

Industrial Ainsworth

Ainsworth looks like a quiet rural village now, but as well as farming, the people who lived here worked in the industries around - weaving, mining, quarrying etc

The villagers would often work outside the village:

- walking along Ainsworth Hall Road and Wood Lane to get to the mills on the new road,
- down Red Lane to those factories at Red Bridge,
- along Church Street to Moorside mill and towards Bury
- across the wood path to Lowercroft,
- through Knowsley and top Lodge to the pits at Affetside

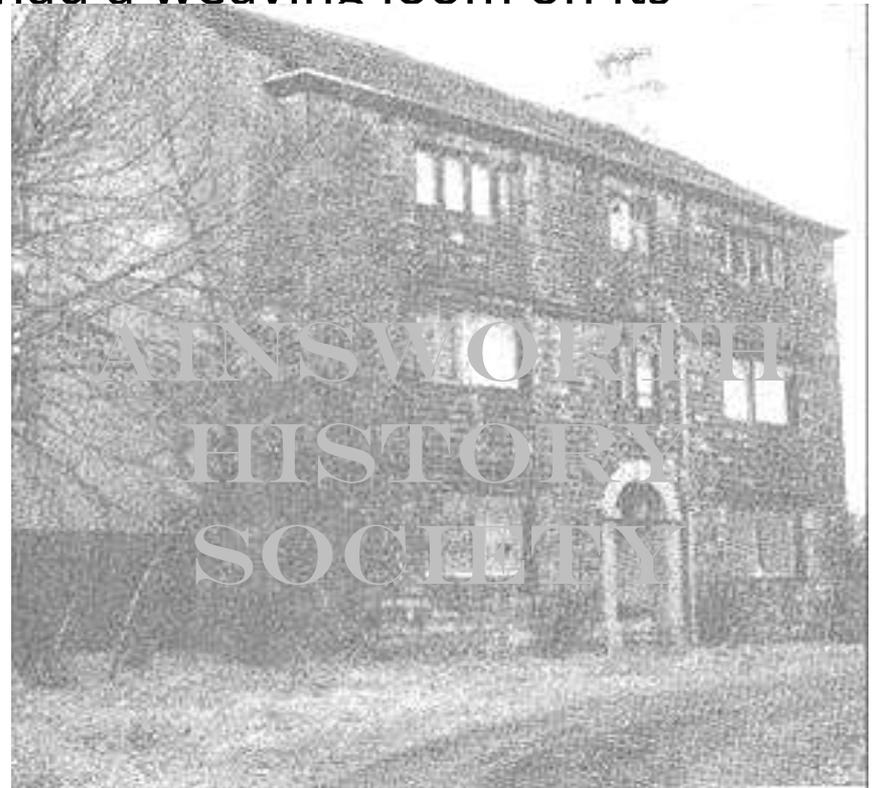
An analysis of the marriage register for the twenty years from 1814 to 1834 shows the occupations of the grooms, many of whom were involved in those industries

And in 1853 the vicar recorded that 1700 people lived in Ainsworth, mostly handloom weavers and small farmers.

And, of course, the women of the village worked as well

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

Many of the homes in the village had loom shops within them – the Tithe register of 1838 shows that there were at least ten on Well Street /Cotton Broad Row (where the present Day School is), with others in the village. The 17th century farmhouse at Paddock Leach (later to become the nurses' home for the Isolation Hospital) had a weaving loom on its top floor.



The cottages at the bottom of Knowsley Road are known as the Flemish Weavers cottages



Like many districts in Lancashire, Ainsworth has a textile history. John Wilson, a manufacturer of fabric fustian, came to live in the village in 1762. He was responsible for bringing to the area the middle-Eastern process of dyeing called “turkey red”, where the cotton was coloured a bright red which remained colour-fast after washing

The innovations in steam technology eventually resulted in the type of steam engine that enabled a weaving shed to be built on Cockey Moor at Moorside Mill, which was built in 1866 and had various owners until the final closure of the weaving shed in 1955.

In the 1870's full time pay in the mill was 5s, for working from 6am to 5.30pm – children, who started work at the age of 10 worked part-time (getting 2s 6d a week and spending the other half day in school) and went full time at the age of 13.

