



Social Unrest in Sutton in the 1800s: The Luddite riots



well read
informed communications

This education Pack developed by Kate Dawson at Well Read in consultation with local heritage groups and schools. Particular thanks to Denis Hill, Heritage Consultant for his help providing historic background.

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at Mill Waters heritage site

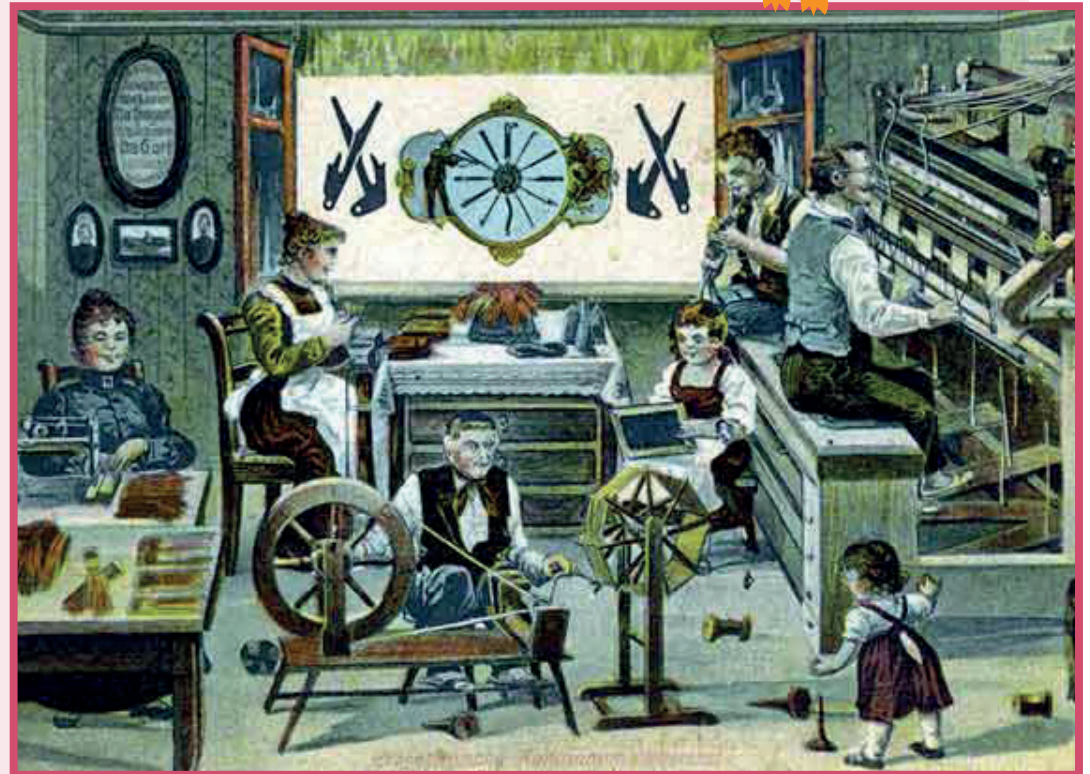
Cottage industries

In the 1700s Sutton was a quiet farming community. People farmed and there were mills to grind corn into flour.

People also made a living by knitting on machines, spinning cotton and weaving in their homes – known as cottage industries.

The Framework Knitters, also known as stockings, made stockings (a fashionable sock) on a knitting frame in their home.

The whole family was involved, as we can see in this picture.



The Industrial Revolution

Between 1750 and 1850 new technology transformed the way textiles were produced. The new machines speeded up production, like the **Crompton Mule** shown here.

A wider knitting frames was later invented which produced more than the stockings could in the same amount of time.

The stockings also believed that the machinery produced stockings of inferior quality.

The term 'poor as a stockinger' was coined.



