

Abstract

Part 1

Harold Taylor comments that the Barnsley linen industry is little known despite the impact it had on the area. Barnsley had a very good reputation in the 1800s for producing noted good quality linen goods, even supplying to the Royal Palaces (Redbrook Works). He suggests the reason for the lack of knowledge is that buildings associated with the industry have been demolished. However, weavers' cottages can still be seen in many of the local villages.

He reviews factors leading to the growth of the industry; availability of necessary resources and the role of local entrepreneurs such as William Wilson, Joseph Beckett and Henry Richardson. The buildings and locations associated with the industry are described, e.g., mills, warehouses, bleach works and weavers' cottages.

Barnsley's population increased four or fivefold between 1801 and 1851 as people came from across the country attracted by the availability of work.

The effect of the introduction of the Jacquard loom (1818), power looms (1830s) and the flying shuttle (1840s) is considered; although these innovations did not lead to the end of hand loom weaving, rather the two methods of manufacture continued side by side.

Many of the workers lived in poverty as evidenced in the 1840s Parliamentary report which describes the appalling living and working conditions of workers, and the use of child labour.

Part 2

The withdrawal of the right of "fent" in 1823, and cuts in the rates of pay led to rioting and strikes in the 1820s which probably contributed to the demise of the industry. Operating the power looms became the province of female workers whilst the men were tempted away by higher wages in the mining industry.

The availability of work meant that people came to work in Barnsley from significant distances and an example is given of a worker who settled in Barnsley from Middlesex and another from Edinburgh. This led to a high population living in lodgings.

The ability to print on linen and union cloth was brought to perfection by Spencers at the Hope Works.

The reasons for the demise of the linen industry in Barnsley are identified as: competition from Ireland which had a larger industry and supporting infrastructure; growth in the popularity of cotton; further labour disputes in 1872; and later the introduction of man-made fibres. The last hand loom weaver Robert Darling died in 1915 and the last mill closed in 1957.

Transcription

Part 1 [00:00:00]

Harold Taylor: [buzzing noise] One of the most remarkable things about the Barnsley linen industry is that so many people have never heard about it. And this in spite of the fact that the industry used to be noted for its quality products and had a very good reputation. Er one example of this good reputation is the tablecloth made for a London customer in 1858 at the Bore Spring Works in Pitt Street, Barnsley. It was 307 feet long and eight feet wide, weighed 200 cwt. The size of the table er leaves a great deal to the imagination. Evidently

Barnsley had a nationwide reputation to have an order like this. Another example, the same kind of thing. The Redbrook Works used to make tea towels or glass cloths for the Royal Palaces as a regular order at the Redbrook mill every year from 1930 to 1939 and incidentally that Redbrook mill was a successor to the factory in Pitt Street where that er large tablecloth was made.

But there's another reason too why it's surprising the industry is-is so little known. For example, the population of Barnsley between 1801 and 1851 increased between four and five times, and that was largely due to the migration of workers coming into the town from various parts of Britain to work as weavers. And more of that later, in this talk. So, before the days of coal in the [clears throat] mid 19th Century onwards, it was linen that accounted for the enormous rapid growth of population in Barnsley.

So, there are reasons why it should be an industry that's understood and known. So, why is it not well known? Or so many buildings in Barnsley that were associated with linen have been demolished. There are absolutely *no* linen weavers' cottages left, and there were hundreds of them one time. Quite recently the very last of the old linen mills has been demolished. Er this was the one er which latterly er was the Barnsley Canister Works. It stood on a high point at the end of Sackville Street very prominent from Town Hall round - from town end roundabout. And that's gone, that was the Hope Works of Messrs Spencer. In its day a famous mill. [pause] Er a little bit earlier the last remnant of another very large mill that was operated by Taylors in Peel Street er was demolished. So [clears throat] nothing left, you could say out of sight out of mind. [pause – takes a drink]

If you could have seen Barnsley in the town end area in the 19th Century, or even the early 20th Century you'd have been very much impressed by the linen mills which were there and the chimneys putting out dark smoke. If you can look at the ordnance survey large scale plan of 1888 you would see seven or eight mills clustered in the town end area and their mill ponds fed by the Sough dike a stream which ran er down to the Dearne roughly along the line of Peel Street. The kind of scene [clears throat] would have been more like you associate with Bolton or Bradford than with Barnsley, very much a mill town then. Erm though by 1888 of course erm sorry 1881, erm coal mining had become very important. If you'd gone back to 1851 before coal became very prominent then you could say it really was a mill town. A scene rather like you get in those Lowry paintings of Lancashire mill towns. [pause - takes a drink]

However, the [clears throat] the days of steam powered mills which I referred to there was the latter part of the story of Barnsley linen. From the 1840s onwards. Before that for about 100 years it was a town of hand loom weavers. Weavers working at home in the cottages. We need to ask when did this industry begin here with these hand loom weavers and why did it? Er what advantages helped it to grow? Was it local flax for the thread perhaps? [00:05:00]

Or was it local water supplies for bleaching? Er we know there'd be plenty of coal for whatever purpose er they required, and-and mainly it was for heating water at bleach works in the early days. Or was it mainly the enterprise and new ideas of particular local people which got this industry off the ground? And one could ask were there weavers here already when the industry began to expand in the 1740s? So, 250 years ago, roughly, was the beginning of this quite remarkable growth of linen manufacturing in Barnsley.

