

The industrial revolution rural life

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



Use a range of documentary evidence to analyse aspects of rural life and draw contrasts with urban living and analyse the main reasons for the development of industrial cities in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The Industrial Revolution was a period where major changes in agriculture, manufacturing, transport and mining took place. It completely changed the way goods were produced, sold and distributed. This had an extreme effect on society and the conditions of people's lifestyle changed, there was a shift in a person's employment options due to advances in technology. Rural life changed dramatically throughout this time, with the development of urban cities. How did rural life change and what was urban living really like? There were many factors that contributed to the development of industrial towns, but what were the main factors for this cities being built during the 19th century? I will look at evidence to find what were the main differences and the contributors to this change.

Prior the 18th century Britain was dominated by an agrarian society. Rural farmers would work the land or rent land from a wealthy land owner. They would graze animals, and produce goods which were a necessity for survival. Often the land would be shared with other families where they would work together to ensure that the members of the village had enough to eat. They rarely grew enough to sell on to make a living, but when they did they would buy or exchange their goods for things they were unable to produce. When the families were not farming for an extra income they would produce goods in their homes. The families would work together to make clothing, textiles and wood products, with women and children having crucial roles in this process. This was known as the cottage industry which was a small scale production of goods. A merchant would provide households in the

countryside with materials like cotton they would then spin the thread and be paid by the merchant, this enabled them to earn a little more in addition to their full time farming occupation. An advantage for the workers was they had a personal relationship with the employer and were able to set their own working hours and take a break at their own choice, unlike the new upcoming factory system. If they had a bad crop they were able to earn a little money producing a product for a local merchant. The way of life would differ around the country and would depend on the following factors such as climate, soil, the distance from the nearest town and the trade routes. For most it would revolve around the agricultural seasons for planting, cultivating, harvesting and the processing of their harvest. You would find within in most families that the son's would follow the trade of his father and the way of life would change through the generations.

They had a close community which worked together to ensure that all were provided for. Many people found life hard, they would have the constant worry that their crops might fail, although very few people went hungry, they would suffer from malnutrition. This resulted in the spread of disease and epidemics were very common. Most everyday man or women were very limited in what they could produce. Manufacturing at this time was very labour intensive, so productivity was low, and as a result they had a low income and no money to make investments. There were few that had a large income, and were people who owned the land and had a successful business. Even though Britain had parliament only male members from the Church of England who paid taxes could vote, although great land owners and rich merchants had political influence, however, the power remained with those

with money and status which enable them to vote. The working class farmers had no voice in government this was to change after the industrial revolution.

The first changes that appeared within rural life was landowners had enough money to take risks and try out new farming techniques, as well as introducing different crops and developing mechanical means for improving agriculture, for example the seed drill which was developed by Jethro Tull. This enabled an improved way to cultivate the crops which would just not be possible by hand. This increased profits for landowners and a faster production of crops and food. So the improvements of crop production enable these goods to be available at a faster rate. With better crops and more choice of foods being produced people were able to have a better diet and more to eat, in result the average death age reduced and the population increased. The wealthy started to fence off their land to many farmers which impacted their livelihood. They could no longer support themselves or produce the crops they were once able to. With an increase of the population and underemployment or no employment it forced many to look for work in the towns.

Rural life changed during the industrial revolution with the construction of factories all around the country, and advances in machinery people were moving away from villages to seek employment. This led to the development of urban towns. One factor that contributed to the development of urban towns was the rapidly increasing population; there was high demand for the need of essential items to enable the population to survive. The inventions of

machines led to the development of factories, trading opportunities, transport networks and economic growth. Urbanisation had an impact on the daily life on people who had come from a self sustaining life of farming to a large city; they were in a position where they had to adjust to their new surroundings to what they would now call their new home. They became dependant on new services which they once provided for themselves. The population of the towns increased and the government's response to this was slow and they practically left people to their own devices, they believed as these people had come from a place where transportation and sanitation was not a necessity, they should stay out of public affairs.

