

# Child labour and the mills history essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

A mill was a fire hazard especially since it produced cotton because its dust effortlessly goes up in flames and burns through ceiling and floor timbers. As mentioned above it happened to the former mill on this site. In an attempt to stop this from happening again experiments were made to build a fireproof mill. So the new reconstructed mill featured beams of cast iron instead of timber flooring, and amongst them low vaults finished with bricks, these had a 2.7m span. Directly above the rubble was used to level them and then a floor made of more bricks. The base arches above the wheel quarry are made of a hollow clay structure where the beams are casted in a “turtle back profile” to give the essential strength, at slightest weight. They are held up by casted iron pilasters, raised on top of each other. The adjacent thrust of the brick arcs was resisted by cloaked bent iron ties between the pilaster tops. The structure was 15 bays wide, and the extensions 6 bays wide. This is one of the leading iron frame constructions. This technology is central due to being precursor to the steel frames used in high rise structures. The rooftop was of slate including internal gutter. The breast-shot waterwheel which provided the main electrical power for the structure was built by Thomas Hewes, the wheel dimension was 5.5m by 7.0m wide. It was a suspension wheel which power was taken off at the edge by a spur wheel which made it lighter than a clasp wheel. The main power was conveyed to the machineries by a upright shaft, geared to level shafts on each floor. Rawhide belts were used to link the shafts to individual machines. The floors are composed of brick arches of 9 feet span

The Processes

Each one of those five floors houses diverse stages of the cotton spinning procedures. The unprocessed cotton rolls would be dropped off from carts at the ground floor loading bay. The initial cleaning machineries which broke down the bails and arranged the cotton into ‘lap’ form were a major hazard as they were predominantly one of the heavier machines that was mainly maintained by the children as were the rest of the machinery in the other floor levels. The cotton now in lap arrangement was taken in the 3rd and 4th floors for further processing; again this task was carried out by the children.

The 1st & 2nd floors originally held 34 Arkwright Water Frames each.

Each Arkwright Water frame rolled 4236 ends simultaneously. This meant that 4236 rovings were constantly warped together and becoming threads that were collected from small reels and later in time some of the alternative Mule Spinning machineries were brought in in order to make the finer thread types due to high demand. The reels transferred to the 5th floor

On the 3rd & 4th floors are the carding quarters, accommodating three rows of carding engines, beyond 130 in total. These machineries separate the cotton fibres to produce a long unbroken ‘sliver’ while 16 drawing frames flattened the fibres. The lantern frames piled the slivers into ‘rovings’ which prepared them for spinning, on the 1st and 2nd floor.

On the 5th floor, reeling frames wound the rolled thread into ‘skeins’ ready for tinting at a different industrial unit in Milford. Doubling frames twisted 2 or more single rolled thread together to make a thick and stronger fibre. The amount of twist determined the thread’s properties.

The loft was later used as a classroom on Sundays only to the worry of the general public who ascended the problem at a national level and became law with the introduction of the The Factory Act of 1802 (see below) but still those children would not be able to even read the rules for working in the mill itself and punishment always followed despite these critical shortcomings.

Machinery So a brief summery for the machinery contained in this mill was:- 80 spinning frames with 4236 spindles each 16 draw frames 4 stretching frames 136 carding engines

Therefore while Britain became the first country to industrialize, it was also the first country where children's nature in work changed so radically at a point where child labour was seen as a leading political issue and a social problem hence classrooms being demanded on these mills for better upbringing of the children though one may perhaps argue that compulsory education would wear off youngsters who were by this time drained from long hours of demanding labor. Educating did little or nothing to children who were substantially physically and mentally deprived. Absence of sleep in children most likely resulted in dangers of lethargy and exposes them to more accidents. .

Children faced a huge change as they observed working in a textile factory was totally different from working at home. In Belper North Mill, Children worked from Monday to Saturday and studied on Sunday, beginning work from 6am in the morning and ending at 7pm in the evening, with only one hour break for lunch between 12-1 midday. If they were late because of the

work they were fined. If they fell asleep or made just a mistake on the job they were beaten. Children's income was too low, at times just a couple of pence for working 60 hours on a weekly basis. Children workers must arrive at the mill by 5: 30am. Lateness was punishable with a fine. Everybody worked an amount of hours and no-one was permitted to leave before 7pm. All this was a new experience for children, even where they lived. The Belper North Mill was built on a massive open plan design so that the supervisors could see every single child worker. If they were sceptic that personnel were not being sufficient or absent they were penalised. These employees had no rights and occasionally missed their dinner breaks due to the supervisors ordering them to keep on working. Those who worked long hours became very exhausted and found it hard to maintain the rapidity required by the superiors. Some were dipped head first into the water reservoir if they became sleepy. Anyone who ran away from the place of work was in danger of being sent to jail. Children who were considered potential runaways were cuffed in irons. One of the main complaints made by factory reformers concerned the state of the building that they children were forced to work in. A statement published in July 1833 confirmed that North Mill situated in Belper was " ill-drained, no conveniences, dirty;; ill-ventilated;; for dressing or washing; no contrivance for carrying off dust and additional effluvia". Due to these conditions The Factories Act 1802, similarly named the " Health and Morals of Apprentices Act") was an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom which passed through in order to adjust factory environments, specifically in regard to juvenile employees in cotton and woollen mills.