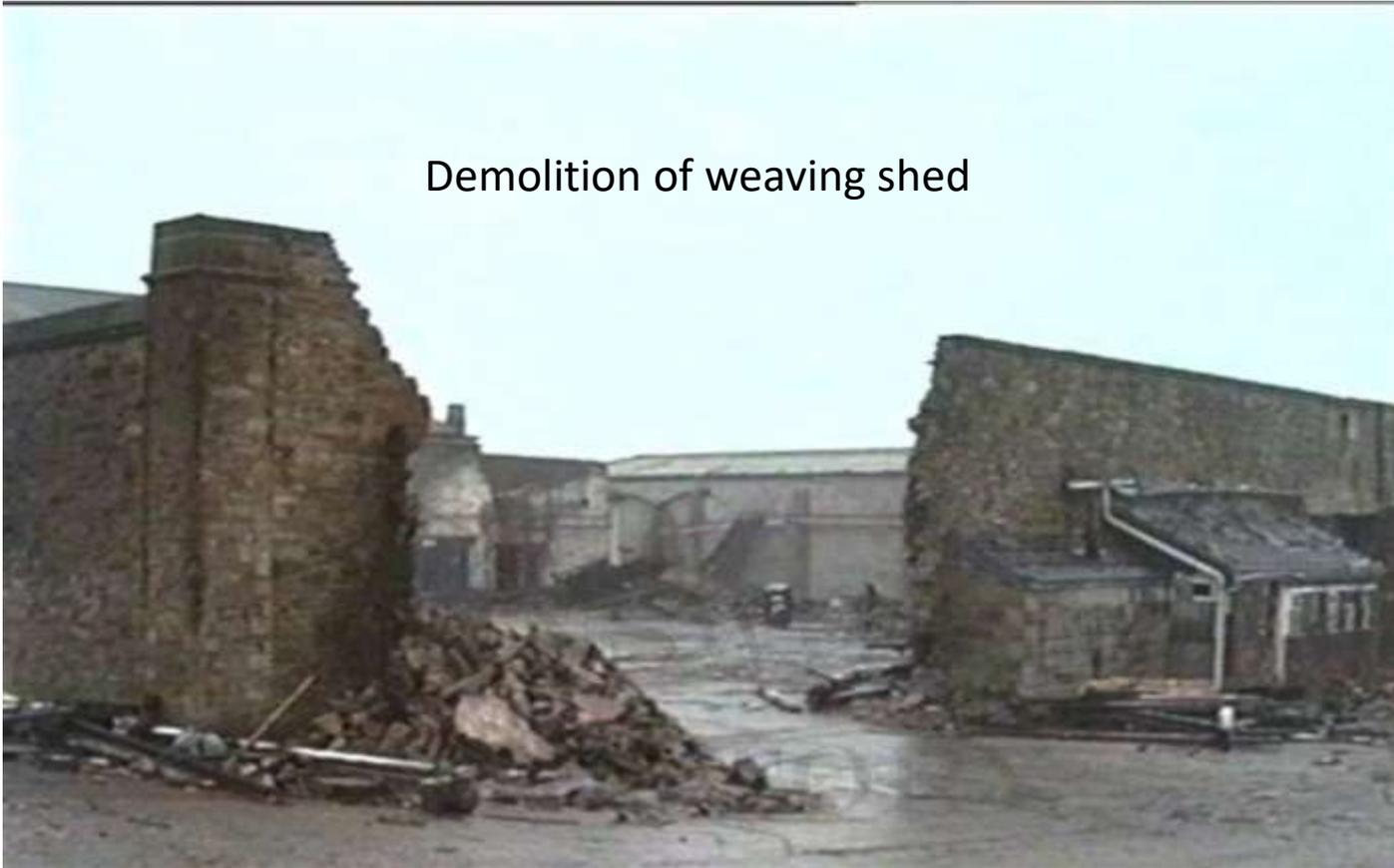
Derelict exterior of weaving shed



Derelict interior of weaving shed



Demolition of weaving shed



Remaining buildings



Steam Engine House



There was a Bleachworks at Red Bridge, which was built in the late 18th century

In 1808 it was 106 feet 7 inches long and 38 feet wide. There was a water wheel for power and it was serviced by a reservoir. The building consisted of “a chymical house, an engine house, a pan room, a bowk house and an area described as ‘the large building’ ”. A smaller room was used for housing and packing.