Well I asked the question was there local flax available? Well it certainly was grown locally but not sufficiently to supply the industry not even the 18th Century. But it could supply small scale weavers working in their own cottages making quite small amounts of cloth for local customers. You'd call 'em "custom weavers". There are nice example which I came across in looking at the inventory of a man called John Bedford. He died at Kexborough in

September 1703, and as usual in those days er some of his neighbours er including people knowledgeable in the weaving business erm looked over his, his house and drew up an inventory of his possessions and the inventory includes a pair of gears and looms valued at five shillings. But not only that it er lists “hay” in the barn and also “barley”, “peas” and “rye”. So clearly he was a weaver farmer. Just a part time weaver, perhaps working on the slack times on the farming. This is the kind of er basis on which the mid 18th Century Barnsley entrepreneur began to build an industry which became much more than a local er kind of trade. Incidentally [clears throat], people like John Bedford would have to bleach their yarn to get out the brown-yellow vegetable matter and make it into an almost white cloth, they’d do this by bleaching the yarn or cloth, spreading it out on a hedge or patch of land for a few months took a long time and now and then they’d have to treat it with whatever materials were at hand and which they’d found by trial and error to be satisfactory. Things like sour milk, and pigeon dung. So there was this basis on which an industry can build up. There was some local skill and experience.

What was it though in the 1740s which triggered off bigger developments than the kind of work that John Bedford did? Much of it was down to one man, a man called William Wilson. In fact, so much down to him that he’s been called ‘the father of the Barnsley linen industry’. He wasn’t a native of Barnsley erm his father had moved from the Mottram area of Cheshire and set up an ironmonger’s business in Market Hill, but the son William began his career in a different line. He was apprenticed to a linen draper. Evidently, he saw potential in building up an industry much bigger than existed at the time. He thought if he put out yarn to local weavers in quantity and took in the wool- the woven cloth and bleached it at his own bleach works he could develop er sufficient volume of trade to look out for bigger customers, bigger orders further afield. And to work in this way, he would need a warehouse er for the yarn and to put the cloth in when he collect- when the-the weavers brought it in. And he also need land for laying out the cloth to bleach because as I’ve said just now part of the process was to put the cloth or yarn out in the open air bright light, sunlight if possible and allow that to help to, to-to make it er lighter in colour. So he want warehouse and a bleach ground. Well his father was very helpful in this, er they lived in Eastgate and at the back of the house was a building which er was going to be suitable to warehouse and William was allowed to use that. As for bleach green, erm his father had a number of fields down at Honey Well, it’s er Old Mill roughly where the ASDA supermarket is now. And this is where William Wilson began to bleach his cloth.
[00:10:02]

So he had a bleach green or bleach croft down there. It was out of town a little way which made the air less sooty. This was better than having to keep splashing water and washing it er to keep it clean as it lay out there. [clunking noise] Very important too; plenty of water available, you need lots of that, and the stream flowing from Honey Well a spring down to the Dearne supplied the necessary water for bleaching.

So, William began to widen his activities, he began to send bleached yarn over the Pennines to the Mottram area, which he knew of course from his- from his origin, and he sent it out to weavers there. He also brought over experienced people from Pendleton er evidently, he knew these people by repute they may have been cousins. He brought them from Pendleton near Manchester er to work for him, these were called Isaac and William Hyde and the idea was that Isaac would look after the warehouse and William would look after the bleach works. Er he had an expertise in that and er the local historian of the 19th Century called Burland erm remarked that the Great Grandfather of these brothers walked with them for the first mile wearing his clogs. You may ask, well why didn’t he go more than one mile? Well apparently, he was 104 years old at the time! [pause]

William Wilson's nephew John Wilson expanded the business further in a different way. Erm he built a lot of cottages for hand loom weavers to rent, and er in that way he had within his business er activities er a number of people [clears throat] to whom he could put out yarn and who would weave the cloth for him. And this kind of business was called "linen manufacturing". A linen manufacturer in that time late 18th Century early 19th wasn't a factory owner mill owner, he, he had weavers operating in the cottages. He had a warehouse and possibly bleach works as well. There is one maybe two erm warehouses still surviving in the town. Er certainly the one in St Mary's place at the foot of Church Fields er is- was a warehouse, it was there in 1821 and it belonged to a man called Samuel Cooper. He was one of these linen manufacturers. [pause – takes a drink] It's now used by a floor covering firm. But it's there, and adjacent to it is a-a very attractive building which was the stable and warehouse er building.

In Eastgate there's a Mas- what was a Masonic building and that, that too has a date 1821 there's a date stone on the wall and er it's possible that too was a warehouse in an earlier time. Erm this local historian Burland that I mentioned tells us something else about Wilson, William Wilson the er the er founder which is significant. He described him as a soberly dressed and plain-speaking man. A man without glitter. This brings us to the point that this man led such a sober life because he was a Quaker, Society of Friends. And some of the other early linen manufacturers in Barnsley were also Quakers. This is important because er they played a notable part in getting this industry off the ground. Er some time ago I looked at the minutes of the quarterly meetings of the local Quakers er they're kept in the Ackworth er Quaker school, and at the end of one of the reports of a meeting in 1817 it says this; "Members should carefully avoid all vain sports, gaming, all unnecessary frequenting of taverns and other public houses, excess in drinking and intemperance." In other words, they were not to waste their time and substance. On the positive side though, Quakers were honest businessmen they could do business with each other they were all trustworthy and it helped the business community er to develop, succeed. This is late 18th Century then. [pause] So we have to stress the importance then of this group of enterprising linen manufacturers, so called, in the establishment of a major and growing linen industry in Barnsley and stressing in particular William Wilson.

