

Saltaire provided a standard of living that was far in excess of normal mid ninet...

[Environment](#), [Air](#)



The most important way that life was better for people in Saltaire was the quality of houses. For example all of the 824 houses in Saltaire had a living room, a kitchen and two bedrooms as well as a back yard and some had a small front garden. All the houses in Saltaire had piped water and gas, and each had its own outdoor toilet. This is very different to other industrial cities of the time, such as Bradford, Liverpool and Manchester where most people would have a communal toilet per street and there was no running water or gas.

We can see this in a source about Leeds in 1842: “ To build the largest number of cottages on the smallest possible space seems to have been the original view of the speculators. Thus neighbourhoods have arisen in which there is neither water nor privies. ” 1 This shows that lack of planning and space was one of the reasons as to why houses in industrial cities like Leeds and Bradford didn't have these facilities. Titus Salt planned his town very well before building, and did not rush into it.

He took into account this problem, which he had encountered in Bradford, and developed means of combating it. The gas was piped to each house from the mill and water was piped to each house from Salts own 500, 000-gallon reservoirs via a series of underground tunnels that linked each house to together. This was a good idea because it meant that repairs could be made if, for example, there was a leak, and other improvements could be made without much trouble. The streets in Saltaire were all well paved and were much wider than streets in other cities such as Manchester and Bradford.

They were regularly cleaned and privies were regularly emptied which was quite different in comparison with other industrial cities. The Health of Towns Report stated that in Leeds “ All the streets and dwellings ... are stated to be more or less deficient in sewerage, unpaved, full of holes, with deep channels formed by the rain intersecting the roads ... sometimes rendered untenable by the overflowing of sewers and other more offensive drains, with ash-holes etc. , exposed to public view, and never emptied” 2

Edwin Chadwick, who had taken an active part in the reform of the Poor Law and in factory legislation before he became secretary to a commission investigating sanitary conditions, said of Manchester: “ Whole streets, unpaved and without drains or main sewers, are worn into deep ruts and holes in which water constantly stagnates, and are so covered with refuse and excrementious matter as to be almost impassable from depth of mud and intolerable from stench” 3. From this source we see that compared to the conditions in Manchester and similar industrial towns, Saltaire was a massive improvement.

Another thing that Chadwick said was that “ disease, wherever its attacks are frequent, is always found in connexion with ... atmospheric impurities produced by decomposing animal and vegetable substances, by damp and filth, and close and overcrowded dwellings ... and that where those circumstances are removed by drainage, proper cleansing, better ventilation ... where the removal of the noxious agencies appears to be complete, such disease almost entirely disappears.

This shows that the conditions in other cities is what was responsible for disease and that the improved conditions in Saltaire meant that people were far less likely to get diseases, such as cholera, from contaminated water sources. He also said "... The annual loss of life from filth and bad ventilation are greater than the loss from death or wounds in any wars in which the country has been engaged in modern times. " 5 This shows that lots of workers were dying from disease brought on by the conditions of the industrial cities, Salt realised that it was not in his interest for his workers to be dying.

Dr. Duncan, an associate of Chadwick and the medical officer of health in Liverpool wrote in a correspondence to Chadwick; "... finding that not less than 63 cases of fever had occurred in one year in Union Court (containing twelve houses) I visited the court in order to ascertain, if possible, their origin, and I found the whole court inundated with fluid filth which had oozed through the walls from two adjoining ash-pits or cess-pools, and which had no means of escape in consequence of the court being below the level of the street, and having no drain.

The court was owned by two different landlords, one of whom had offered to construct a drain provided the other would join him in the expense; but this offer having been refused [by the other Landlord] the court had remained for two or three years in the state in which I saw it. " 6 This again shows that the conditions in industrial cities is what was responsible for disease, but it also highlights the Laissez-Faire attitude that was very common at the time.

Like the Landlord who didn't want to pay for the drain, many people did not feel it was their responsibility to improve conditions in the cities. Another reason that Salt wanted wide streets was because he didn't want people to be making trouble in his town. The wide streets made it easy to see what people were up to in the streets. Salt even had special watchtowers so that he could make sure that people weren't up to 'no good'. Even the smallest houses in Saltaire were bigger than the average houses of workers in industrial cities, but they were not as tall.

Often houses in other industrial cities would be quite tall to compensate for the small area that they were in, but in Saltaire, Salt made sure that all the houses were only two storeys tall. This was to keep the streets light (they weren't in the shade of the other houses) making it easier to see what was going on in the streets, and also gave a pleasant atmosphere to the town because they were not dark and dingy. The houses were built with large windows that allowed more daylight into the homes.

There were also streetlights to keep the streets light at night. Salt would often take his guests on a tour of the town so it was a good idea to make his town look so pleasant and it also lifted the spirits of the workers - which was good for his business because happier workers meant that they were more willing to cooperate with other workers and that meant that they worked more efficiently. Only 4-5 people on average lived in a house in Saltaire whereas in other cities there were usually more people living in a house.

These sources show that overcrowding was a major problem in industrial cities such as Liverpool: " Houses of the lowest class were so overcrowded that it was common to see every room of the dwelling occupied by several families, without even a curtain to separate them" 7 and Leeds: "... In one cul-de-sac in Leeds there are 34 houses, and in ordinary times there dwell in these houses 340 persons, or ten to every house. "

We have seen before that Chadwick wrote, " disease, wherever its attacks are frequent, is always found in connexion with ... lose and overcrowded dwellings... " This shows that overcrowded houses were one of the causes for disease. Salt had also realised this and built the accommodation to suit individual families. All the houses were ' through-terraces' as opposed to those in other industrial cities where houses were ' back-to-back'. This meant that there was more than one entrance to a house, making access easier. The streets were also open-ended which made for even greater access.

In contrast, J P Kay wrote of Manchester " The houses of the poor... are too generally built back to back, having therefore only one outlet, no yard, no privy and no receptacle of refuse" 9 The houses were allocated to different workers depending on their status. High status workers such as over-lookers would sometimes get houses closer to the factory, though often their houses would be at the end of a street containing lower status workers. This was so that they could keep an eye on the activities of their subordinates.

To ensure that high status workers homes were recognised as being different Salt devised a system whereby the amount of panelling on the doors

indicated the status of the worker. The more panels on a door meant the higher the position of the worker. Over all, the improved quality of houses led to improved health, this was good for Salt because it meant that his workers were of good health; so could produce better quality goods more efficiently, and lived longer; so he maintained skilled workers and did not have to waste as much time training new employees.