

The John Rylands Library

150 Deansgate, Manchester M3 3EH
telephone: 0161 306 0555
email: jrl.visitors@manchester.ac.uk
web: www.manchester.ac.uk/library

Public Opening Times

Monday	10.00 – 5.00
Tuesday	12.00 – 5.00
Wednesday	10.00 – 5.00
Thursday	10.00 – 5.00
Friday	10.00 – 5.00
Saturday	10.00 – 5.00
Sunday	12.00 – 5.00

Directions

The Library is located on Deansgate in the heart of Manchester. The city centre is accessible by all forms of public transport. The nearest Metrolink tram stops are St Peter's Square and Victoria. The nearest bus stops are in St Peter's Square and Albert Square. The easiest way to reach the Library from Piccadilly, Oxford Road and Victoria railway stations is via the free Metro-Shuttle buses.

Car parking is available at the NCP car parks on Watson Street, New Quay Street and Blackfriars Street. Follow the signs from Deansgate.

Disabled visitors who require car parking should contact the Library's main reception desk on 0161 306 0555 for further information and advice.

Access

The new entrance wing provides level access with power-assisted doors and accessible toilet. There is lift access to all public areas of the building except the Historic Entrance Hall and the Historic Toilets.



Photography is not permitted in the galleries.



No dogs except assistance dogs.

Singing Histories

10 August 2008

Live a little... sing a little... Sing Manchester



Contents

Introduction –

A brief history of textile manufacture in Manchester

2

‘Cottonopolis’ –

The Growth of Manchester

6

Trouble at t’ Mill –

Daily life for workers in the cotton industry

12

The ‘Detestable Trade’ –

Cotton and slavery

18

King Cotton –

The American civil war and the Lancashire cotton famine

22

Boom and Bust –

The changing fortunes of Manchester and the cotton industry

26

Acknowledgments

Inside back cover

Singing Histories
10 August 2008
The John Rylands Library
Manchester

Live a little... sing a little... Sing Manchester

Part of Sing Manchester: A festival to unite the city in song

Introduction

A brief history of textile manufacture in Manchester



Pollard's Cotton Twist Mill, from Plans of all the Spinning Factories within the township of Manchester, c.1822 (English MS 1340)

Manchester has been associated with the textile industry for at least 600 years. During the 14th century Edward III invited Flemish weavers to settle in England, with the promise of "good beer, good food, good bed and good bedfellow."

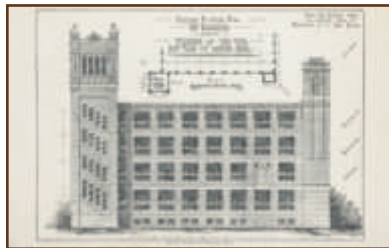
The influx of Flemish weavers to Manchester is sometimes credited as the foundation of the region's textile industry and the city became an important centre for the manufacture and trade of woolens and linen. At this time, cotton goods were rare and expensive to import due to the heavy taxes levied on them, which meant they were only available to the wealthy.

Before 1700 the spinning and weaving of textiles was a cottage industry. The mechanisation of the industry began with inventions such as John Kay's Flying Shuttle and the Spinning Jenny of James Hargreaves.

One of the most significant developments was the patented design for Richard Arkwright's Water Frame of 1769.

Arkwright probably did more than anyone else to establish the dominance of the cotton manufacturing industry in Manchester and the surrounding areas. He built the first water and steam powered mill in Manchester in 1782 on Miller Street, close to the present-day CIS Tower.

By 1800 there were about 50 textile mills, and people were flooding into the area from all over the country to find work. However, the increasing mechanisation was greeted with hostility by people who saw it as a threat to their livelihood. After several riots and attacks on cotton mills, Arkwright was forced to move to Cromford. Nevertheless, the mills were economically successful and Manchester continued to prosper and develop.



Cotton mill construction plan, from Cotton Mill Planning and Construction: Illustrated by plans, elevations, and constructional details by Theodore Sington, published Manchester, 1897 (SC12650E)

Mark and Chris:

Handloom V. Powerloom

This song is about the changeover from weaving by hand in the home to weaving in a factory using powerlooms – the power provided by the newly developed steam engine. The transition from one to the other took longer than is generally imagined as some specialised weaving was still done by hand for many years.

**Come all you cotton weavers, your looms you may pull down.
You must get employment in factories, in country or in town.
For our cotton masters have a wonderful new scheme:
These calico goods now wove by hand, they're going to weave by steam.**

**There's sow-makers and dressers and some are making warps.
These poor pincop-spinners they must mind their flats and sharps.
For if an end slips under, as sometimes perchance it may,
They'll daub you down in black and white and you've a shilling to pay.**

**The weavers' turn will next come on, for they must not escape.
To enlarge the master's fortune, they are fined in every shape.
For thin places or bad edges, a go or else a float,
They'll daub you down and you must pay three pence or else a groat.**

**If you go into a loom shop where there's three or four pairs of looms,
They all are standing idle, a-cluttering up the rooms.
And if you ask the reason why, t'ould mother will tell you plain:
"My daughters have forsaken them and gone to weave by steam."**

**So come all you cotton weavers, you must rise up very soon,
For you must work in factories from morning until noon.
You mustn't walk in your garden for two or three hours a day,
For you must stand at their command and keep your shuttles in play.**

ALL:

The Hand Loom Weavers' Lament

This song, which dates from after the death of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1821, tells how the factory masters would depress workers' wages by insisting that the wars had caused low prices in the market place, amongst other reasons.