[00:15:04]

As John Goodchild puts it in his article called "Golden Threads", the right man was there at the right time. As the facilities grew here, the need for more workers led to, led the manufacturers to recruit weavers er from across the Pennines er big demand for them, people with skills already. And this was the start of a big in-migration went on into the 19th Century. In-migration of weavers from other linen centres, people with skills already, coming from places where trade wasn't as good as in Barnsley. Er like Knaresborough, North Allerton, Wigan, parts of Scotland and Ireland. There were also many who were not weavers though who just came to the town hearing that work was available, and they didn't require very much training apparently to become weavers of a kind. Working low quality cloth. And so that four or five-fold growth of population which I mentioned earlier on largely through this in-migration. But we need to remember the influence of some of the other manufacturers, not just the Wilsons. Particularly Joseph Beckett, and we've a reminder of this man in Barnsley's Coat of Arms, in there there're two boar's heads, and they were taken from the family Coat of Arms of the-the Becketts. And Joseph lived a long time 1751 to 1840, in other words the years when the linen industry was just growing to the time when it had reached its peak really and was being replaced by coal as a dominant industry in Barnsley, or pretty close to that. By the 1840s power looms are coming in, so his lifetime was a span of years in which the industry grew on the basis of hand looms.

Well he's been called the "father", not the "founder", but 'the father of the Barnsley linen industry'. It's said he introduced the flying shuttle which made hand loom weaving very much quicker. It's said he introduced better techniques of bleaching using chemical materials and er certainly he-he had a bleach works at Greenfoot, Wilthorpe at Tinkers' Pond it's still there to this day on what was for long years known as Beckett's bleach ground. Er he also had many cottages in the town, some of them in Beckett's Square er where the-the Metro is now. Metropolitan centre I should say. [Pause - takes a drink]. If you look at the Coat of Arms again [swallows] and particularly thinking about the year 1869 when it was first put together; the year when Barnsley became a Municipal Borough, this brings us to another personality who made a good contribution to the growth of the, the town's linen industry. This is Henry Richardson, he was the first Lord Mayor of the Town 1869 and he reached this prominent position as a linen mill owner, linen manufacturer. Very much a self-made man erm in the style of the 19th Century the Victorian self-help philosophy erm he's another one that started off as a draper's apprentice, this time at Cheapside. Er but he moved on to a new job and he married the boss's daughter. A good move because he soon became a partner, with his boss' father. Er from then he moved on to form another firm with new partners, this became the firm of Richardson, Tee and Ryecroft. They had a, a very large mill in Pitt Street, the Bore Spring Works and this is the firm that made that big tablecloth which I mentioned at the beginning of the talk. He lived at a house called "The Grove" in Dodworth High Street, that's still there it's an architect's house now.

Well it's all very well to stress the role of these people in the growth of Barnsley linen, but er surely there had to be some other kind of advantages to help it along. And indeed, there were. Er firstly for instance among these reasons, there was land available for building weavers' cottages. Not in the 1740s so much but by the 1770s particularly on the south side of the town where a very large area called Warren Common was enclosed. Enclosure of 1777-9. So land became available.

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What had been common was now owned by somebody, and if they didn't use it themselves, they'd put it on the market and sell it. And one way or another the Beckett family and the Wilson's and the others acquired land. And they built cottages. Very notably erm the Wilson's built a lot of cottages in a district between New Street and Sheffield Road, it came to be known as "Wilson's Piece" and it was in a part of the Town known as the "Bare Bones", and it was a very unlovely area became a notable slum as time went on. So there was this land for er expanding the weaving capacity of the Town building cottages with loom shops in them.

Another development, very timely, was the improvement in transport. Turnpike roads er to Leeds, Sheffield, Huddersfield. These developed in the second half of the 18th Century and by the end of the century, 1799, the canal from the Aire and Calder Navigation had come into Barnsley. A very important advantage we'll mention presently.

So, a third advantage mentioned before plenty of coal locally especially for heating water at the bleach works.

A fourth advantage which helped was that at the time in the later 18th Century, there was no major competitor for labour. Wire drawing had been the notable industry of the town at that period erm but it wasn't a very big employer of labour so there was no pressure er on a linen manufacturer to put up wages because other industries were competing for the labour he wanted. So it kept wages down and this was of course an advantage for the manufacturer, if not for the worker.