With the large construction of factories, housing was needed for the workers and was built quickly to a low standard; many were living in poor conditions. The planning of these towns was not considered correctly and was poorly built and seriously overcrowded. The cities found themselves in a situation where they needed to make improvements to the local facilities like sewage and transport system. The new workers found them forced into a situation of hard labour, low wages as massive class divide as well as being at the control of their employer. Women and children were hit hard when the families moved to a city they were also forced into gruelling hard labour working up to 15 hours per day, and were paid a lot less than your everyday man. Factory owners exploited the poor, especially women and children. Although it was very common for women and children to work in rural villages they would be working for the family where they looked out for each other's wellbeing. Now they were in a situation working for a factory owner who care for nothing more than profit, their wellbeing was not a concern. The

owners just wanted to work people to the bone to get their goods produced quickly to sell. The new factories were dangerous places to work, health and safety never existed and many suffered from severe injuries or death. People were exposed to ill ventilated mills which caused many to suffer from various illnesses. Conditions were harsh and people suffered from harsh penalties for even arriving two minutes late, children were beaten, and break times were short, many worked as long as 14 hour days. This was a complete contrast to rural living, although both farming and factories was hard labour, people were in more control when working for themselves in rural villages. They had pride and a sense of self worth, the skills that they once possessed, and had put to use when living in a rural village had been stripped away from them by modern technology and working in the new factories built in urban cities.

With the fast development of factories there was a shift in population, settlements grew surrounding the factories, in some cases housing was provided to the workers by their employers, which gave the owner much more control of the life's of his workers. Industrialisation needed these cities to house the workforce with good transport routes to be able to transport the goods. Some factories started in existing towns which provided them with a ready available workforce and road links. The prime reason for locating a factory was the availability of power. That's why many were built around water near rivers or streams, using water as their primary source of power. Although many were working in terrible conditions, if they did not have their job they would have starved to death. The growth of the factory system and the manufacturing of goods brought many people seeking work to these central cities; urbanisation was on the rise with the building of cities and the

movement of people. A good example of urbanisation is the development of Manchester which was largely dominated by the manufacture of textiles particularly cotton. During the 1800's Manchester had a massive growth in population. In 1760 there was a population of 45, 000 and by 1850 it had over 300, 000 people. This city had no plans set when it was being built, no consideration was taken for sanitation and housing. Cities like Manchester, London and Birmingham lacked quality housing, police and education, to provide for the influx of people from rural villages looking for work. Many streets were unpaved, had no drainage, workers lived in dirty shelters and overcrowding homes. This caused the poor to live in appalling conditions and the mills owners to line their pockets with the profits. French writer Alex de Toqueville visited Manchester in 1835 and the following is a quote from his journal on what he saw. " From this foul drain the greatest stream of human industry flows out to fertilize the whole world. From this filthy sewer pure gold flows. Here humanity attains its most complete development and its most brutish, here civilization works its miracles and civilized man is turned almost into a savage."(Toqueville, A. de. 1835 quoted Hobsbawn, E. J. 1962 p27). His description is a good example of someone's opinion of what Manchester was like during this time. Poor living conditions was a factor to the spread of disease; people growing up in a large town from the working class had a life expectancy of 17 years compared to 38 years of someone living in a rural village. Young children at the aged of six years were working alongside their parents for six days a week and extremely long hours and many were beaten to stay awake, this was very common in all the new

cities. The advantage that Manchester had was it was built where there was access to water, and good transport links to the sea at Liverpool.

Although not all suffered from living in the city, people from the middle classes and wealthy were able to build large homes on the suburbs and there was a rise in the middle class which consisted of people with a skilled profession, bankers and wealthy farmers. They were now able to produce quality goods at a quicker rate, employ many workers cheaply, so their profits were large. Cities did provide many with a better quality of life if they were fortunate enough. But the poor people who migrated from villages suffered a great deal. They no longer were able to use their skills, instead they would perform mundane jobs with new machinery now carrying out the tasks that they once did by hand. Factory workers were put at great risk using these new machines and their life was no longer their own. They had a job and no matter how miserable their lives were it put food on the table and there really weren't many other options. Looking at all the evidence it suggests that the main reason that these cities were developed was due to the inventions of new machinery in agriculture which freed the labour from the land and inventions of industrial machinery which needed factories to house them and a source to power them. This resulted in many people arriving to find work in these factories. This resulted in the development of cities, the more people that arrived, the more factories that were developed the bigger these cities became.

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