Gorton Mill House

Gorton Mill was one of the first and largest integrated textile mills in the area. The mill is associated with John Rylands, an entrepreneur who is also known for his philanthropy. John Rylands & Co becoming one of the most influential firms of textile manufactures in the region.

The location of Gorton Mill owes much to the proximity of the Stockport Branch of the Manchester and Ashton-under-Lyne canal, which opened in 1796. This not only enabled Gorton Mill to utilise the water of the canal to supply its boilers but also provided the means of transport to deliver both the finished products to the lucrative markets in Manchester and the fuel for the engine.

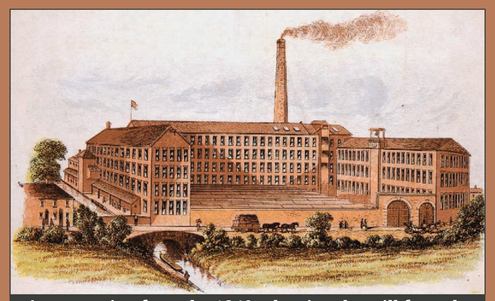
Not only did the canal and by association the mills along it, bring the prospect of prosperity for entrepreneurial manufacturers, it also transformed the areas it passed through by creating work for those living outside the towns. This was certainly the case in Gorton prior to the construction of the mill, the area containing only a handful of scattered farmsteads placed along rural trackways.

The earliest elements of Gorton Mill are almost certainly represented on Hennet's map of 1830. Opening in 1825 the Mill housed 26,264 spindles and 886 power looms. Situated in a rural location, available space on which to build was not a problem for the Mill and the site experienced near continuous construction from 1824 to 1833. By 1832 it employed 711 people.



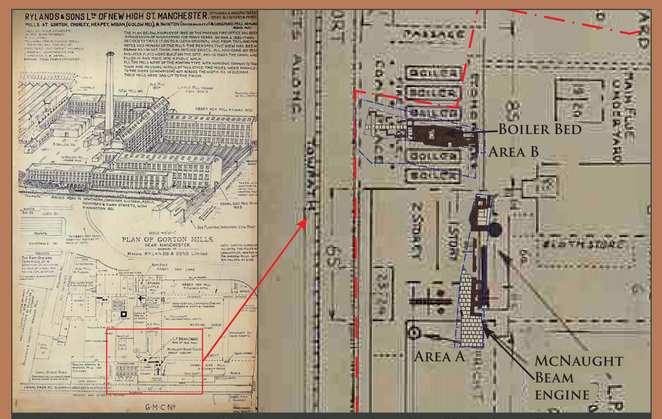
Extract from Hennet's map of 1830, showing the approximate position of the mill with the canal to the west

The influx of hundreds of workers in the early 19th century created a ready-made community which formed the basis of the modern settlement. The fortunes of the community were so closely linked with the mill that when it temporarily closed in 1840, much of Gorton was plunged into unemployment. Therefore, when John Rylands & Co. took over the mill in 1844, production could begin almost immediately with a full workforce drawn from the surrounding area.



An engraving from the 1840s showing the mill from the south and the canal to the west.

As one of the earliest integrated textile mills, Gorton was responding to the contemporary development of the power loom. Weaving could be mechanised rather than using the 'putting out' system where home weavers collected yarn from the spinning mills. This increased the spinning manufacturer's profits by adding weaving to their processing sites and mechanising all stages of production from the raw material to the finished cloth.



Fire Insurance plan of Gorton Mills produced in 1895. As well as a map showing where various activities took place within the mill, an isometric drawing shows the vast size of the mill complex. The Right hand image shows the location of the excavation trenches superimposed on a zoomed in and rotated area of the plan

An 1895 insurance plan of the mill shows further expansion with the premises comprising seven multi-storey blocks, a large weaving shed, two boiler houses (containing a combined total of nine boilers) and four separate engine houses and ancillary buildings. After the First World War (1914-18) ended there was a slump in the demand for cotton, and by 1935 the mill complex had been demolished.

Finds From The 2019 Excavation



1. Codd bottles (used for carbonated drinks) 2. Stoneware botanic beer bottle 3. Boots Chemist medicine bottle 4. Kay Atlas Brewery bottle 5. Longsight mineral bottle with cork 6. Wilson Brewery beer bottle 7. LP. Boden milk bottle 8. Poison bottle 9. Iron boiler fitting 10. Ceramic light fitting 11. Clay tobacco pipe bowl (not to scale)

Archaeological Excavations



Location of the 2019 excavation in relation to Gorton Mill House

Excavation of Gorton Mill has revealed important aspects of the industrial past of this sub-urban location. In Area B remains of the steam-raising plant was revealed. This took the form of a boiler bed and coal storage area possibly relating to the location of economisers - super-heated exhaust from the steam-raising plant to preheat water before it entered the boilers - and the remains of a flue. Several culverts and a cast-iron pipe were also found which were thought to have been used to supply water from the canal to the boilers.



The remains of the steam raising plant in the form of a boiler bed.



'McNaught Beam Engine' block

In Area A evidence of three cellar rooms were identified, including a storage area with iron doors. To the north, a large stone base complete with iron holding bolts and a channel thought to relate to the flywheel pit are thought to be the location of the 'McNaught Beam Engine' marked on the 1895 insurance plan.

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