It was the peak of a movement originating since the 1700s, where activists had tried to push numerous acts through Congress to improve the condition of the employees and apprentices.

This act had the following requirements:

Factory owners must obey the law. All factory rooms must be well ventilated and lime-washed twice a year. Children must be supplied with two complete outfits of clothing. Children between the ages of 9 and 13 can work maximum 8 hours. Adolescents between 14 and 18 years old can work maximum 12 hours. Children under 9 years old are not allowed to work but they must be enrolled in the elementary schools that factory owners are required to establish. The work hours of children must begin after 6 a. m., end before 9 p. m., and not exceed 12 hours a day. Children must be instructed in reading, writing and arithmetic for the first four years of work. Male and Female children must be housed in different sleeping quarters. Children may not sleep more than two per bed. On Sundays children are to have an hour's instruction in the Christian Religion. Mill owners are also required to tend to any infectious diseases.

£ 2 to £ 5 charges could be levied on factory proprietors who broke the law, but the Act established no inspection regime to administer those environments. The act had failed at some extent to deliver a clear law of the hours one was allowed to work and was futile in order to embrace observation into making sure that the law was to be followed.

Richard Oastler in 1804 comments on the act:

This act gives little authority to parliament and less restriction on factories.

How can factories not resist to break the law?

So the act was fundamentally at large disregarded by the factories but successfully paved the way for more similar Acts to follow.

More provisions to the act were to follow; The 1819 Cotton Mills and Factories Act (59 Geo. III c66) detailed that no children under 9 were to be in employment and that children aged 9-16 years were restricted to 12 hours' work per day. The next of the Cotton Mills Acts in 1831 repealed the Laws relating to Apprentices and other young Persons employed in Cotton Factories and in Cotton Mills, and to make further Provisions in lieu thereof (1 & 2 Will. IV c39)

No night work for persons under the age of 21

Up until the Factory Act of 1833, the industrial units were at liberty to decide on working hours. The employees typically worked for more than 12 hours with no breaks in-between. Thus, children as labourers suffered continuous lack of sleep and were as emphasized initially exposed to mistakes which eventually led to injuries.

“ Matthew Crabtree was one of the forty-eight people whom the Sadler Committee interviewed in the year of 1832. According to the Sadler Report that catalyzed the Factory Act of 1833(detailed in the following paragraph), Crabtree had operated in a factory from the age of eight. He operated in 16 hours shifts, from 5a. m. to 9p. m. Often he went to sleep instantly after supper, and was awakened by his parents every single day. According to

Crabtree, he was "very severely" and "most commonly" beaten each time he was late for work 'and due to this particular reason' said Crabtree, was "sufficient impulse" to keep up his efforts at work in spite of drowsiness".

(Lenard, 1992, P. 273)

Labour of Children, etc., in Factories Act 1833 The Factory Act 1833 (3 & 4 Will. IV) c103 was an attempt to establish a regular working day in the textile industry. The act had the following provisions: Children (ages 14-18) must not work more than 12 hours a day with an hour lunch break. Note that this enabled employers to run two 'shifts' of child labour each working day in order to employ their adult male workers for longer. Children (ages 9-13) must not work more than 8 hours with an hour lunch break. Children (ages 9-13) must have two hours of education per day. Outlawed the employment of children under 9 in the textile industry. Children under 18 must not work at night. provided for routine inspections of factories.

As we can convey from the above text the conduct of youngsters in the industrial units was over and over again harsh and extreme thus children's safety was generally neglected and it did prove fatal on numerous occasions. The youngest children, round the age of eight, were not skilled or old enough to operate the machines and were usually referred to be assistants to adult main workers. Girls would not be immune to beatings and other harsh methods of pain infliction; they were also vulnerable to sexual harassment. Minor mistakes due to lack of sleep occasionally resulted in serious injuries or mutilation. The employees were in most cases abandoned from that moment in which the accident would happen leaving them with no wages or medical attendance of any kind, and no financial compensation.