You gentlemen and tradesmen who ride about at will
Look down on these poor people it's enough to make you crill
Look down on these poor people as you ride up and down
I think there is a God above will bring your pride quite down

You tyrants of England your race may soon be run
You may be brought unto account for what you've surely done

You pull down our wages shamefully to tell
You go into the markets and you say you cannot sell
And when that we do ask you when these bad times'll mend
You quickly give an answer "When the wars are at an end"

When we look on our poor children, it grieves our hearts full sore
Our clothing it is worn to rags and we can get no more
With little in their bellies as they to work must go
While yours do dress as manky as monkeys in a show

You go to church on Sunday and I'm sure it's nowt but pride
There can be no religion when humanity's thrown aside
If there be a place in heaven as there is in the exchange
Our poor souls must not come near there, like lost sheep they must range

And you say that Bonaparte he has been the spoil of all
And that we have good reason for to pray for his downfall
Now Bonaparte is dead and gone but it is plainly shown
That we've got bigger tyrants in Boney's of our own

So now my lads for to conclude it's time to make an end
Let's see if we can form a plan that these bad times will mend
And give us our old prices as we have had before
And we can live in happiness and rub off the old score



‘Cottonopolis’

The Growth of Manchester

As a result of dramatic economic growth, by 1801 Manchester and Liverpool had become the largest provincial cities in Britain. It soon became clear that better communication links were needed between the two cities as the increase in trade between ports and centres of production highlighted the deficiencies of Lancashire’s transport networks.

The development of the canal network played an important part in the growth of the cotton industry. Coal was needed in large quantities to fuel the industrial revolution and the canal enabled goods to be transported efficiently and cheaply.

However, the slow pace of canal transport meant that cotton was taking longer to travel from Liverpool to Manchester than it had from America to Liverpool. If growth was to be maintained, then a new form of transport was needed.

A solution came with the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1830. The journey time between the two cities was so reduced that a businessman could leave Manchester in the morning, transact his business in Liverpool and easily return home the same day, thus opening up new commercial possibilities.

The Royal Exchange, first established in 1729 was central to the commercial life of Manchester and provided a meeting place between the Manchester merchants and the cotton manufacturers who came from the outlying towns and villages to conduct their business. In 1874 it was described as “the biggest room in the world” and it played a key part in the success of the Lancashire cotton textile industry.



Royal Exchange, from *Manchester As It Is: A series of views of public buildings in Manchester and its vicinity* by James Croston (ed.), Alfred Brothers, 1878 (R64178)

There were also educational and cultural developments taking place in the city funded by cotton money.

John Owens was a successful cotton merchant who together with his father built up their company to great success.

When he died without heirs, Owens left a substantial bequest for the establishment of a college of further education. The college was to be open to all, regardless of social rank, and applicants would not be required “to submit to any test whatsoever of their religious opinions.” Owens College, which would later become the University of Manchester, was opened in 1851 in Quay Street and moved to Oxford Road in 1873.

In the 19th century John Rylands amassed great wealth through the success of the textile business which he ran in partnership with his brothers and father. By the end of his life *Rylands and Sons* was the largest and most successful textile manufacturing company in Britain.



John Rylands, sculpture by John Cassidy, 1899, in the Historic Reading Room of The John Rylands Library

John was a great philanthropist who, during his lifetime, provided the people of Stretford with a town hall, baths, a library and a coffee house. He also gave money to establish orphanages and homes for senior citizens.

John’s widow, Enriqueta Rylands, used her inheritance to build The John Rylands Library as a permanent memorial to him. This tremendous gift to the city of Manchester opened its doors to the public in 1900.

Other cultural developments included the establishment of Manchester Art Gallery. The collections of Thomas Horsfall, the son of a wealthy Manchester cotton merchant, together with gifts and bequests from wealthy Manchester industrialists such as the Greg family from Styal Mill, form an important part of the gallery’s collections.



Architect’s drawing of the Deansgate elevation, Basil Champneys, 1890 (Rylands Library Archive)

Mark and Chris

Johnny Green's Trip from Owdham to see the Manchester Railway

This very much abridged version of the original broadside gives us an insight into what a tourist attraction the railway was when it was first introduced. As a means of transport it was a great improvement over the roads of the time which were not well metalled; horses and carts took days to travel relatively small distances, whereas the railway would take a fraction of the time to take finished goods to the port of Liverpool.

