

Wycoller Weaving

In the 18th and early 19th centuries, the manufacture of woollens and worsteds developed into a boom industry. In 1820 Wycoller's population rose to its highest level of 350. However, this period of growth was short-lived and thirty-five dwellings have disappeared since this time.

The development of the powerloom led to the relocation and expansion of the textile industry in other areas and the handloom weavers sought employment in the mills and left to live in nearby towns. The decline was relatively gradual and the very last worsted handloom weavers at Wycoller were Henry Hindle and his son and daughter in 1871.

The population of 107 was now mainly composed of farmers and farm labourers. Wycoller had gone back to concern itself with the land. (see sheet 7).

Lant Troughs

The woven cloth had many processes to go through although it was often sold in the unfinished state. The first process often involved treating it with the urine of animals and humans, the latter being collected from lant troughs in various parts of the village. Lant (urine) was collected and used in the process of cleaning wool, because of its ammonia content. Another of the processes took place at the fulling mill. The earliest method was by tramping the cloth underfoot, causing it to thicken and the warp and weft to become meshed together. Finally the cloth was put on tenter frames to stretch and dry. Wycoller's 'Tenter Field' is the long narrow field that stretches from the top of the bank above the pack-horse bridge, on the Hall side to Height Laithe on the Haworth Road.

Wuzzin Holes

To make the weaving easier, the yarn was washed and then 'wuzzed' to drain the water. Wet yarn was spun round in a basket at the end of a stick which was supported in a 'wuzzin hole". This acted very much like a spin dryer that you have in your homes today. Examples of these 'wuzzin' holes can be seen in the walling of Pierson's House. That's the house with the fancy doorway opposite the craft shop.



From the 15th century significant number of sheep were grazed around Wycoller and the settlement was a typical farming / weaving community. Cloth making was a family occupation, with women and children cleaning, carding and combing the wool and then spinning into a coarse yarn.

Dry yarn was then woven on the handloom by the older boys and heads of families.

In the early days, many people had their own carding, spinning and weaving as a family operation, but soon wealthier yeomen began to have their wool spun by poorer neighbours, and thus the clothier came into existence. The first clothier noted in Wycoller was William Hargreaves who died in 1598. The cloth would be sent to London by pack-horse carrier and once there it would be received by his London agents.

When the Colne Cloth Hall was erected in 1775 both Henry Owen Cunliffe and Richard Foulds, a Wycoller 'piecemaker', were among the shareholders. The Cloth Hall was erected as a market both for clothiers and independent weavers.

John Kay invented the flying shuttle in 1733 which greatly speeded up the process of woollen weaving.

Families who were involved in cloth making frequently had cards for carding, combs for woolcombing, wheels for spinning and looms for weaving. It is obvious that some were involved in the complete process from clipping the wool from the sheep's back to stretching it on the tenter frames that stood in the Tenter Field.

However, by the late eighteenth century there were few people in Wycoller employed in any other branch of cloth making other than weaving.

In Wycoller there were few specially-built cottages for handloom weavers, and looms were placed in every conceivable room. Some had looms in the kitchen and others in the living room while a common site was the bedroom. By 1851 Wycoller's 68 handloom weavers were weaving worsted cloth with the exception of a few satin and 'Delaine' weavers. But by 1871 Henry Hindle and his children were the last worsted handloom weavers in Wycoller. The population was now mainly composed of farmers and farm labourers. Wycoller had gone back to concern itself with the land.

wors'ted (woos'tid)n. woollen yarn -a. made of woollen yarn. Worsted cloth was woven from smoother, thinner and stronger yarn which had been spun from combed wool.