There was some mining in Ainsworth, even prior to the industrial revolution, but it was small scale



*The ancient lost landscape of Cockey Moor.
A relatively unknown coalfield possibly dating back to the medieval period*

Although it is known that the Romans used coal it is thought that they only dug it from where the coal outcropped at the surface

The Bell Pit system is said to be the earliest form of proper mining dating back to the medieval period and an examination of the area bounded by Cockey Moor Road to the north, Higher Pit Lane to the south, Starling Road to the east and Sumner Avenue to the west. reveals evidence of old abandoned bell pits. There was extensive “bell pit” shallow mining in the 18th century

With the bell pit system, a shaft was dug until the coal seam was reached. On Cockey Moor it is said to be between ten and fifty feet from the surface.

The miners would excavate around the shaft in all directions. No support was used and the mine was simply abandoned when the risk of collapse became too great.

Another pit was then dug nearby with the spoil being thrown into the first pit, leaving a circular depression where the first pit had been.

Walking round this site shows remains of the Bell Pit shafts and these circular bell pits are very clear from satellite pictures



One Coal Pit Shaft was sunk at a date after the construction of Higher Pit Lane – resulting in a U-shaped diversion, which, again, can be clearly seen on satellite pictures

Raised banks around a circular pit suggest a horse-gig (or whim) has been used. (possibly an 18th century coal pit)

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Split coal can be found on the surface



This early form of coal mining (bell pits and open outcrop) in the area was followed by more traditional methods

The first “real” mine was sunk in 1777, followed by another in 1778 when a new underground canal (or sough) was completed

Many others followed, including sites near Sumner Avenue, (where a brickworks later stood) and the winding shaft was at the top of Harley Avenue. Miners were reckoned to make good money - £7 to £8 a week in the 1870's

There was also the Redhouse colliery off Bury New Road, which featured in the internationally recognised legal ruling in the court case *Rylands v Fletcher*

Cockey Moor Colliery

The junction of Bury/Bolton Rd and Grindsbrook Rd was the site of this once important coal mine.

Thought to have been started in the middle of the seventeenth century, the mine followed the coal seam (Hinds) in a north westerly direction until it met the bell pits on Cockey Moor.

Unlike the bell pit system this mine was what might be described as a more traditional mine not unlike modern coal mines with a single entrance and the mine being supported as the coal was excavated

In 1861 there was a fire at Cockey Moor Colliery. Sixty miners in the pit escaped, helped by the manager Mark Todd.

The manager went back into the pit to save a pony and was suffocated – his body being left in the pit

This may have been the one referred to by Walter Taylor (the Postmaster in the early 1900's) when he tells the tale of the miner who, when Cockey Moor pit was on fire, went into that hell of fire and gas not to save human life, but to save the pit ponies

The Cockey Moor Culvert

Flooding has always been a problem in coal mining

The miners on Cockey Moor solved this problem in the 1790's by digging a five foot diameter culvert or sough 200ft down from the surface from the Cockey Moor Colliery to drain into the river Irwell some two miles away.



And there were other pits in the area

In 1848 there were Brightmet Colliery (2pits) Crompton Fold Colliery (2 pits) and New House Colliery. Little Lever had 46 pits at one time

And on the 1939 map, an old shaft is shown opposite Moorside Mill, where the estate now is

There were two main quarries in Ainsworth – one on Church Street and one at the top of Delph Lane, with smaller ones at Oaks Nook; opposite Titus's; near Ainsworth Hall; near the junction of Cockey Moor Road and Starling Road; and further afield on the new Road.

The quarries at one time employed many villagers and the noise of the saw as it cut through the big pieces of stone could be heard through the village.

There were also a number of gravel pits, including at Pim Hole and Traddle Hole

The 1806 enclosure map shows the Church Street Quarry, whereas the 1850 map shows both main quarries (the one on Church Street being the bigger and deeper) and two north of Delph Lane

Work at the quarry on Church Street ceased suddenly when it filled with water. It is said that it filled so quickly that the quarry men didn't have time to remove all their barrows, trucks and tools.

The 1893 map shows both main quarries but the one on Church Street shows a large worked-out area filled with water. The quarry north of Delph Lane was still active, with shafts and cranes marked on the map. The small quarry east of the Hey Club House is filled with a pond by this time

The gritstone of the quarries was of good quality

Demand for the stone needed to build Bury Barracks was so great in the 19th century that a narrow gauge railway was used to transport the material into town

