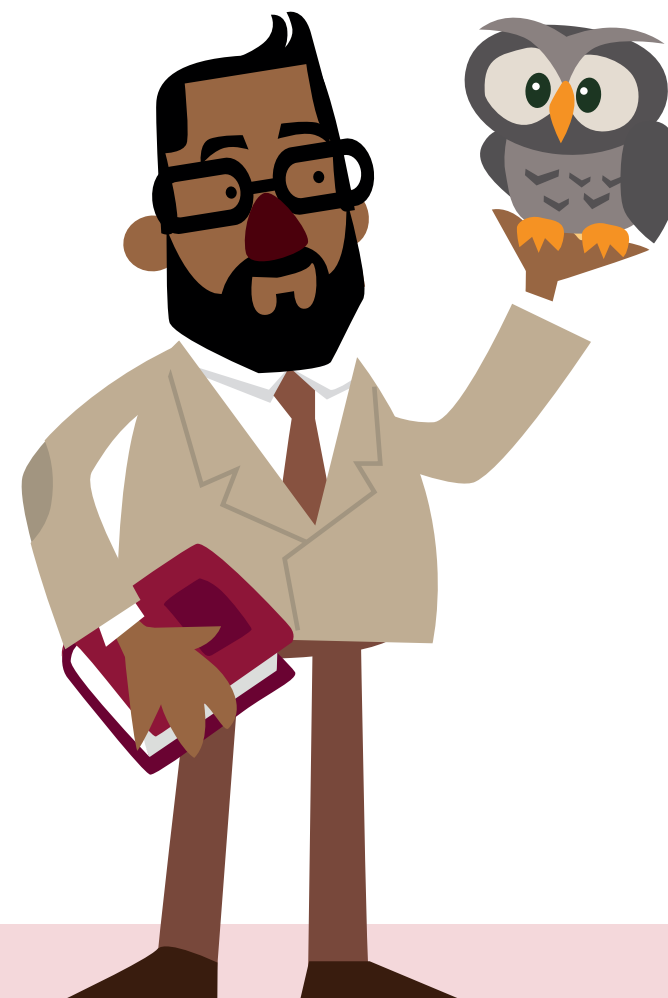


Conditions in the mills



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.

at Mill Waters heritage site

Recruitment of orphans

Orphans who lived in the poor houses were bought to work in the cotton mills.

Known as pauper apprentices, they would work in return for food and somewhere to sleep.

They signed a contract (an agreement) that made them the property of the mill owner.

By the end of the 18th century a third of factory workers were pauper apprentices.



How many children worked in the textile mills?

- In 1837 an estimated 700 - 800 children worked in the mills in Mansfield and Sutton
- In 1841 there were 44,833 boys and 62,131 girls under 20 employed in cotton manufacture across Britain
- By 1851 cotton manufacturing was still one of the main jobs in the UK, with 33,228 boys and 37,058 girls under 20 years old recorded as working in the cotton mills
- By the 1900s it was illegal to employ children under the age of 11 to work in a factory



Conditions in the mills

- Children worked a 12-14 hour day
- They were regularly beaten
- Children often made mistakes and fell into machinery because of lack of sleep
- Factory workers often lost fingers and limbs as machinery was not fenced off
- There were gas explosions and fires
- The toxic air caused health problems such as tuberculosis, lung cancer, eye inflammation, deafness and body deformities



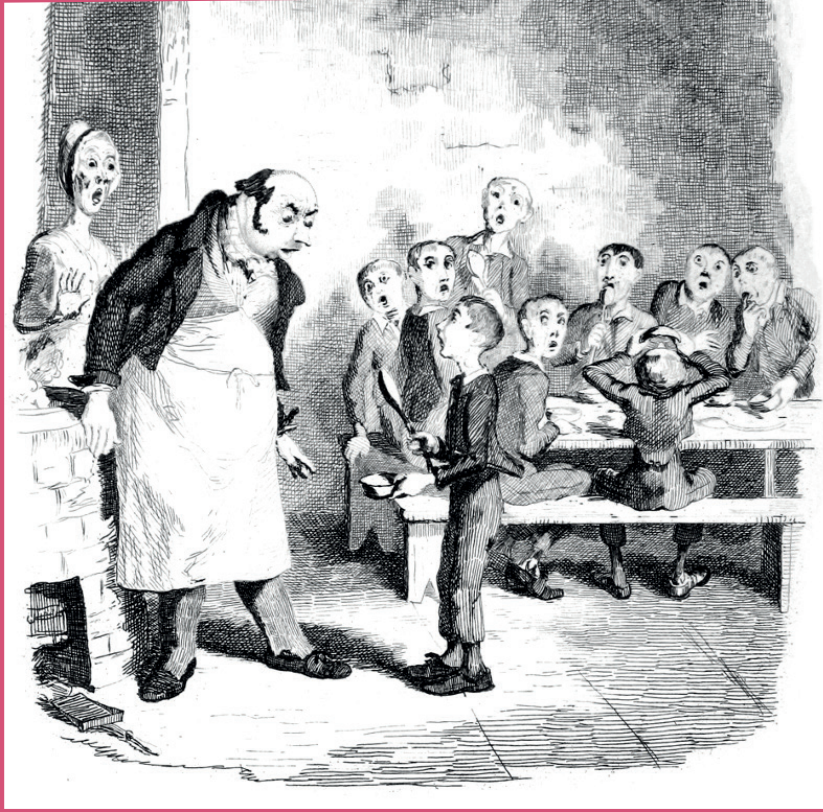
What work did children do in the mills?