And a fifth advantage; in these days, it's the period before cheap cotton cloth flooded the

market and linen was holding its own as a very important commodity in that period. Coming back to the improvement in transport though, turnpike road and the canal particularly linking with Leeds. Important for this reason that in Leeds from the 1780s onwards, there was a-a very large flax spinning mill at Marshall's Mill at Holbeck. And in this early period they're producing ordinary quality of yarn at very much lower rates than before or lower cost than before and this firm Marshall's seems to be very closely linked with Barnsley at this period. Erm one of its chief outlets for its yarn. And by cutting costs in this way, through cheaper yarn, Barnsley began to outdo Scottish rival producers at the cheaper end of the market. [rustling of papers] There was incidentally a flax mill in the town at Old Mill early in the 19th Century. Er Baines Directory of 1822 mentioned a Russell & Company, now this in its early days was a-a water powered mill and afterwards steam was applied to it. But it was never a major activity in the town, flax spinning. [pause] So far, I've only spoken of the early days of the industry 1740s let's say to about 1810. In this period, ordinary quality products of linen nothing very sparkling for instance coarse sometimes unbleached cloth known as "drab" for making smock frocks and they made heavy linen for towels for instance. From about 1810 a big change, the more enterprising manufacturers began to make higher quality fabrics, getting better profits, wider markets, more lucrative. [cough] Three particular examples I can mention or "damask" for instance was made now, the cloth that reflects light so beautifully from its surface. And "huckaback" an absorbent quality fabric, good for towels and a third one "diaper", a very soft material for tablecloths and towels, still made the lower grade products but these were the, the changes that took place. Now two good reasons why the change could be made. First of all that they could use better quality yarns, at first they obtained them from continental suppliers, from hand spun materials, hand spun producers.

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And eventually Marshalls in Leeds began to supply the quality that was wanted, at a, a lower cost than before. So now Barnsley could outdo still other rival producers. For instance erm ones in North Yorkshire, North Allerton, Pateley Bridge, Knaresborough for higher quality products. And it's notable from the census return that some of the or weavers from these places began to drift southwards into Barnsley to find work. So that's one reason why the change of quality could happen. Another one was a technological one, in 1818 the jacquard loom was introduced into Barnsley; it was introduced by a man called John Bolton a native of Cumbria or he'd observed jacquard looms working in Manchester or he studied them rather carefully and he made a model which adapted the technique to linen manufacturer. He demonstrated this in Barnsley and the manufacturers were quite impressed- very impressed and they adopted it. Erm what it is, is an endless chain of perforated cards operating on the top of the loom and as these pass along, holes in the cards guide wires which control the warp threads automatically. So, although you still need a man to provide the power to move the parts of the loom the or jacquard punched cards do the actual thinking work, very intricate patterns could be produced so fancy weaving is the kind of work that could now be done. Some of the jacquard machines, as years went by, could be obtained by firms manufacturing in Barnsley. [pause] So now you could expand quality production, you'd even compete with Scottish producers where wages were rather lower than in Barnsley or place like Dunfermline for instance. It's interesting that again some Dunfermline weavers found their way down to Barnsley though I don't think the area was or depressed, devastated like some others by Barnsley's progress. Some indication of the developments through these means is indicated- is shown by these figures; the number of manufacturers in 1789 was five, by

1836 there're 36 of them. And it's reckoned there're about 4,000 hand looms in the town. Another way of looking at the growth is to think of the material used. In 1812 about a quarter of a million bundles of yarn were used by the town weavers. In 1822, 10 years later they're using three quarters of a million bundles of yarn. So these were the-the good times. In 1837 another very important er change in direction came about. Steam powered looms came to Barnsley. Hand loom weaving didn't finish though it went side by side with power looms for decades after 1837. In fact, Taylor's power loomed mill in Peel Street had a lanch- hand loom shop as well. But erm in time they found it, it-it paid them to use the mill space for other things and er to leave the hand loom to the cottage workers. So er why was it that the hand loom weaving didn't fade out in-in face of power looms? Well some manufacturers found that some of the finer weaving, fancy weaving er could be done very profitably by hand loom weavers, and the cheaper fabrics were certainly better done on power looms. Another thing too, in erm really good trading times erm manufacture could expand his output through employing more and more hand loom weavers who are there wanting work. And in poorer time- poor trading times he could lay them off, and still keep his mill going and-and the machinery into which much money been invested, keep that going erm whilst putting off the hand loom weavers until times picked up again, trade picked up again.

At this point, we can look at the work and the living conditions of the Barnsley hand loom weavers. Incidentally, it's possible to be pretty clear about where the cottages were. In the Barnsley Archives, there's a whole set of rate valuation lists and the one for 1848 gives a lot of detail about each street, er the owners and the tenants of the cottages and most important how many looms er each loom shop could hold.

[00:30:12]

And it's possible to map the distribution of these and I've done this and er this is in a erm erm an article now put into the Local Studies Library and into the Archives in Barnsley. Incidentally, four to five looms a typical number but erm a few had a spigot [word unclear] to hold six, er some held two or three and a few just one loom. Four or five was typical. [rustling of papers] [pause] Apart from the town there were many weavers er in some of the villages er surrounding Barnsley. And again you can build up a picture of this by using the census returns. And er the 1861 returns for instance I've used er to show how many weavers there were in-in the villages. Erm I'm not quoting the figures here but they are on a map er in-in my article that's in the library, but the village included Dodworth which incidentally had its own warehouse at Dodworth Green erm Hoylandswaine, Cawthorne, Gawber, Ardsley, Monk Bretton, er Worsbrough Common, stretching out roughly west to east. Not all villages participated er Mapplewell and Staincross more interested in small metal manufacturers [swallows] and further south you come towards the small metal manufacture of the Sheffield area. Go further west towards Penistone, Thurlstone and you come to a woollen weaving area, but the rest apart from those areas very much a collection of satellite villages where villagers could go into the town, collect the yarn and take the cloth back to the-the merchant's warehouse. [rustling of paper]