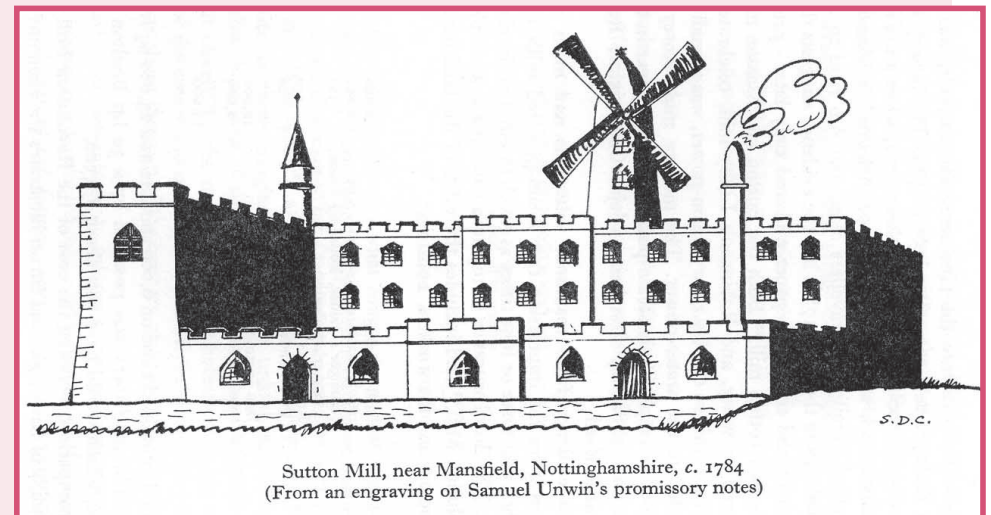
Factory production in Sutton

Somewhere between 1768 and 1775 Samuel Unwin built the gothic style 'Sutton Old Mill' to carry out cotton doubling (a process in textiles manufacture to create strong smooth yarn).

Sutton Old Mill (left) was one of the first to be powered by a water wheel and was based on Richard Arkwright's pioneering mill at Cromford.

Unwin later added a windmill to increase the power.

Many other corn mills were converted, or built for textiles manufacture (as well as leather tanning and bleaching) in the late 1700s and early 1800s.



Radical thinking

Before the 1800s the country was run by the rich landowners, also called the establishment. People got important jobs in the government because they had money or somebody owed them a favour.

Only 3 percent of men could vote.

Alongside the Industrial Revolution people started to question the way the country was run.

They were inspired by the French Revolution, in which the poor people rioted to get a change in society and killed the King to get rid of the old system.



Storming of the Bastille

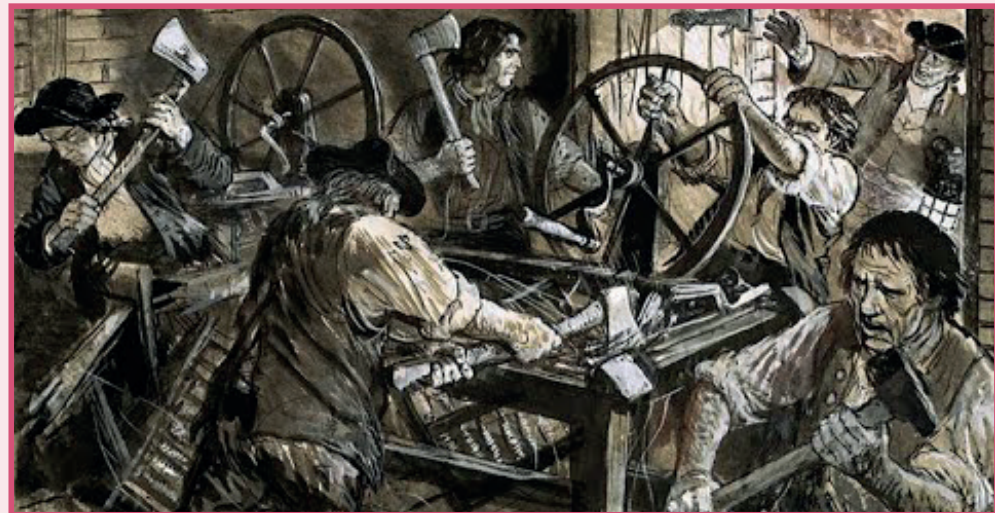
The Luddite riots

The Luddite riots between 1811 -1816 involved the poor people using violence as a way of showing those in charge that they had had enough of living a miserable life.

The riots took place across the East Midlands and Yorkshire, between 1811-16.

The Luddites were unemployed tradesmen, mainly stockings, who were angry because new machinery had made their jobs redundant.

The stockings protested by going about smashing up the new larger frames that they blamed for losing their jobs, in what were known as the Luddite riots.



