

Ainsworth looks like a quiet rural village now, but as well as farming, the people who lived here worked in the industries around and so we began a series of presentations under the title of "Industrial Ainsworth", in which we intend to look at weaving; the court case "Rylands v Fletcher" which put Ainsworth on the legal map; mining; and quarrying.

A summary of the marriage register for the twenty years from 1814 to 1834 shows the occupations of the grooms, many of whom were involved in these occupations, especially weaving. Handlooms were a prized possession, passed down through the family and it was interesting to see that it was indeed a family trade, with many of the fathers of the grooms also being weavers. In 1853 the vicar recorded that 1700 people lived in Ainsworth, mostly handloom weavers and small farmers. Of course, the women worked as well and the marriage register for the twenty years from 1894 to 1918 show that many of these women worked in the industries in and around the village, especially weaving.

The locals would often work outside the village; walking along Ainsworth Hall Road and Wood Lane to get to the mills on the new road; down Bury Old Road to those factories at Red Bridge and Brightmet; along Church Street to Moorside mill and towards Bury; across the wood path to Lowercroft; through Knowsley and top Lodge towards Affetside

The focus of the first of these talks was weaving, and Steve showed us the tithe map of 1838, especially the cottages which had "looms shops" - there was at least ten on Well Street alone. Paddock Leach was a 3 storey farm house with a purpose built loom shop on the top floor. He told us of the local inventions which led from handloom weaving in the cottages to industrial weaving in the factories - the weaving shed at Moorside Mill at the edge of the village and the others further afield.

He then looked in more detail at Moorside Mill - the layout and construction of the mill that was built in 1866; its various owners and the additional buildings that were added over the years; the demolition of the chimney and the final closure of the weaving shed in 1955. We saw internal and external photos of the derelict weaving shed taken when the site went on sale in 1998 followed by photos of its demolition in December 1999 and photos of the engine house, boiler house and mechanics shop that are still there.