<https://assignbuster.com/child-labour-and-the-mills-history-essay/>



These regulations were severe, the punishment inhumane and sporadic on the contrary to the above the employee that would breach any of the aforementioned rules occasionally had to pay the consequence monetarily! Elizabeth Bentley, before the Sadler Committee in 1832, revealed that she was commonly quartered;

” If we were a quarter of an hour too late, they would take off half an hour; we only got a penny an hour, and they would take a halfpenny more.”

Selected witnesses associated themselves as slaves, and the supervisors as slave drivers.

Factories Act 1844 Another act which covered the above mentioned shortcomings The Factories Act 1844 (citation 7 & 8 Vict c. 15) further condensed working hours for children and applied the many provisions of the Factory Act of 1833 to women.

The act applied to the textile trade and comprised the following provisions:

Children 9-13 years could work for 9 hours a day with a lunch break. Women and young people now worked the same number of hours. They could work for no more than 12 hours a day during the week, including one and a half hours for meals, and 9 hours on Sundays. Factory owners must wash factories with lime every fourteen months. Ages must be verified by surgeons. Accidental death must be reported to a surgeon and investigated. Thorough records must be kept regarding the provisions of the act. Machinery was to be fenced in.

One could argue that deficiency in education had steered the children into factories, and mandatory schooling was the key to eradicating industrial child labor. It is true that illiteracy obstructed the children from elevating both social & economic hierarchy. Yet, the Education Act of 1870 provisioned into allowing school boards to induce attendance but necessary by-laws were not enforced to implement these provisions. So in short, the mandatory education in Britain was presented too late to critically contribute to the reform. Furthermost statistics that are available could not be entirely trusted. One especially was wary not to depend entirely on skewed figures or individual case studies. Similarly, during the course of history, many academics and ideologists have distorted evidence to demonstrate their assertions.

Up until the child labor case developed into a state issue, most of the investigators touched only the exterior surface of the problem. The factory supervisors could effortlessly lead the investigators away from the truthful issue. Moreover, the survey has not been directed thoroughly as to depict an accurate sketch of the labour picture. On the contrary, some reports have even gone as far into being accused of overstressing the current condition to get the child labor subject matter to a state concern. Key government reports on child labor were irregular in the coverage, concentrating primarily upon children in industrial professions.

In addition, some "determined" historians have manipulated the statistics to embellish child labor as an example of corruption and depravity when actually child labor aided into improving the family's financial status.

Conclusion Industrial child labor has occupied only a small portion of the child labor population. Also, it had lasted for a fleeting moment in British history. However, child workers in industrial workplaces need to be highlighted as history in which children were placed under the custody of a stranger in a confined, unwholesome space; the children were exposed to a higher possibility of abuse and mistreatment. Child labor, as much as it is critiqued for its responsibilities, should be studied, considering every possible factor. It is factual that the child labourers have suffered from abuse and unintended negligence, yet the family could've starved if not for the contribution of their children. History should not be hastily judged, but observed objectively for future's sake. It is all that mentioned so far why today in our society more than ever before we have the safest working environments be it in the textile or any other industry. It's due to those shortcomings why we have health & safety programs in every commercial, public and private building structures like fire escapes, first aid, ventilation, sanitation, water efficiency, drainage and waste disposal, electrical safety and access to & use of the building, hygiene and much, much more

Bibliography Freedman, Russell. Kids at Work: Lewis Hine and the Crusade against Child Labor. New York: Clarion Books, 1994. Horn, Pamela. Children's Work and Welfare, 1780-1890. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995. Kirby, Peter. Child Labour in Britain, 1750-1870. Hampshire: Palgrave, 2003. Lenard R. Berlanstein, The industrial revolution and the work in nineteenth-century Europe, London: Routledge press, 1992 Marjorie, Cruickshank, Children and industry, 1780-1890, Manchester: Manchester university press, 1981. Maxine. Berg. The age of manufactures, 1700-1820, London : Routledge Press, 1994 Pamela, Horn, <https://assignbuster.com/child-labour-and-the-mills-history-essay/>

Children's welfare, 1780-1880. London: The Macmillan Press, 1994

S. Ashton, The industrial revolution, 1760-1830, oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968

Winstanley, Michael J. The factory workforce: in Rose, The Lancaster cotton industry: a history since 1700, Preston, Lancashire County Books, 1996

Zelizer, Viviana A. Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1994.

Booth, C. " On the Occupations of the People of the United Kingdom, 1801-81." Journal of the Royal Statistical Society (J. S. S.) XLIX (1886): 314-436.

Bloy, Marjie. August 13th, 2002. " Victorian Legislation: a timeline." The Victorian Web. October 16th, 2005.

" Child Labor." Children's Rights. 2004. Human Rights Watch. April 08th, 2010.

" Child Labor." Scholastic. April 18th, 2010.

" Child Labor 1750-1850." Encyclopaedia of British History. Spartacus. April 18th, 2010.