

STOKESLEY FLAX MILL - TIME-LINE WITH REFERENCES

- 1733 John Kay's flying shuttle for weaving. Gradual disappearance of hand loom.
- 1764 Hargreaves's spinning jenny (could be operated in homes).
- 1771 Arkwright improved jenny, spinning frame could use water power.
- 1785 Crompton's mule for spinning, combination of both the above, was larger, operated in workshops.
- 1787 The above helped the cotton industry, but were not suitable for flax, causing the linen industry to shrink. However, John Kendrew, an optician who had a mill for grinding glass, and Thomas Parkhouse, a clockmaker, both from Darlington, patented a process for flax developed from Arkwright's water frame, and set up mills on the River Skerne.
- 1800 Stokesley's population 1369 (1).
- 1800 Lease of 42 High Street, with shop and yard, garden and orchard behind, to John Mease and a cabinet maker (2).
- 1822 42 High Street now belongs to John Mease and Thomas Mease with two tenants. The indenture includes James Easom, flax dresser (2).
- 1823 Population of Stokesley town 1897, parish extends for 7 Square miles (3). Robert Armstrong, a watch & clock maker and agent for newspapers, also a free thinker, was criticised in a talk at a Methodist Mission Meeting by Thomas Mease, who believed in the literal truth of Bible. Robert Armstrong retaliated by installing a Printing Press in his shop, producing tracts on revolutionary ideas of Thomas Paine. Thomas responded with publications printed by Robert Pratt. A slanging match went on for at least a year, known as the Paper War (4, 5). There were 10 linen manufacturers and 3 flax dressers in Stokesley (2). Thomas & John Mease were Flax and Tow spinners, and were erecting flax spinning mill behind the house (3).
- 1824 Thomas produced a monthly publication, The Extremist continuing the dispute with Armstrong (4, 5).
- 1825 Thomas' mill built with steam powered flax spinning, also used for corn (2, 6).
- 1827 42 High Street: deeds note garden and warehouse wine vaults converted into corn mill and spinning factory, now occupied by John Mease, grocer, and his sons Thomas, flax spinner, and John; also about 15 acres of land towards Great Broughton now in the possession or occupation of Thomas Mease (6), known to be the site of a bleach mill from the 1838 sale notice.
- May: Bankruptcy of Anthony Haviside: Sale in Stokesley of linen manufacture and dyeing equipment, including milling stock and horse drawn Wheel (7).
- 1831 Stokesley's population 1967 (including Busby, Easby and Newby).
- 1832 Thomas bought land and old buildings on Levenside to build a steam driven mill (6).
- 1833 In partnership with James Blackett the mill was completed with partnership capital £4000. A gasometer was also built. A pipe was laid to Red House, Bridge Road, where Thomas lived (8).
- Factory Act: Prohibited employment of children under 9, limited children 9-13 to 9 hours, youths 13-18 to 12 hours.
- 1834 In Stokesley, Thomas Mease is listed as a Flax Dresser and Spinner, and Patent Thread manufacturer. John Mease is a Linen and Damask Manufacturer. Garbutt, Blackett and Fawcett are solicitors on Front Street (now the south side of the High Street) (3). 42 High Street occupied by John Mease, grocer, and sons Thomas, flax spinner and John, linen manufacturer, along with land and items behind No 36 & 38 (2). Thomas with John acquires a former paper mill in Hutton Rudby, fitted for flax spinning (9). Gas from a works near the New Mill supplied to the town: a special celebratory Dinner was held at the Black Swan Hotel, cooked entirely by the new Gas (10).
- 1836 Hutton Rudby Mill sold (9).
- 1837 A collapse of foreign demand led to a general trade depression to 1842 (11). There was also competition from cotton and less expensive Irish and Scottish linen (9). Edmund Blackett took up position in Levenside mill, owned by Thomas Mease and James Blackett snr, and operated by his brothers, James and John (12). However, the Mease, Blackett partnership broke down in July (13), and Edmund started work for the Stockton and Darlington Railway as a surveyor. This would

have involved designing stations, which fitted with his first love architecture, which his father did not allow him to pursue (6). In December, Thomas Mease was bankrupt, with proceedings at the Greyhound Inn Stockton (14).

1838 May: 42 High Street was put up for sale together with the flax and tow spinning wheel with associated equipment and buildings, together with the Bleach Mill near Broughton Bridge (15). In Oct it was advertised again, saying that if not sold for spinning it will be let as flour mill as heretofore used (16).

1839 John Blackett lived in Durham to 1841 when he became Land Steward for the Earl of Bessborough in Ireland (6). August: Dissolution of partnership of Garbutt, Fawcett and Blackett of Stokesley (17). 1839 Factory returns (18): 139 persons employed, 67 men and boys (45 under 21, 1 under 10, 15 under 12, 21 under 15); 72 women & girls (49 under 21, 2 under 10, 10 under 12, 15 under 15). Steam engine 30 HP.

1840 James Blackett listed as Flax Spinner and Patent Tread manufacturer in Stokesley, operating the Levenside Mill, John Blackett as Collector of Crown rents, and Thomas Mease as Gentleman (3)

1841 Stokesley's population 2310 (including Busby, Easby and Newby). Edmund leaves Yorkshire to go to the family home at Brixton Hill (11)

1841 James Blackett senior bankruptcy announced with hearing at the Vane Arms, Stockton in February (19). April: sale of machinery & effects of James Blackett at the New Mill, also an extensive sale of Flax Machinery, instructed by the Proprietor (suggesting the New Mill has a new owner not intending to continue with flax) (20). Thomas had donated an organ to the 1812 Methodist Chapel, but failed to pay cabinet maker involved in the installation. This caused embarrassment to the trustees who had difficulty in finding the money after Thomas left town (21).

1842 Edmond Blackett loved Thomas Mease's daughter Sarah, and had been miserable at being parted. They eloped and married at Wakefield, and then they emigrated to Australia where he achieved fame as an Architect designing many well-known Australian Buildings (11).

1847 Factory Act: women and youths limited to 10 hours.

1853 Following Cleveland Show, Great Dinner in the New Mill, Lord de L'Isle and Dudley in the chair (22).

References

- 1 Stokesley Selection, Alec Wright and John Mawer, p23.
- 2 House deeds researched by Tom Berry.
- 3 Stokesley Directory.
- 4 Jakes Barn.
- 5 Printing & Publishing in Stokesley by Daphne Franks.
- 6 Clan Barker.com
- 7 York Herald, 5 May 1827.
- 8 Stokesley Selection p85,132, extract from Whelan's History of the North Riding.
- 9 Hutton Rudby, Industrial village c1700-1900, R P Hastings.
- 10 Stokesley Selection, p 132.
- 11 Simon Scharma, History of Britain Vol 3, p180.
- 12 Wikipedia on Edmund Blackett.
- 13 Morning Post 2/8/1837.
- 14 York Herald 23/12/1837.
- 15 York Herald May 26/5/1838.
- 16 Newcastle Courant 5/10/1838.
- 17 London Gazette 8/8/1839.
- 18 Along Levenside, A Third Walk Around Stokesley, I E Ridley and D Franks.
- 19 Manchester Times & Gazette, 16/1/1841.
- 20 Leeds Mercury 17/4/1841.
- 21 The Methodist Chapels of Stokesley 1765-1994, T Berry.
- 22 York Herald, 10/8/1853.