So, how would you recognise these weavers' cottages. [pause, takes a drink] Can't see them in the town of course they're all gone. But in the villages, you can still see them. Basically, many of them are three storeys high, at least on one side they are. And a number of photographs erm have been produced to illustrate the main points I'm making here erm the idea – if you're looking Caw- Darton Lane Cawthorne you'll see a pair of cottages there three storeys high er the weaving was done in the basement, living room above, living room above and two bedroom at the top. Round the back of the house access to the living room, the first floor, is by a flight of steps. Hoylandswaine, Nipping

Row as you come in from the Barnsley end, the end of the village very much the same, three floors high at least on the er main road side, basement had the-the loom shops, living room above, bedroom above that. Dodworth High Street what was a-a old newsagent's shop er that's now a-an example that survives three weavers' cottages used to be part of Jackson's Square. [pause] [rustling of paper].

Inside the cottages, if you fortunate enough to be able to get inside there the typical arrangement in the basement was to have a, a barrel-vaulted ceiling of brick or stone and the idea of this was to give strength to the b- this rather tall building, prevent the walls from collapsing inwards. And that various photographs of this which will, will show it. [rustling of paper].

At Dodworth, Dodworth Green, erm something else in addition to er the weavers cottages elsewhere in the village erm here the Tailor family who owned that Peel Street mill erm began in the latter part of the 18th Century by developing er, er a linen warehouse here and erm that by 1858 was converted into cottages and because of that the middle windows of the row of three are blocked up, it's now two cottages. And adjacent to this you can see other cottages which have got an arch – a series of archways in the front walls.

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These were originally a cart house and later a warehouse. And incidentally there was an eight-loom shop here early on in this site, but that's gone. And that's the biggest in the area that I-I've heard of. Some more examples of surviving cottages Top Row Ardsley, top of the hill as you come from Stairfoot up the main Doncaster Road in Ardsley, they're on your left hand side. They are all that survive of a row of five. Road widening really devastated the, the old parts of Ardsley many cottages were just swept away by this, but there at the top of the road you've got this row of two. If you look on the downhill side, you'll see it's three floors high. Round the other side you get erm two floors and steps up to the front door, typical arrangement. Coming back to the side on – facing Barnsley you see half an arch in the wall and this is a reminder that three cottages have gone, the rest of the arch has gone, but before they were weavers' cottages this group of buildings was part of a farmstead and about 1801, it was converted into weavers' cottages. This happened in a number of places, certainly happened in-in-in Dodworth, these are boom times early in the century when people were deciding that here was a way to make money and you could convert barns and farm buildings and make them into weaver's cottages. So, some were purpose built, others were converted and adapted and a lot in-in Ardsley were simply adapted, not built for the purpose originally. [pause] [rustling of papers].

In Barnsley itself as I say that no cottages survive but there are plenty of photographs and er in the Archives and the Local Studies Library you can see er a number of pictures of Tailor Row for instance. Interesting that erm while whilst on the south side of Tailor Row that's between Dodworth Road- sorry Doncaster Road and Sheffield Road on the south side of the this double row the houses were three floors high and they had cellars where the looms were. Opposite on the north side of this row, there were no cellars you had two rooms side by side the smaller one could hold two looms which remind us that whilst basically erm weaving was done in cellars and basements it didn't have to be, you could get by at ground level. [pause]

Interesting erm illustration though in the report of the Barnsley Board of Health dated from 1852, this is in the Local History Library too, and it has an engraving showing two workers in a loom shop erm a loom shop's six foot high and er it's just about, well its ceiling is two foot above the street level. And outside the little window which has one little opening pane is the open gutter, the sewer which carries the, the town waste. [pause] [rustling of paper] The, this report of 1852 gives some quite striking descriptions of-of how it was in, in some

of the, the dampest examples of these cottages. [takes a drink] Incidentally I-I should have said early on that'er whereas the erm woollen weavers in places like Thurstone [pause] worked in, in attics, lofts, almost without exception linen weavers worked in basements. And I think the reason was that er so much water had to be used and splashed about to keep the linen from snapping that you-you had to have it in a basement. They not only splashed water but they also used a flour and water size so a fairly wet kind of job not suitable for a loft er and in addition in a cool cellar or basement er you'd have rather damper air and-and this prevented the problem of snapping thread. However, some of these cellars could be a bit too damp and-and this 1852 report describes er one particular example it says; "...the chief evil connected with the weaving shops arises from the surface drainage of the streets in which they are situated, the ceiling of the weaving shops generally about two feet above the surface of the ground, has a window which doesn't open, the sill being on a level with the street outside. Immediately under this window the aperture- an aperture runs an open channel to carry off the liquid refuse of the neighbouring houses so that every breath of air that comes into the weaving shop is poisoned in its passage over the filthy and half stagnant gutter. Add to this the fact that the permeable nature of the drains allows much of the liquid sewage to saturate the ground as well as the walls of many of the underground weaving shops in wet weather the surface water runs into them from the streets. In some instances, the overflowing contents of the adjoining soil pits are discharged into the loom shops, the occupants of which have to bail them out two or three times a day. A large proportion of the weaving population who work in their own shops are living in and breathing in the atmosphere of a cess pool". [00:40:45]