Last new year's eve our Nan hoo said why Joan we've been near three year wed
An sin the day to t' church I're led thou ne'er were t' chap to treat one
Awhoam this day I will not stay aw'l ha me play so I moot say
Theauwst seet railway this very day so bless thi dunno fret mon

Aw shouted out and whirled my hat and whiz they come at such a bat
Aw ran so hard and puffed and swat but I could not keep wi t' waggins
When th' injuns stopped and seet um down Aw wondered where they all were bound
They rode in callivans oth town aw think to get their baggins

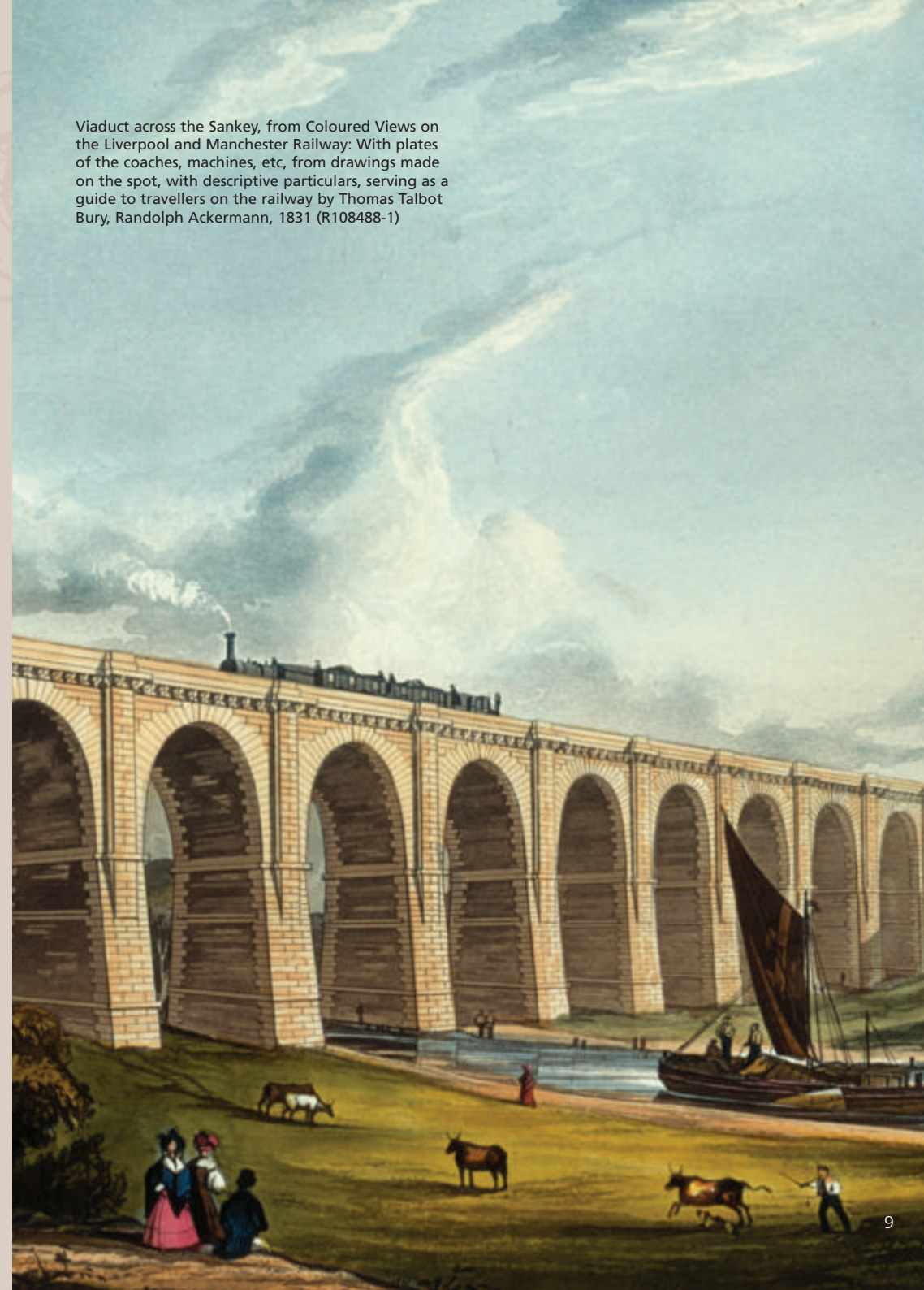
We seed tat coach what Wellington and awt great folk one day come on
They show it thee or ony mon an tell thi aw if axes
Eaur nan said they'd have served him reet to dragged him on through t dry or weet
An riddin him on both day and neet if he'd naw take off taxes

Both nan and me to ride had meant but brass you see were welly spent
So straightway up Knotmill we went An at the sign o' t' railway baited
We come by t Star in Deansgate too And t coachmen there looked woeful blue
Awm sure ther Jaws han had nowt to do sin th Liverpool railway gated

Aw yerd my uncle Nathan say they're going to make a new railway
From Manchester to Owdham eh? Aw wish it were boh gated
For weavers then to t' Warehouse soon may tek their cuts by twelve at noon
An then thou knows they'n save their shoon and not be allas baited

Aw allas said you known it to no mon could tell what steam ud do
And if to Oldfield lane you'd goo you'll find I'm non mistaken
Aw neer struck stroke this blessed day aw know now what eaur nan ed say
It's dinner time and if I stay Hoo'll eat all t beans and bacon.