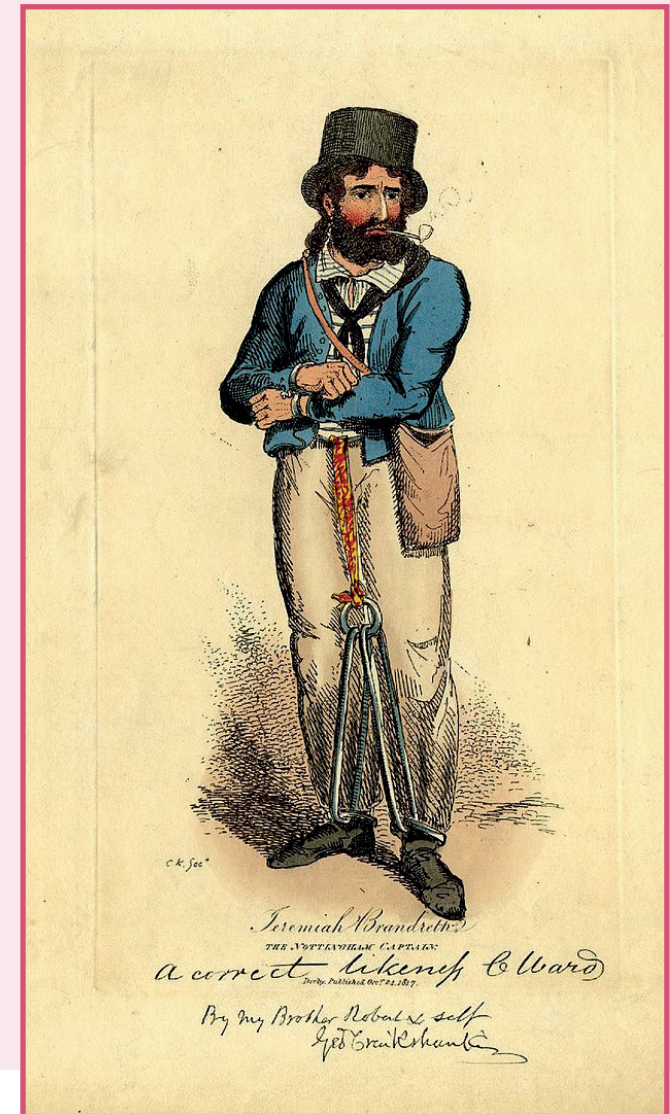
Jeremiah Brandreth

Jeremiah Brandreth was a local Luddite leader who moved to Sutton in 1811 to marry. Jeremiah was a charismatic leader – he was able to win over supporters easily. He was known as The Nottingham Captain.

The Pentrich Uprising

In 1817 Jeremiah Brandreth led more than 500 angry workers from Pentrich in Derbyshire to attack Nottingham Castle. They were mainly stockings, quarrymen and iron workers, armed with pikes, scythes and a few guns.

Whatever the reason for joining the Luddite movement, it was not for the faint-hearted, as anyone caught breaking a frame would face either transportation to Australia, or death.



Luddite protest songs

The Luddites published leaflets, gathered in pubs and sang songs about their plight.

Some of the Luddite leaders also gave powerful speeches standing on top of a soap box, which would draw a crowd.

One of their songs was called Hunting the loaf.

Nedd Ludd was the name used for the imaginary leader of the Luddites, but probably refers to the organising committee.

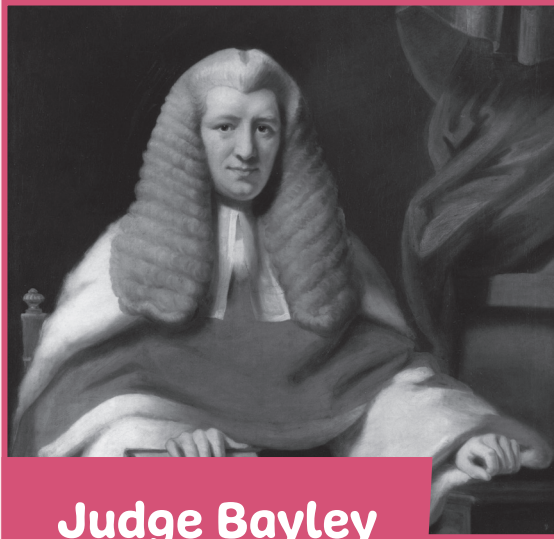
Protest songs were a powerful way of uniting people to join the Luddite movement.

The men would have been very motivated to fight against injustice after listening to the Luddite leaders speak and joining in the songs.

Not everyone could read in those days, so songs were a good way of spreading messages.



Different views of the Luddites



Judge Bayley

Those in the establishment, such as Judge Bayley, (pictured above) were appalled at the actions of the Luddites and firmly believed that law and order should be maintained.



Lord Byron

Lord Byron, the poet and Peer in the House of Lords was sympathetic of the suffering of the Luddites.

He believed that the introduction of capital punishment for the frame-breaking was too harsh.