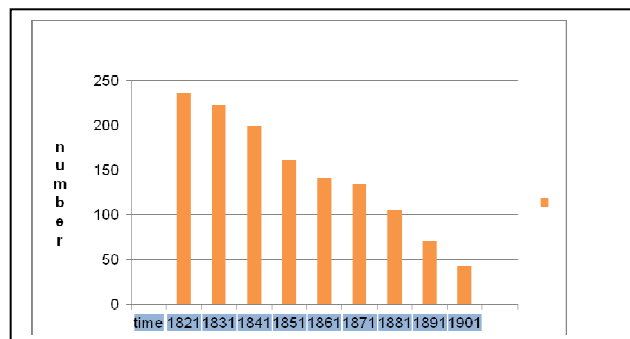


Population figures for Twiston (from the censuses)



**T**WISTON mill burnt down in 1882 but, as the graph shows, the decline in the population of Twiston had already started well before that, as people moved from the countryside to the towns. This second article looks at the mill hands who lived and worked at Twiston Mill. It examines the number and size of families, the sort of jobs people did, where they lived, where they came from, the turnover of staff and managers and the gradual transition of the mill into a farm. It uses the 1841-91 censuses as a chief resource and refers also to the electoral registers as well as articles in the British Library online newspapers.

Twiston had existed as a farming community, long before the Industrial Revolution. The Hearth Tax Returns of 1664 list 16 houses with 20 hearths. However, the 1665/6 Returns list only 11 houses in 1665/6, this time with 23 hearths. The discrepancy in the numbers of hearths may have been a result of people trying to avoid paying the tax. Between 1841 and 1891 the farming community remained constant, with numbers fluctuating between 12 and 15 farmers. But there were huge changes in the rest of the population.

The censuses of 1821 and 1831 are numerical only but they show that the population of Twiston was already in decline, down from 236 in 1821, to 222 in 1831. This decline continued throughout the nineteenth century. The corn mill, converted to a cotton mill in 1792, (Rothwell, 1990) provided employment but there was other industrial activity: as lead mining at Skeleron, limestone quarrying at Lower Gate and Hill Top and a long tradition of handloom weaving.

What about the mill hands? One thing which is immediately obvious is the huge turnover of staff. In 1841, Thomas Taylor and his sons Robert and John ran the mill. They are listed as voters on the 1835 electoral register. There were eight other surnames at Twiston Mill, presumably living in the six mill cottages attached: Benson, Lee, Thornber, Wilkins, Altham, Hitcroft, Parker and Kendrick, totalling 35 individuals, some of whom were minors.

In 1851 there were 30 people living at Twiston Mill, 21 of whom were working there. The Taylors remained, along with the families Benson, Hitcroft, Lee and Parker. But the Thornber, Altham and Kendrick families had gone and the Duckworths and Starkeys were

new. The Taylor partnership was dissolved in 1852 and by 1861 the mill was being run by Mr. Moorby and Sons. It would seem that they brought their own mill hands: the new family names were now Hardacre, Metcalfe, Ralph, Stockdale, Briggs and Cunliffe.

The mill hands did not all live in the mill cottages. Many lived nearby in the clusters of buildings at Lower Gate, Hill Foot, Hill Top, Smithy Fold and Brownlow. The censuses list exact figures for operatives: 21 in 1851, 49 in 1861 and 44 in 1871. By 1881, when William Bailey was manager, there were only two families left in the mill cottages: those of Preston and Scott. By 1882, after the fire, there were none

The jobs reflect the nature of work. In 1828 the Taylors had introduced waste cotton spinning and carpet weaving. In 1839 the firm had started printing carpets. In 1841 there were 26 weavers, 4 rovers, 3 printers, 2 spinners, as well as a seizer, hawker, cart driver, tearboy and 2 paupers. In 1851 there was 1 over looker, 18 weavers, 4 winders, 2 spinners, 2 tearers, 2 rovers, 2 carding piercers, 2 carpet printers, 1 engine feeder, 1 cotton picker, 1 block printer, 1 blowfeeder and 2 paupers. We cannot be sure how many of these were power loom or handloom weavers in cottages.

The 1861 census is more specific. There were 2 principals, 1 over looker, 13 cotton piecers, 11 cotton loom weavers, 3 cotton feeders, 3 rovers, 2 spinners, 2 carding loom piecers, 1 stoker, 1 carter and 1 creeler. In 1871 I counted 1 manufacturer, 1 over looker, 11 cotton loom weavers, 3 operatives, 3 piecers, 2 mill hands, 2 rovers, 1 creeler, 1 engine feeder, 1 jobber, 1 corder, 1 spinner, 1 mule piecer and 1 warehouse assistant. In 1881 there was 1 cotton manufacturer, 21 weavers, 3 cotton framers, 2 factory workers, 2 rovers, 1 carder, 1 creeler, 1 warehouseman, 1 spinner and 1 carter. By 1891, after the fire, there were no mill hands.

Where did these mill hands come from? And where did they go? The 1841 census does not list place of origin. It states only if a family was born in the same county or not. Only about five families connected with the mill were born outside Lancashire. In 1851 families were born locally in Twiston or in neighbouring villages such as Downham, Barley, Barrowford, Chatburn, Grindleton, Newchurch, Rimington, Sabden and Sawley. But by 1861, those who lived in the mill cottages, at least, were from places further afield, like Darwen, Haslingdon, Burnley, Liverpool, Bentham, Malham, Settle or Langcliffe. Some came from even further afield like Mrs. Alice Parkinson, the over-looker's wife, who came from Gibraltar. It is harder to say where the mill hands went. Presumably, they went wherever they could find work. They might be more easily traced through family histories.

William Assheton, who built the upper dam and a new trunk to take water to the wheel in 1851, once described the mill as 'more plague than profit.' (Farms and Woods, 1851) The turnover of managers and staff may have had something to do with it. The Taylors, from Giggleswick, left in 1851 (London Gazette, 1851, British Library Online Newspapers). Mr. Moorby and Sons, from Langcliffe in Yorkshire, took over but Mr. Moorby, senior, was soon to suffer the same fate as the Taylors when his partnership was dissolved. (Liverpool Echo, 1862). The next managers, Greenwood and Bailey from Burnley dissolved their partnership in 1874. (Liverpool Mercury, 1874).

In the 1871 census, the families living in the cottages were Diggle, Parkinson, Briggs and Oddie, continuity being supplied only by the Briggs family. Mr. Moorby, junior, the previous owner's son, was now listed as a farmer of 35 acres. In the 1881 census, there were 20 people living at the mill: the two families of Preston and Scott in the cottages and Mr. Bailey in the Master's house. But in 1882 the mill burnt down and soon after the cottages and buildings were cleared away.

Land bought from Mr. Stott was added to the farm and in the 1891 census, Twiston Mill, no longer functioning as a mill, was listed as Twiston Mill Farm. It was inhabited by Mr. Briggs and family. The population of Twiston as a whole had shrunk to 71. By 1901, it had dropped even further to just 43 and was to remain around that figure until into the 1950s. Mr. William Jackson and his wife and two children lived at Twiston Mill Farm. Twiston had come full circle and returned to its original identity as a farming community.

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