Viaduct across the Sankey, from Coloured Views on the Liverpool and Manchester Railway: With plates of the coaches, machines, etc, from drawings made on the spot, with descriptive particulars, serving as a guide to travellers on the railway by Thomas Talbot Bury, Randolph Ackermann, 1831 (R108488-1)



ALL

Manchester's Improving Daily

At the start of the 18th Century, Manchester was a small market town. During the Industrial Revolution Manchester grew both in size and stature to become the thriving metropolis that it is today. This song tells of the improvements that took place.

This Manchester's a rare fine place
For trade and other such like movements
What town can keep up such a race
As ours has done for prime improvements
For at late what sights of alterations
Both streets and buildings changing stations
That country folks as they observe us
Cry out "Laws! Pickle and preserve us"

Sing hey sing ho sing hey down gaily, Manchester's improving daily

Once Market Street was called a lane
Old Toad Lane too a pretty pair sir
While Dangerous Corner did remain
There was hardly room for a sedan chair sir
But now they both are opened wide sir
And dashing shops placed on each side si
And to keep making old things new sir
They talk of levelling th' Mill Brew sir

Sing hey sing ho sing hey down gaily, Manchester's improving daily

With bumping stones our streets were paved
From earth like large peck loaves up rising
All jolts and shakings now are saved
The town they're now macadamizing
And so smooth and soft is Cannon Street sir
It suits the corns on tender feet sir
And hookers-in when times aren't good there
May fish about for eels in th' mud there

Sing hey sing ho sing hey down gaily, Manchester's improving daily

But though these roads are all the go
The railways beat em I've a notion
For carts beat horses there will show
We've found the true perpetual motion
And none can say but we may try sir
To steer large ship balloons in t'sky sir
That folks may mount sky larking there in
And grow sea sick by going an airing
Sing hey sing ho sing hey down gaily, Manchester's improving daily

Thus at improvements on we go
We're ever trying at invention
New objects starting up to view
And catching all our spare attention
Then the ship canal and all such schemes sir
Though some may call them fancy dreams sir
They'll all succeed you need not fret sir
As soon as John Bull's out of debt sir

Sing hey sing ho sing hey down gaily, Manchester's improving daily

Trouble at t' Mill

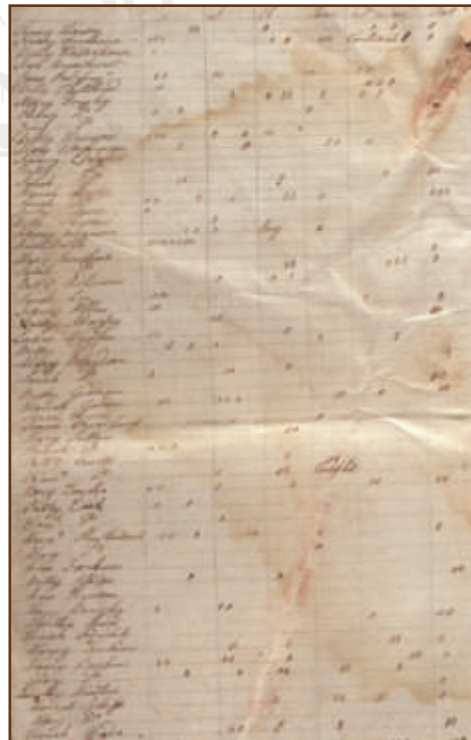
Daily life for workers in the cotton industry

Despite Manchester's growing wealth, prosperity lay in the hands of very few of its people. Working conditions in the mills were appalling, and the people who flooded into the city looking for work lived in cramped and unsanitary courts and cellars. Women and children were especially sought after as employees because of their smaller, and more nimble, fingers – they could also be paid less than the men who worked in the mills.

Working in the cotton mills was very different to working at home, not least because strict discipline was enforced. There were numerous rules and regulations, and transgressions such as lateness were punished with a hefty fine.

Children were given the dirtiest and most boring jobs in the mill, such as scavenging. This involved picking up pieces of loose cotton from beneath the moving machinery and was given to children because they were smaller and quicker than adults. The children who did this work were christened "Nimble Elves."

The work was extremely dangerous and many died by getting caught up in the machinery. Some were crippled or developed permanent stoops from crouching under the machines. In 1808 the poet Robert Southey



Report book on the conduct of women in the finishing industry, 1787, May – August (Oldknow SO 10/3) Record of textile mill workers' conduct; includes remarks such as 'very idle' & 'careless holes'.

toured one of the cotton mills and concluded that, "...if Dante had peopled one of his hells with children, here was a scene worthy to have supplied him with new images of torment."

A series of Factory Acts passed over the years gradually reduced the hours that children could legally work but it wasn't until the early 20th century that the school leaving age was raised to 14, and the enforced labour of children in the mills came to an end.

Originally mills closed only on Sundays and Christmas Day. However, worker's leisure time increased throughout the 19th century as successive Factory Acts were passed.

Many mills and factories had their own sports teams. Manchester United was formed in 1878 under the name Newton Heath L&YR F.C. and was the works team of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway depot at Newton Heath. Obviously they have come a long way from such humble beginnings!