And the report described a six-loom shop off Mayday Green, where a man was working in water- working in water that were two feet deep. Already that day he'd bailed out over 47 gallons of water and he expected to bail out two or three times more before that night. The manufacturers certainly knew about these conditions and-and one of them told that inspector as proof of the atmosphere in the shop was of the worst kind, he could mention that the work brought in by the weavers had the most offensive and unhealthy odour. The smell was peculiar and quite indescribable. [pause]

There's a mention of a, a cottage in Heeley Street too which tells us about living conditions above the-the workplace and these also were in many cases most unpleasant and unhealthy. This cottage in Heeley Street is in what I call Wilson Piece, the Bare Bone between New Street and Sheffield Road. It measured 14 feet by 11 approximately, there're two families living in this, they had two beds in the cellar because of the crowding. Water stood in the passage of this house so frequently, there were stepping stones to cross it. Then there's another cottage in a place called Burrow's [spelling unsure] Yard two families in this as well, one of the- one family of four, another family of five! A man, his wife and three children. And this man, wife and three children were lodgers, they had to sleep on the floor without bedding. Another cottage had a woman and her daughter and son-in-law with their child and they'd taken in six other persons to stay a few nights with them. An Irishman, his wife and four children because they were desperately poor and needed the money. So, it's interesting to read the comment of one of the Parliamentary Commissioners in the 1840s speaking about the people of Barnsley that they'd met, the weavers they'd met, inspite of all these most discouraging conditions and it says; "The moral condition of the Barnsley weavers is highly spoken of by their employers and others with whom I've conversed on the subject, and I've found them for the most part sober, steady and intelligent to a degree far above what might be expected in their humble situation." Bit patronising that! "Their dwellings present an appearance of comfort much

superior to that of weavers in other places. In their persons, clothing and the appearance of their children, the Barnsley weavers contrast favourably with the same class of person in Leeds and elsewhere.”

And there's more information in these 1840s Parliamentary reports. Erm evidently the, the conscience of the Nation was awakened to the fact that children were being very badly treated er in-in employment and that something should be done about it. And a good-good many erm Commissioners went around interviewing er children and finding out just what kind of life they led. When you read the replies which were reported replies of these children, you-you see that they were not only asked about the work they did and the conditions of it, but also could they read erm did they go to Sunday School. Er did they know about Jesus Christ and God. Erm did they go to church and so forth, so we can see this from the kind of replies we get. There's one in particular of interest blank call- a boy called John Dunk, he's 12 and a half years old in 1840 and his replies are given without the question, you guess what the questions were. He says he's a winder to a weaver.
[00:45:00]

He wound the yarn onto bobbins ready for the looms, a winder to a weaver. “As I begin to work at seven in the morning and leave off at 10 at night. I generally wind as long as that. I stop half an hour at dinner and half an hour at tea. I get potatoes and dry bread and a bit of meat for dinner. I have tea and bread for breakfast and for tea, sometimes porridge. I could eat more If I could get it. I've been very little to school. I've been to a Sunday School when I do go. I don't know who made the world. I have heard them talk of God Almighty but I don't know who he is. I don't know whether I have ever heard of Jesus Christ or not. I never pray, I'm not taught how. I don't go often to church, I've not the clothes to go in. I stop at house and do nowt”. And his brother Thomas Dunk aged 14 is a weaver er he reckons to weave 14 hours a day and he mentioned that some of the boy weaver...

[00:46:06]

End of first recording.

Part 2 [00:00:00]

... descriptions it, it comes as no surprise to read in the, the reports of the 1840s that a Barnsley weaver is a degraded being and that a man of 50, a weaver, is an old broken-down man and completely emaciated. It wasn't just the hours of work and the work damp workplaces that erm made this so, er some of the manufacturers ran tommy shops er paying their weavers in tokens which had to be spent at the manufac- the employers' shop. There were also long layoffs when trade was bad boys didn't do those twelve hours of work every day every week.

And something else, in 1820s they lost one of their perks. They had traditionally the right of Fent that means they could keep the- keep the last yard of each piece of cloth that they wove, and they would make clothing with it or [intake of breath] exchange it for food at a shop or buy ale at the local pub with it even sometime [sound of small bell ringing, clatter rustle] erm but it seems in the 1820s erm weavers had been taking rather more than they should have done for their fents. Fents were getting longer and they were also in such quantity that they were being sold in competition with the products of the Masters, so erm in 1823 the manufacturers withdrew the right of fent. This led to some er [paper rustles] considerable goings on in the town, mass meetings and-and even rioting. Erm there was a three months strike in fact, due to the lost of the Fent right. Erm two of the strike leaders were arrested and sent to Wakefield prison and spent two months on the treadmill. There're other serious disturbances too, erm in-in the 1820s due to cuts in the rates of pay,

