

Workers Housing

'..the vast numbers of neat and comfortable cottages built by the late Sir Richard Arkwright and his son are far superior to the cottages of the cotton spinners built in the north of England.'

*J. Farey: Agriculture of Derby 1811-17
(Geologist and writer)*



No. 8 North Street, Cromford, one of a double row of cottages built by Arkwright for his workers about 1777. (From a survey made by the Ancient Monuments Society, the present owners of the property)

Plan of North Street
Workers House

Social Conditions - Children

SOURCE A

August 23rd. 1800

We went to church at Cromford. On each side of the organ a gallery where about fifty boys were seated. These children work in the week, and on Sundays attend a school.

They came to chapel and looked healthy and were well clothed and cleaned.

The boys go to church on one Sunday, the girls on the next. Whichever are not at chapel are at school.

*Cromford's Working Children
from the diary of Joseph Farington, 1800*

SOURCE B

In the evening I walked out to Cromford and saw the children coming from their work. I was glad to see them look in general very healthy. A boy of ten or eleven years of age told me his wages were 3s and 6d a week, and a little girl said her wages were 2s and 6d a week.

*Cromford's Working Children
From the diary of
Joseph Farington, 1800*

SOURCE C

Q: At what age do you admit children into your mills?

A: Not until they are 10 years old

Q: What are the hours of work per day at your mills?

A: Thirteen hours including meal times. From six to seven in the summer, and from seven to eight in the winter

Q: Did you ever observe if they were ill or their growth was affected by their work

A: I have never known any employed during the day but the rooms were not so well aired and so some may have been ill for that reason.

*Richard Arkwright (junior) answers asked by
Sir Robert Peel about child mill workers, 1816*

Festivals and Songs

Derby Mercury

25.9. 1778

The workmen, children, &c. at CROMFORD COTTON-MILL, were entertained by Mr Arkwright and they all walked in procession in their uniforms, accompanied by a band of music. A song composed by one of the workmen was sung. Song composed for the annual celebration of the Cotton-Mills at Cromford.

Tune:

Roast Beef of Old England

Ye numerous Assembly that make up this Throng,
Spare your Mirth for a Moment, and listen to my Song,
The Bounties let's sing, that our Master belong,
At the Cotton Mills now at Cromford,
The famous renown'd Cotton Mills,

Our number we count seven Hundred and more,
All clothed and fed from his bountiful Store,
Then Envy don't flout us, nor say any's poor, & c.

Ye know we all ranged in Order have been,
Such a Sight in all Europe sure never was seen,
While Thousands did view us to complete the Scene, & c.

Likewise for to make our Procession more grand,
We were led in the Front by a Musical band,
Who were paid from the Fund of that bountiful Hand, & c.

Ye Hungry and Naked all hither repair,
No longer in Want, don't remain in Despair,
You'll meet with Employment and each get a Share, & c.

Ye Crafts and Mechanics, if ye will draw nigh,
No longer ye need to lack an Employ,
And each duly paid, which is a great Joy, & c.

To our noble Master, a Bumper then fill,
The matchless Invention of this Cotton Mill,
Each toss off his Glass with a hearty Good-will,
With a Huzza for the Mills now at Cromford
All join with a jovial Huzza.



Views of Arkwright and Reactions

SOURCE A

'..Arkwrights machines require so few people they can be worked by children, with the assistance of an overlooker. A child can produce as much as ten adults.

Within the space of ten years from being a poor man he has become the Lord of the Manor, while thousands of poor women work a long day to card and spin and reel yards of cotton for 4 pence or 5 pence.'

1780 'An impartial representation of the case of the Poor Cotton Spinners' Ralph Mather

SOURCE C

Last Friday, at his house in Cromford, Sir Richard Arkwright, Knight, died; he invented and perfected spinning machinery. He gave jobs to many thousand families, the population increased and the country gained wealth. He contributed more than any other.

Based on Derby Mercury - Arkwright's Death 9th August 1792

SOURCE B

'..you expressed some fear about the riots coming to destroy the mills at Cromford. All the men in this neighbourhood will support Mr Arkwright to defend his mills. 5000 or 6,000 men, Miners, etc can be ready in less than an hour, to defend the works by which hundreds of their wives and children earn a living.'

A letter to a Gentleman of Manchester, published in the Derby Mercury, October 9th 1779

SOURCE D

25th

'Arkwright appears to be a man of great understanding and to know how to make his workers do their best. He not only gives money as rewards, but also fine clothes. He also gives two Balls at the Greyhound to the workmen & their wives & families.'

Diary entry 1781 Sylas Neville, The Diary of Sylas Neville 1767 - 1788