The first public parks in Manchester, Philips Park and Queens Park, were opened in 1846 to provide open spaces for working people to walk and relax. Many pubs had their own rooms or halls for concerts and workers enjoyed humorous and satirical songs reflecting their own experiences of the desperate working conditions they had to endure.

Music Hall and theatre were also cheap forms of entertainment. There were many theatres in Manchester from the 18th century onwards and entertainment varied, but some were known to have mesh screens across the stage to prevent actors being pelted with rotten fruit by an unappreciative audience! After the 1870s music and dancing licences were required for public performances.

Performers began to turn professional and concerts took place in Variety Theatres with proper stages and seating for the audience.

Manchester's Free Trade Hall was for many years a focal point for political debate but it was also a place of entertainment. One wonders what the audiences who cheered Charles Dickens and jeered Oscar Wilde would have thought of Bob Dylan's controversial appearance in 1966, or the concert debut of Manchester's Buzzcocks or The Sex Pistols!



Playbill from the Theatre Royal, Manchester (R132052.9)

Mark and Chris

A Weaver's Song

This song by John Trafford Clegg was written around 1890 and gives an optimistic view of life in a cotton mill at the time. The recited work is very much reminiscent of the sound of the looms, and the tune used for the sung version reinforces this impression.

Down in t' shed on a summer's day
Th' owd sun shining through
whitewashed tops
Brids on t' slates are chirping away
And I whistle a tune to every cop
Clattering loom and whirling wheel
Flying shuttle and steady reel
This is wark to make a mon feel
There's wur jobs than weaving in time
o need

Straight drawn alley and clean white
walls
Picking pegs nodding their yeads all
round
Warps bending down like waterfalls
Cog wheels rattling a merry sound
Tidy skips running ower wi weft
Snowy cloth winding on the beam
Tek a good sniff o t' flying drift
It's clay and dust and we're nobbut
same

Lads and lasses standing in rows
Wortching away fro morn til neet
Tenters – Bobs Sals Bettys and Joes
Running around on their nimble feet
Keeping time to a steady tune
Played bi th' engine from leet til dark
Feed him Watter and coal – bout spoon
And he's olez reet for another day's
wark

Weaving cotton all sizes and makes
Table cloths handkerchiefs owts and
nowts
Shirts for whites and Merica blacks
Towels for Chinamen India clouts
Dhootie's Jackonets Sheetings Twills
Yard wide Narrow width Heavy and
Leet
Brats and Petticwots Fancies Drills
We can weave owt and weave it reet

Down in t' shed on a Winter's day
Sun asleep in his cloudy bed
Scores of gasleets blazing away
On shining pulley and snowy thread
Clattering loom and whirling wheel
Flying shuttle and steady reel
This is wark to make a mon feel
There's wur jobs than weaving in time
o need

Cotton spinning room at Wigan Mills, from Rylands and Sons promotional brochure, c.1932 (RYL/1/3/8)



All

Calico Printer's Clerk

Research by Chris Harvey Pollington has found that this song was in fact a Music Hall song written by the prolific artist Harry Clifton around 1863 with an original tune composed by Charles Coote Jr.

In Manchester that city of cotton twist and twills
There lived the subject of my song the cause of all my ills
She was handsome young and twenty, her eyes were azure blue
Admirers she had plenty and her name was Dorothy Drew

She was very fond of dancing but allow me to remark
That one fine day she danced away with the Calico Printer's Clerk

At a private ball I met her in eighteen sixty three
I never can forget her though she was unkind to me
I was dressed in the pink of fashion my lavender gloves were new
I danced the Valse Circassian with charming Dorothy Drew

She was very fond of dancing but allow me to remark
That one fine day she danced away with the Calico Printer's Clerk

We Schottisch'd and we Polka'd to the strains the band did play
We Valsed and we Mazourkad till she Valsed my heart away
I whispered in this fashion as round the room we flew
Doing the Varsoviana – I love you Dorothy Drew

She was very fond of dancing but allow me to remark
That one fine day she danced away with the Calico Printer's Clerk
For months and months, attention unto her I did pay
Till with her condescension she led me quite astray
The money I expended I'm ashamed to tell to you
I'll inform you how it ended with myself and Dorothy Drew

She was very fond of dancing but allow me to remark
That one fine day she danced away with the Calico Printer's Clerk

I received an intimation she a visit meant to pay
Unto a near relation who lived some miles away
In a month she'd be returning I must take a short adieu
But her love for me was burning – deceitful Dorothy Drew

She was very fond of dancing but allow me to remark
That one fine day she danced away with the Calico Printer's Clerk

At nine – o – clock next morning to breakfast I sat down
The smile my face adorning was soon changed to a frown
For in a morning paper a paragraph met my view
That Jones, a Calico Printer's Clerk had married Miss Dorothy Drew

She was very fond of dancing but allow me to remark
That one fine day she danced away with the Calico Printer's Clerk

She was very fond of dancing but allow me to remark
That one fine day she danced away with the Calico Printer's Clerk

The 'Detestable Trade'

Cotton and slavery

There was a darker side to the textile industry; cotton was inextricably linked to the slave trade.

