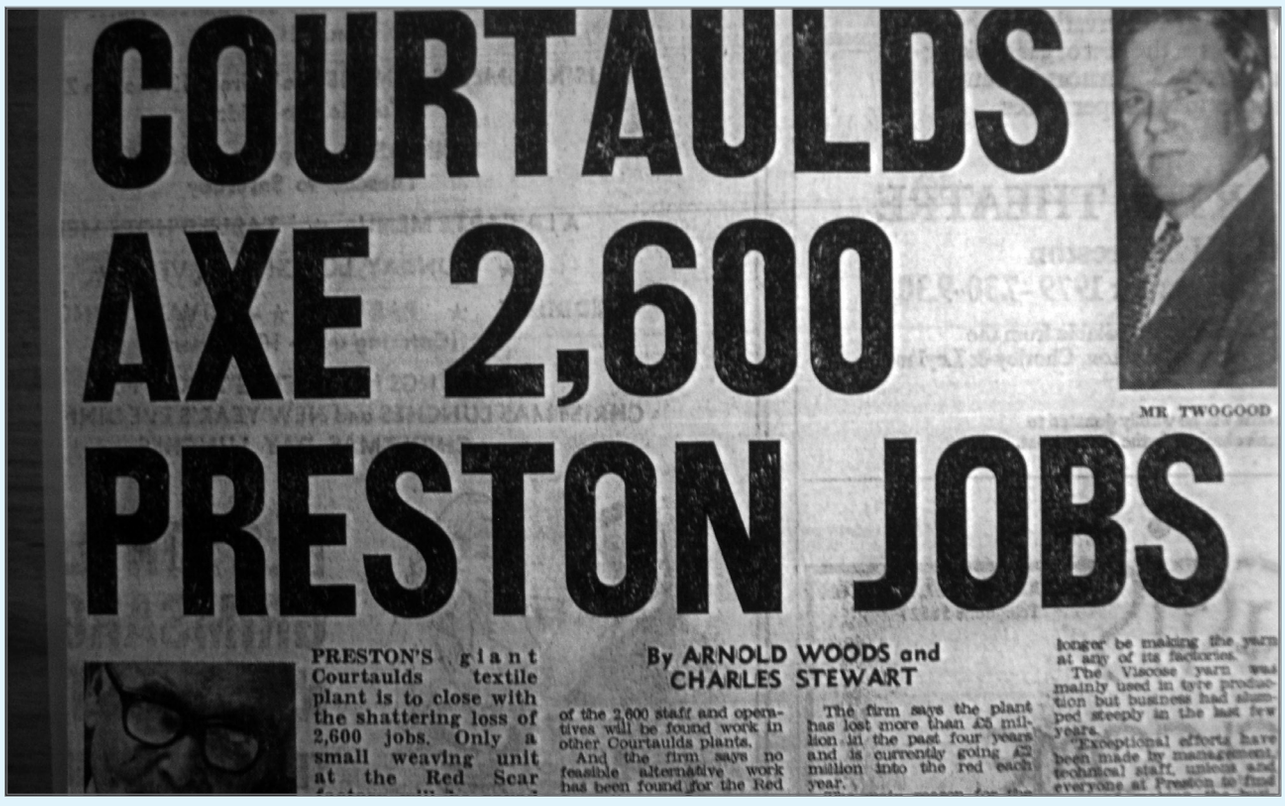
Similar to the minority ethnic respondents, 27 per cent of respondents stated that they did not work again, deciding instead to look after their families or retiring. However, the remainder of respondents managed to secure other work and again this was varied and included working in nursing, retail and for Rolls Royce!

Thinking of the past, a majority of respondents (86 per cent) stated that they had fond memories of working in a textile factory and that for many it offered a chance to start working after leaving school.

Again, some respondents (20 per cent) felt that the working conditions resulted in them not having many good memories and that they were glad to stop working in a textile factory.

One respondent commented that working in a textile factory changed her life:

" Not only did I win a personality contest, but I also met my future husband at work, what more could you ask for"



COURTAULDS AXE 2,600 PRESTON JOBS

MR. TWOGOOD

By ARNOLD WOODS and CHARLES STEWART

PRESTON'S giant Courtaulds textile plant is to close with the shattering loss of 2,600 jobs. Only a small weaving unit at the Red Scar

of the 2,600 staff and operatives will be found work in other Courtaulds plants.

And the firm says no feasible alternative work has been found for the Red

The firm says the plant has lost more than £5 million in the past four years and is currently going £2 million into the red each year.

longer be making the yarn at any of its factories.

The Viscose yarn was mainly used in tyre production but business had slumped steeply in the last few years.

"Exceptional efforts have been made by management, technical staff, unions and everyone at Preston to find

▲ *Press cutting spelling out the end for Courtaulds (Courtesy of Lancashire Evening Post)*

5.0 LOOKING BACK AND FORWARD

5.1 Looking back

When this project was started, it was as a result of the important role that the textile industry and in particular Courtaulds had played in many people's lives, especially those who settled in Britain from other countries.

The textile industry offered people with limited skills and qualifications the opportunity to gain full time employment and an opportunity to better themselves and their families.

The textile industry traditionally employed the weak and vulnerable sections of the workforce and apart from women and older workers, it also employed substantial numbers of migrant workers who found it difficult to find or adjust to other jobs as a result of cultural or social factors. Similarly, early school leavers were also able to find work in the textile industry.

The textile industry also employed disabled people, especially in the wrap preparation departments, and alternative employment for them was non-existent at the time.

▲ *Participants involved in the video production*

This research project involved 100 people, ranging from teenagers right up to people in their nineties, from people who worked all their lives in the textile industry to people who were not born when the last textile factory closed down.

In a sense, this project offers an insight into the thoughts of different generations and the changes that have occurred in this country over the last ninety years.

From it's hey day to its decline, the cotton factories helped shape much of Britain's past both here and abroad.

It offered many people employment and whilst the work was hard, nearly everyone who worked in a cotton or textile factory commented on the friendly atmosphere that existed between workers and that many lasting friendships were formed on the shop floor. Perhaps, it was the hard work and the fact that to survive you needed to support one another that created the bond in people.

For many when the textile factories closed, there was a time of uncertainty, but for many this opened up other opportunities to try new professions and many did. Although, for quite a few, on leaving employment in a textile factory meant the end of their working careers, although even today, the very same people hold on to their positive memories of a time when they worked hard and felt good inside.

It has been over thirty years since Courtaulds closed down and another generation has emerged for whom the textile industry is something they read in textbooks. Through this project, for a moment in their lives, they were made to think and speak about the textile industry rather than read about it.

▲ *Participants visiting the Textile Museum*

The views of the young people was interesting. They had respect for the people who worked in the textile factories and that for many, this was their only choice open to them. However, times have moved on and in an age of wifi, Ipod and x-boxes, the thought of working in a textile industry was bemusing to most and indeed most would refuse to work if asked to do so.

What role does the textile industry have in their lives, not much by the sounds of their comments. Perhaps this is exactly why a project such as this is needed, in that it starts to raise awareness of a heritage in young people that they are unaware of or do not value. Perhaps by gradually making people aware of where they have come from, they will understand where they are going.

5.2 Looking forward

To conclude, this story started with Courtaulds and with them will be the final point. The Courtauld family captures the essence of Britain. A refugee family arriving in Britain, they are offered the opportunity to develop their skills and build up a business empire relating to the textile industry and in turn, their factories become the sources of employment and security for those from socially deprived backgrounds and those seeking a better life by coming to this country, just like their family had done in the past.

For more information about the project and the DVD's produced, go to: www.k-solutionsgroup.org.uk

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