and you can read account in the library about some of the events of those very difficult years when the manufacturers were rather worried that what had happened in-in France might happen here, and very jealous of their property. And at times er there were certainly was rioting and-and damage to the er manufacturers houses and property erm [sound of page turning] at-at-at one particular period the-the warehouses were all barricaded. [sound of pages turning] Could just mention that erm Barnsley weavers were noted for their pugnacious refractory conduct towards their, their manufacturers, their-their employers rather, and that Barnsley was in the vanguard of radical politics. So this is an interesting background to the history of labour relationships in-in Barnsley in the era of the-the miners. About the in-migrants who s-swellled the weaver's population there are a couple of examples which give a good idea of how people came to be in from what distances. Erm and why there are so many lodgers in the town. Census of 1851 [paper rustles] describes [pause, rustle of paper] a man called Charles Brown, he was born in-in Middlesex in 1806 erm and you can see from the census where his children were born and-and find his movements from that. It er a-a child was born in Ardsley in 1833, Hoylandswaine in 1835, another in Cawthorne in 1842 and he was in Monk Bretton by 1851. And all the places I've mentioned were weaving villages. And it's perhaps not surprising that the middle class of Barnsley are supposed to describe the weavers as Nomads, always on the move. That there are other interesting little er, er account of how people came to be here, perhaps in this case not intentionally is the story of a man called erm [swallows] Robert er McLintock er he was born [click] in Glasgow in 1768 er apprenticed to a weaver but erm he didn't stay his time, he run away, first to Edinburgh and eventually found his way to Barnsley, perhaps he's working his way down the turnpike road from Leeds to Sheffield, but when he got to Barnsley he erm went into a pub and er he met a friendly lawyer, so the story goes and he must have been a good talker because the lawyer befriended him and took him in for the night and he even got him a job in a clothing shop.
[00:05:02]

But erm Bobby McLintock, McLintock was a-a weaver by training and he eventually moved into weaving in the town. Lived a long time, he died at the age of 90 in 1858, and it was er his descendants who founded the mill in er Summer Lane. McLintock's factory Utilitas Works, they didn't make linen but er they made down quilts and clothing. Evidently he didn't mean to settle here but er most others did. Like the Charles Brown I mentioned. Coming then on to the days of steam power. I said earlier that'er steam power came to the weaving shops in 1837. It had been applied to the bleach works er late earlier on and by 1840s there were four new steam powered mills. By the 50s looms were being made in Barnsley by the firm of Wilson-Longbottom they had a foundry in Nelson Street. Changes were taking place in the town as a result of this. Power looms were generally worked by women employees er by the mid Century coal mining was attracting the menfolk paid better than, than weaving. Certainly, better than hand loom weaving. So, you've got a different er work structure coming in at this time. And you can see this by the- looking in the census returns, the numerators' notebooks show on their pages many examples of women operatives in the power loom mills. [rustling of papers] We can just have a look at some of the powered, power loom mills, erm in Peel Street there was a very large one owned by the Taylor family er a good illustration of this available er the last- it was the last remnant of this the bottom of Fenton Street which is demolished about two years ago and er it was almost a mirror image of the-the large building which had gone before. The whole mill was built from about 1845 and added to various times. By the 1880s it was believed to be the largest of its kind in the United Kingdom, and they had getting on for 500 power looms in there. It ended up just as a bleach works erm by 1949. Er weaving finished there

in 1939 because the, the firm had another branch in Northern Ireland and er it was er more profitable to-to shift the weaving over there. Er after World War Two the various tenants er following Taylors, er Freemans Suba Seal one of them but there're others and I seem to recall that they had a disastrous fire towards the end of its life and er streams of molten rubber running down the road. The site is now replaced, has been replaced by a-a shopping [rustling of paper] arcade. [pause]

Another of these power loom mills was the-the Bore Spring Works, er we mentioned Henry Richardson earlier on erm the firm of Richardson Tee and Rycroft and this mill was between Pitt Street and York Street. Established in the 1820s but was powered by 1850 and-and gradually expanded. This was the firm which made that enormous tablecloth, now the one of the operatives there er an elderly lady living in er Dodworth erm described to me some of her early days working in the Bore Spring Works and I put these down on, on paper and there's a tape also erm in the Archives in Barnsley which describes her experiences. Most although her working life was spent at the Redbrook Mill because erm in 1930 the, the firm moved to Redbrook. It had been an old bleach work site and that they built a mill there, took over some older buildings too and the old site became the-the site of the Ritz Cinema. Erm subsequently erm Leo's Superstore and now the Pioneer store occupy that site. The firm was- the-the mill was taken over by the firm of Hickson, Lloyd and King a Manchester firm and er tea towels were the main product, and I said they, they supplied them for the-the Royal Palaces in the 30s. After the war when they turned out erm quite different things from er linen they decided 1950 to rebuild. But by 1957 for whatever reason the firm closed down. And that was the very end of Barnsley's linen manufacture. The end of the whole story. The mill, of course, is still there but it's a modern one, quite modern and it's being used by various er people since. [rustling of papers] Erm another of the large powered mills which ought to be remembered is the Hope Works. This became the Barnsley Cannister Works in er 1919, linen finished there before 1912. But it-it developed in the 1820s and er expanded great deal in the 1840s and 50s. Erm it did a whole range of processes, it-it spun cotton, and wove cotton and linen into union cloth erm they had a bleach works down at Rob Royd at Dodworth and [papers rustle] at the main factory at Barnsley they er had a great reputation for the innovations in the finishing process, particularly in dyeing and er printing. And one of the old trade directories of the town says this that; "...the printing upon on linen and union cloth and cotton fabrics and quilting is a new invention of Messrs Spencer at the Hope Works, and though extremely difficult yet by perseverance, immense expense it has been brought to perfection." [pause] Near the beginning of the lecture, I explained how the early manufacturers set up bleaching grounds in the 18th Century. People like William Wilson at Honeywell and er Joseph Beckett at Greenfoot. During the 19th Century bleaching became an even more important activity using chemical materials of various sorts, like Sulphuric acid, bleaching powder er manganese er chemicals erm soda ash and potash. But the basic needs were the same as they had been before you had to have plenty of good quality water and you needed sites away from the sooty atmosphere of the town. So if you see a map of the distribution which - of bleach works which is available you see they used to be out at Swithin erm Haigh near West Bretton erm Redbrook, Greenfoot, Wilthorpe erm Old Mill, Hoyle Mill er Beaver Hall, that's Oakwell, Stairfoot, Littleworth near Monk Bretton, and er Rob Royd near, near Dodworth. [intake of breath] So there's interesting pattern which you can explain, in terms of water supplies and fairly clean air. [rustling of papers] And they all had bleach greens and you can see these beautifully on the ordnance survey maps of 1851, worth examining to see the quite large areas which are set aside er for bleach grounds and they're distinctively shad- shaded on the ordnance survey sheets. Erm because water was so important erm they had to construct reservoirs or ponds to hold