The route generally taken by slave ships between Europe, Africa and America was known as "The Triangular Trade". Ships sailed from Britain to Africa carrying cloth, metal goods, weapons and alcohol. These goods were traded for men, women and children who were taken in horrific conditions across the notorious "middle passage" to America and the West Indies. Here they were sold as slaves to the plantation owners in return for raw ingredients such as sugar cane, cotton and tobacco which were brought back to Britain.

Although the Transatlantic slave trade had been abolished in 1807, it was not until the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act that all enslaved people in British colonies were emancipated. Slave-owners received massive amounts of compensation whereas slaves received nothing. The British continued to buy cotton from plantations in the southern states of America which were worked by slaves until 1860.



Flour Barrel from The George Griswold, 1862.
On display at Touchstones Rochdale
Image courtesy of David Pugh, Museum Officer,
Touchstones Rochdale

Opposite: enslaved woman with a weight
chained to her ankle.
John Gabriel Stedman, London, 1796 (9331)



All

Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen Pick a Bale of Cotton

Two songs from the point of view of the slaves who were picking the raw cotton in the southern states of America.

Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen

Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
Nobody knows my sorrow
Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
Glory hallelujah

Sometimes I'm up sometimes I'm down oh yes lord
Sometimes I'm almost to the ground oh yes lord

Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
Nobody knows my sorrow
Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
Glory hallelujah

Now you may think that I don't know oh yes lord
But I've had my troubles here below oh yes lord

Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
Nobody knows my sorrow
Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
Glory hallelujah

Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
Nobody knows my sorrow
Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
Glory hallelujah

Pick a Bale of Cotton

Jump down, turn around to pick a bale of cotton
Jump down, turn around to pick a bale a day.

Oh Lordy, pick a bale of cotton,
Oh Lordy, pick a bale a day.

That slave from Shiloh can pick a bale of cotton
That slave from Shiloh can pick a day.

Oh Lordy, pick a bale of cotton,
Oh Lordy, pick a bale a day.

Me and my gal can pick a bale of cotton
Me and my gal can pick a bale a day

Oh Lordy, pick a bale of cotton,
Oh Lordy, pick a bale a day.

Me and my wife can pick a bale of cotton
Me and my wife can pick a bale a day

Oh Lordy, pick a bale of cotton,
Oh Lordy, pick a bale a day.

Me and my buddy can pick a bale of cotton
Me and my buddy can pick a bale a day

Oh Lordy, pick a bale of cotton,
Oh Lordy, pick a bale a day.

Me and my poppa can pick a bale of cotton
Me and my poppa can pick a bale a day

Oh Lordy, pick a bale of cotton,
Oh Lordy, pick a bale a day.

Takes a might big man to pick a bale of cotton
Takes a might big man to pick a bale a day

Oh Lordy, pick a bale of cotton,
Oh Lordy, pick a bale a day.

King Cotton

The American civil war and the Lancashire cotton famine

In 1860 America supplied over 80% of the cotton imported into Britain, and this was still produced by slaves on plantations across the southern states. This was about to change.

On 4th March 1861, Abraham Lincoln was elected sixteenth president of the USA. He abhorred slavery, and his election proved to be the spark that led to the southern states breaking away from the Union. War seemed inevitable but the South was confident that Europe's reliance on American cotton would bring her in on their side. Senator James Henry Hammond of South Carolina stated confidently to Senator William H. Seward of New York that:

"Without the firing of a gun, without drawing a sword, should they [the North] make war upon us [the South] we could bring the whole world to its feet. What would happen if no cotton was furnished for 3 years?...England would topple headlong and carry the whole civilized world with her. No you dare not make war on cotton! No power on earth dare make war upon it. COTTON IS KING!"

He was wrong and America was plunged into four years of civil war. During this time the northern states blockaded the south, which stopped supplies of cotton getting through and led to the disruption of cotton supplies to Lancashire's mills.

