

In What Ways Did The Conditions At Greg's Mill Differ From Some Other Textile Mills?

Quarry Bank Mill differs in a lot of ways from other mills of its time. The living conditions and working conditions were far superior to that of other cotton mills. The workers of Styal Mill were treated extremely well compared to the workers in other mills. For example, instead of harsh beatings, which often resulted in death or severe injuries, workers were fined or locked in solitary confinement for crimes such as lateness, swearing, being unwashed or disorderly. Non-violence was used because, if your workers died from harsh beatings, then whom would you employ?

Most Mill owners caught on to this idea and decided to give their workers better treatment and even healthcare in some mills. Samuel Greg employed a doctor/dentist to look after his workers when they were ill or needed a tooth pulled out. This was extremely unusual because, you could see the doctor for free whereas if you were working somewhere else, as a plain village shopkeeper for example, you often couldn't afford to go to the doctor. Greg did this because if he had unhealthy workers, he would have low profits. Richard Arkwright was another Mill owner that treated his workers fairly. He set up a Saturday market for the employees that lived in the village and even had a festival which had its own theme song. This increased the morale of the staff and so more profit was made.

Both Greg and Arkwright were very similar to each other. Both mostly employ women and children because they are cheaper to employ than men. They used any age child but only full time workers were employed at the age of 7 and no younger. Additionally, they both set up countryside mills around hamlets and turned them into a working/mill community.

They both built houses, churches, schools and shops for their employees but there are many things that set them apart. For example, Arkwright ran shifts that were 2-12 hours and the mill ran 24 hours a day whereas Greg's shifts were 1-13 hour shifts and no nights.

In many mills, the food had no variety and was served in very small portions. An apprentice from Cressbrook Mill commented,

"We went to our work at six in the morning without anything at all to eat or fire to warm us. For about a year after I went we never stopped for breakfast. The breakfast was brought to the mill in tin cans on large trays. It was milk, porridge and oatcake. They brought them into the room, and everyone took a tin and ate his breakfast as he could catch it, working away all the while. We stopped at twelve o'clock, and had an hour for dinner, but had the cleaning to do during that time. It took some of us half an hour to clean and oil the machinery. We went to dinner, which was potato-pie five days in the week."

However, Greg's mill was different. They had a very varied diet and you could always have as much as you could eat. Joseph Sefton, an apprentice from Quarry Bank Mill said,

"On Sunday we had for dinner boiled pork and potatoes. We also had peas, beans, turnips and cabbages in their season. Monday we had for dinner milk and bread and sometimes thick porridge. We always had as much as we could eat. Tuesday we had milk and potatoes. Wednesday we had sometimes bacon and potatoes, sometimes milk and bread. Thursday if we had bacon on Wednesday we had milk and bread. Friday we used to have Lob Scouse (stew). Saturday we used to dine on thick porridge. We had only water to drink, when ill we were allowed tea."

The wages were too very different. Even though in other mills, children were paid 1/6 of the adult wage that was still more than what the children at Styal were paid.

Wages at Styal were lower than the average cotton mill presumably because of the free healthcare and good food as well as the provided religious services and education for the apprentices.

The Styal apprentices appear to have lived better than many of their contemporaries and this is clearly shown in all the evidence above. Greg's mill was the first of it's kind; a revolutionary step in the cotton making industry and it set the mould for other cotton mills to fall into.