Children were employed to:

- Go underneath machinery to fix it
- Clean and oil moving machinery
- Take the full bobbins off the spindles and put on empty ones – known as ‘doffing’
- ‘Scavengers’ cleaned up the dust and oil and gathered the cotton that had been thrown off the machinery – known as scavenging
- ‘Piecers’ repaired the broken threads



What did child workers eat?



Gruel, a watery porridge, was a staple in the mill and the workhouse. Here's Oliver Twist famously asking for 'more'.



Potatoes were regularly dished up at the mill.



Child workers would get very little meat apart from a little bacon and mutton (old sheep meat).



Cheap beer would have been served to drink.

Playtime

Child mill workers may not have had much time to play, but those who found the energy at the end of a shift would have enjoyed hopscotch, tag and playing with a bat and ball (made out of old rags).

Children who were better off played with marbles, a hoop and stick, and rags dolls.



Punishments for being naughty

- Children were often beaten for just being a bit naughty and sometimes were strung up above the machinery
- If they did not produce their quota they might have weights tied around their neck and be ordered to walk up and down the mill floor to be made an example of. This caused serious injuries to the back and neck
- Sometimes boys who were late to work would be dragged naked from their beds to the mill floor holding their clothes, to get dressed there



Different viewpoints of child labour

The Optimists believed:

- Work in the mills built children's character
- It provided income for poor families
- It was no harder than the work children used to do on the farms, in the cottages, or up the chimneys.

The Pessimists believed:

- Children were being exploited by the factory owners, including millers
- The poorest people in society were being taken advantage of by the richest
- That there should be regulation (rules to make life better for children in the factories), if not the abolition of child labour altogether

Robert Owen and early factory reform

- From 1800 – 1825 Robert Owen created a model village for his mill workers in Lanark, in Scotland. He believed people were more productive if they were healthy and happy
- Children under 10 did not work in his mills
- The working day was reduced to 12 hours with an hour and a half for meals
- Medical care was available
- There were rewards for good behaviour
- Robert's model village influenced the Factory Health and Morals Act in 1802 which banned children under the age of 9 years working in the mills



Herbert Greenhalgh

Herbert Greenhalgh was the mill owner at Field Mill in Mansfield and later inherited Stanton and Little Matlock Mills from his father.

- Herbert gave his workers time off for sport and leisure
- He established the first Field Mill Football Club
- He had a reputation for being a kind and considerate employer unlike the reports of the government's inspectors at many other mills around the country



Herbert cared about the welfare of the poor and was on the Board of Guardians which oversaw the Poorhouse in Mansfield.

The Factory Act 1833

The Factory Act 1833 made the following the law:

- The working day started at 5.30am and finished at 8.30pm (no night shift)
- Children aged 13-18 could only work up to 12 hours per day
- Children aged 9-13 could only work up to nine hours per day
- Children under 9 were not allowed to work at all (children as young as 3 had been put to work previously)
- Children had to go to school for at least two hours a day
- The government paid factory inspectors to check that factory workers were following the rules and complying with the law



The Factory Acts of 1844 and 1847

The Factory Act of 1844 was even stricter than the 1833 Act:

- The hours of work for children aged 8-13 to six and a half hours a day
- Young people and women could not work more than 12 hours for the first five days of the week (with 1.5 hours for meals), and 9 on Saturday
- There needed to be a register of all the children who worked in the mill, and every child worker had to have a certificate of age granted by a surgeon
- Accidents causing death or bodily injury were to be investigated
- The factory was to be thoroughly washed with lime every 14 months

After further campaigning another Act of Parliament was passed in 1847 which made it illegal for women and children to work more than 10 hours a day in the factories.

Further factory reform in the late 18th century

- Factory Extension Act of 1867 - children and women could not be overworked in factories and children must be schooled
- 1870 Education Act (also known as the Forster Act) said that there had to be a school in every town and village
- Chimney Sweeping Act of 1875 made it illegal to put children up chimneys
- By 1880, children aged 5 to 10 had to go to primary school, The Factory Act of 1891 made it the law to fence off machinery and children under 11 could not be employed in a factory (they had to go to school instead)
- In 1899 the school leaving age was increased to 13
- The Fisher Education Act of 1918 made education compulsory up to the age of 14