water, generally it wasn't river water because by the 19th Century it was pretty well polluted. Certainly, the Dearne was and the-the Sough Dike became more or less a sewer. So, spring water was what they wanted and they had to store this, so if you look around the district erm you - this is how you identify the er the bleach works sites. At Sw-Swithin quite a large reservoir [swallows] by the side of the motorway. Er this bleach works was established by Samuel Coward, a Quaker, in 1826 and it-it ran on for about hundred years. [rustle] Latterly it was used by Taylors at Peel Street. Erm Greenfoot, Beckett's bleach ground that I mentioned, established in late 18th Century you can still see the two ponds Tinker's Pond and its neighbour and lot of stone work still survives just down the hill from these er by the side of the canal. If you look at the, the old ordnance survey maps you er you can piece together what you see on the ground and what was there before. Down at Oakwell, Pontefract Road there's Beaver Hall this is all that's left really to mark the fact that this was a Bleach works site built by one of the Jackson family in the 1770s and they used water from the lower, water from the lower Oakwell spring to feed the pond there. Pond has now gone though but you can see it on the maps. [intake of breath] [rustling of papers] Erm William Jackson who built the Hall and established the bleach works there had a son Henry Jackson who took over the, the works and erm he incidentally owned those cottages in Dodworth High Street, Jackson's Square which I described er now he moved further out from Barnsley to get er cleaner air one of the reasons why he went, and he bought land at Cudworth next to the Midland Railway and established what became the Midland Bleach works. Again, springs fed the reservoirs and there's quite a bit to be seen there on the site. Two, two ponds a chimney some buildings left er the chimney incidentally has a date stone 1854 and it's a listed structure, can't be knocked down. But it's all on private land it's-it's Bleachcroft Farm which is a pig farm.

Coming out of the, the end of the indust- the demise while among the reasons was the fact that competition Scottish and Irish producers erm were all very strong perhaps labour was cheaper some of the time erm perhaps the fact that you'd-you'd bigger scale industry there, particularly in Ireland meant that any single manufacturer enjoyed advantages of-of facilities for a linen industry like banks, knowledgeable in the trade er transport geared to it and so forth all these thing would help these rival areas to outdo Barnsley which is a rather isolated er example of the industry. Erm the growth of cotton fabrics of course made a difference as well it-it-it made great inroads into the market for linen. Despite the argument by the linen manufacturers in their adverts that er linen was more durable than er cotton for ladies it was a hard wearing cloth of course that's not a very good fashion line [intake of breath] to take [swallows] they said it was more resistant to fire as well but er they still began to lose out. Perhaps more important were the labour disputes of the 1860s and 70s in Barnsley, disputes over pay. Particular bad example in 1872 when the weavers were out of the factory for almost six months. The Barnsley Chronicle had a very salutary comment to make it said in its editorial erm; "...why didn't they go back to work so much earlier, instead of spending five hundred pound of relief fund on supporting weavers in idleness, when they might have been earning-earning wages and while the masters would have been retaining the linen trade a considerable portion of which we feel has permanently gone from Barnsley". And they appear to been right. By 1897 there are seven firms but only, in 1913 there are only three. By 1936 there are only two and I said the last one Redbrook 1957 closure. [pause] [intake of breath] Maybe the demise of [clears throat] the Redbrook mill is something to do with management decisions but it's been suggested it could be something to do with them- the incursions of man made fibres on to the market as rivals. I'm not sure about the reasons. Hand loom weaving lingered on erm I understand the last of the hand loom weavers in Barnsley [cough] died in 1915 and-and there's a picture in the Archives of this man Robert Darling working at his loom [clears throat] and

it's a, a room lit by an electric light so it must have been taken after 1901, so between 1901 and the year of his death 1915 there he was working on a loom. And in the 1890s the census showed that er out at Cawthorne in South Lane there was a-a group of hand loom weavers still working. But erm they must have been literally hanging on by then. So to finish let's think again about the Coat of Arms which I've mentioned before if we look at it we see there are two shuttles in there, not very prominent but they deserve to be there because linen manufacture played such a big part in the growth of Barnsley. [pause] Now as you come in to the Barnsley libraries main entrance on the wall there's a handsome Coat of Arms er the shuttles are shown with thread in them whereas on the pictures you don't get that and when you see this magnificent example of Barnsley's Coat of Arms you should remember it represents the enterprise which went into the Town's- into the Town's linen industry and especially think of all that human toil which is represented there.

[00:20:26]

End of second recording.