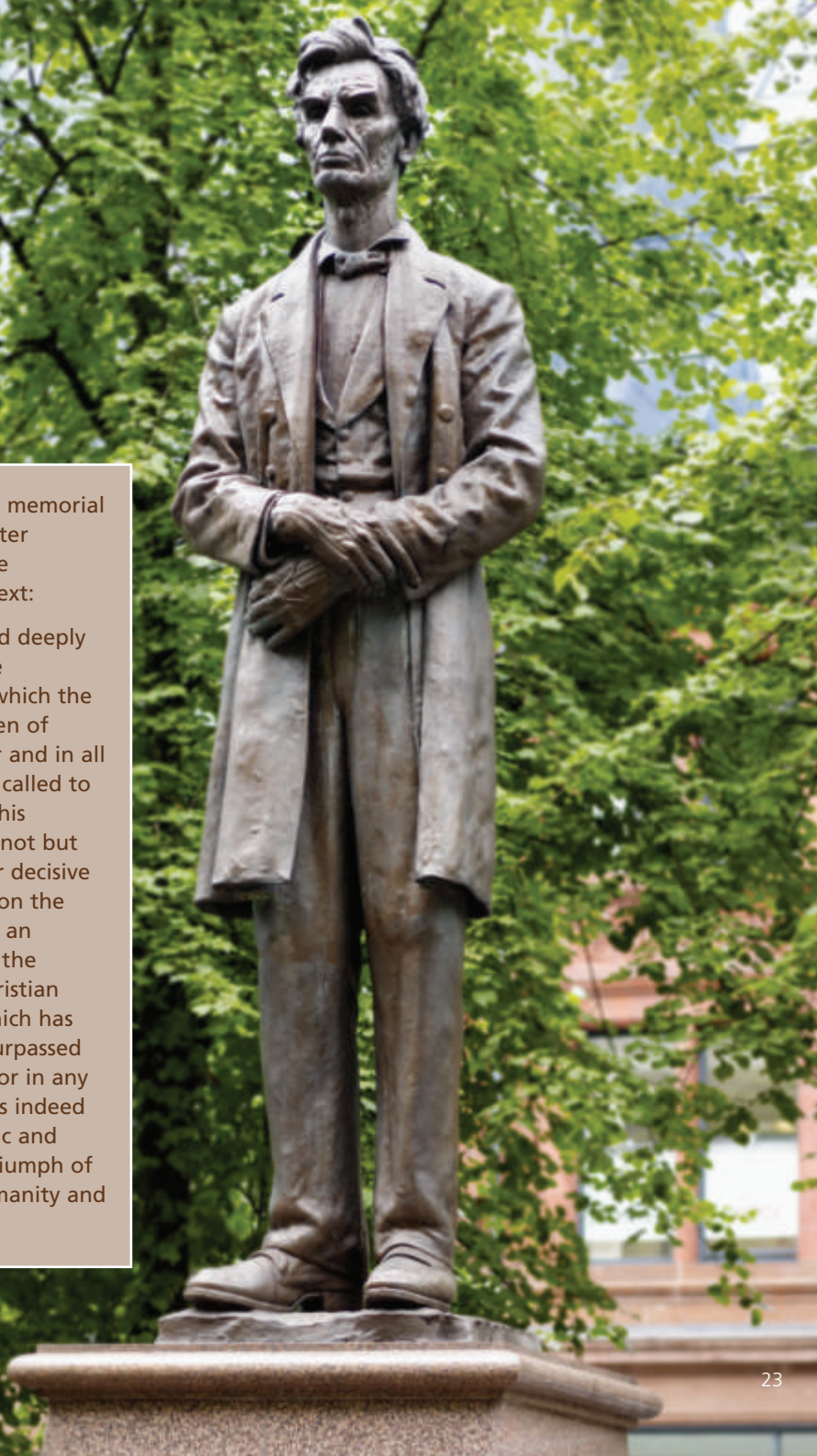
Attempts were made to find alternative sources of supply from India or Egypt but with little success. The short stapled Shurat cotton proved no substitute for the medium stapled American variety. Deprived of their essential raw material, spinning mills and weaving sheds closed down or resorted to short time working; there was a dramatic rise in unemployment. Despite their suffering, many of the people of Lancashire pledged their support for the northern states, seeing a link between the hardships of workers in the mills and slaves on the plantations.

Lincoln himself was well aware of the sacrifice Lancashire workers were being forced to make, and he was quick to respond, sending them a letter of thanks and also ordering a ship, the George Griswold to be sent over carrying barrels of food to the starving people of Lancashire.

Opposite: The Lincoln Memorial, Lincoln Square, Brazenose Street, George Grey Barnard, 1919
Photographer – Jamie Robinson, The John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester

The Lincoln memorial in Manchester contains the following text:

"I know and deeply deplore the sufferings which the working men of Manchester and in all Europe are called to endure in this crisis...I cannot but regard your decisive utterances on the question as an instance of the sublime Christian heroism which has not been surpassed in any age or in any country. It is indeed an energetic and universal triumph of Justice, humanity and freedom."



Mark and Chris

The Shurat Weaver's Song

The poor quality of cotton sourced from India led to the word Shurat becoming a by-word for anything that was bad. This song was written by Samuel Laycock from Stalybridge who was a clothlooker.

Confound it I ne'er were so woven afore
My back's welly broken and my fingers are sore
I've been staring and rooting amongst this Shurat
Till I'm very near getting as blind as a bat

I wish I were far enough off owt o't' road
For all weaving this rubbish I'm getting reet stowed
I've nowt in this world to lie down on but straw
And I've only eight shillings this fortnet to draw

Now I haven't my family under my hat
I've a wife and six childer to keep out of that
So I'm rather among it at present you see
If ever a feller were puzzled it's me

If one turns out to steal folks'll call me a thief
And I cannot put cheek on to ask for relief
As I said in our house t' other night to my wife
I've never done nowt of this sort in my life

Oh dear if yon Yankees could only but see
How they're clemming and starving poor weavers like me
I think they'd soon settle their bother and strive
To send us some cotton to keep us alive

Twass nobbut last Monday I sowd a good bed
Nay very near gan it to get me some bread
Afore these bad times come I used to be fat
But now bless your life I'm as thin as a lat

Come give us a lift you that has owt to give
And help your poor brothers and sisters to live
Be kind and be tender to t' needy and poor
And we promise when t' times end we'll ask you no more

ALL

Factory School

In response to the widespread hardship caused by the cotton famine charitable funds were set up by regional committees around the cotton towns of Lancashire. With the mills standing idle, it was decided to pay workers a small sum of money to attend schools which were set up in the factories. They were taught basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic – many workers were illiterate at this time. Some factories had sewing classes running which is the subject of another song by Sam Laycock. The school that this song mentions was at Higher Hurst near Ashton-under-Lyne and it is sung to the tune of "Artichokes and Cauliflowers".

You factory folks of Lancashire a song we'll sing to you
Of a school now formed at Higher Hurst and every word is true
Our Masters are determined to care well for their hands
If they will only come to school and there obey commands

Then old and young attend the school, your teachers there obey
There's military exercise and military pay

Our Mules and Looms have now ceased work the Yankees are the cause
But we will let them fight it out and stand by English laws
No recognising shall take place until the war is o'er
Our wants are now attended to we cannot ask for more

Then old and young attend the school, your teachers there obey
There's military exercise and military pay
Amongst our scholars there are some whose age is past threescore
Who have, for learning, wages which they never had before
The pencils slates and copybooks are free for us to use
And every morning on each desk is laid the daily News

Then old and young attend the school, your teachers there obey
There's military exercise and military pay

A system of good order rules supreme from morn till night
There's grammar and arithmetic and nearly all can write
Reciting too with moral songs to suit the gay or brave
And often we do close our school by singing "Sailor's Grave"

Then old and young attend the school, your teachers there obey
There's military exercise and military pay

Boom and Bust

The changing fortunes of Manchester and the cotton industry

By 1913 the cotton industry in Britain was at its peak producing 8 billion yards of cloth, and 65% of the world's cotton was processed in the Manchester area.

The First World War interrupted access to the export markets and so began the decline of the industry. Countries such as Japan set up their own factories and were able to produce cloth more cheaply than Britain.

In the early 1920s Ghandi called for a boycott of imported Lancashire cotton as part of his campaign for Indian independence – before this India had accounted for half of Britain's cotton exports.

These events had a devastating effect on Lancashire as the demand for British cotton slumped and hundreds of mills closed between the two world wars.

There was a short reprieve for Lancashire mills during the Second World War when they were used to make uniforms and parachutes for the army, and this was followed in the 1950s and 1960s by a huge influx of workers from the Indian sub-continent who were encouraged to seek work in Lancashire. This was too little too late, however, and British companies simply could not produce cotton cloth as cheaply

as their competitors abroad. By 1958 the country which had seen the birth of the textile industry became a net importer of cotton cloth.

In 1959 The Cotton Industry Act was introduced to help modernise the industry by compensating companies disposing of outdated machinery. The practical effect was the mass closure of countless mills across Lancashire, at a rate of almost one a week.

The economic impact on Lancashire towns was severe, although larger cities such as Manchester had developed more diverse economies which were not solely dependent on the cotton industry.

By the 1980s the textile industry had all but vanished. The empty factories and the Lancashire towns which grew up around them are a reminder of what was once the most successful of British industries.

More positive reminders of the impact of the textile industry can be seen throughout the city of Manchester. Many of the fine buildings – not the least of which is The John Rylands Library – public monuments, universities, galleries, museums and theatres were founded on the success of the cotton mills.



The John Rylands Library, Deansgate elevation



64, South Elevation

Image courtesy of Bernard and Jill Champness, Manchester Regional Industrial Archaeological Society

Mark and Chris Hard Times

Harry Whitehead wrote this song in the 1930s. The spectre of hard times was never far away from an industry that seemed to work on a principle of “boom or bust”. In the end the industry couldn't keep up with the price of finished cotton goods from abroad, where the rates of pay were even lower than in domestic factories, and many mills closed for good in the 1980s.

**You munnot come again hard time we thowt those days were done
When t' dust lay thick in t' jinny gate, where t' wheels no longer run
When t'yed stocks stood like silent ghosts and t' straps and the ropes were still
Where all about em seemed to say there's nowt to do in t' mill**

**You munnot come to haunt these streets where once you left your mark
Where care and want together walked with thousands out of wark
Where decent men from decent homes with broken heart and soul
Went trudging down that hopeless road to the means test and the dole**

ALL

Dirty Old Town

This song was written by Ewan MacColl about Salford and has become synonymous with the grimy image of “The North”. He wrote the song in 1946 to cover a set change in the Theatre Workshop production of ‘Landscape with Chimneys’. The depiction of Lancashire in this song is a far cry from the “Clean North” of today!

I met my love by the gasworks croft
Dreamed a dream by the old canal
Kissed my girl by the factory wall
Dirty old town, dirty old town

Clouds are drifting across the moon
Cats are prowling on their beat
Springs a girl in the streets at night
Dirty old town, dirty old town

Heard a siren from the dock
Saw a train set the night on fire
Smelled the spring on the smoky wind
Dirty old town, dirty old town

I'm going to take a good sharp axe
Shining steel tempered in the fire
We'll chop you down like an old dead tree
Dirty old town, dirty old town

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‘Dirty Old Town’: Ewan MacColl



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