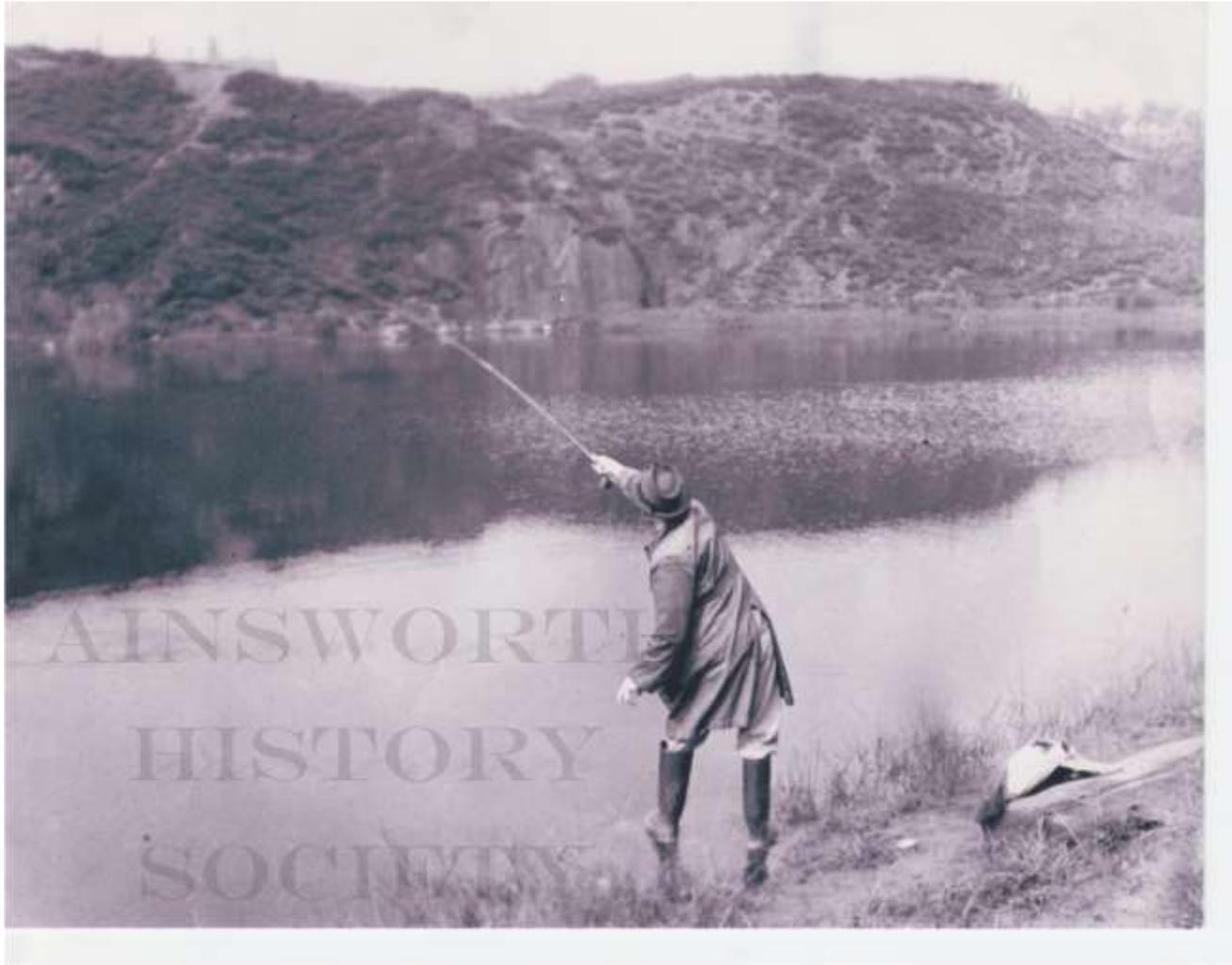
It is probable that it went along the wood path at a slight incline

Walter Taylor (the sub-postmaster in the 1900's) tells of the area when it was filled with water.

He talks about the sheer drop of 50 to 60 feet when looking over the wall on church Street, with cliffs on the other side of about the same height.

It was very deep almost to the edge and he says that the more adventurous boys would walk along the top of the narrow wall

And it became a popular fishing spot, but it was also the scene of tragedies



And in the 1960's it was filled in and was grassed over

The council had been attempting to fill up the Delph by tipping, but it was a very large quarry and only certain types of refuse could be deposited there.

But a scheme had finally been arranged with the National Coal Board to tip colliery waste and to create a bank alongside the wall.

As part of the agreement, the council had to pay the additional transport costs to divert the loads to Ainsworth.

It was estimated that 8,000 tons of colliery waste would need to be put in the Delph to create a bank alongside the wall.

Much more waste would have been needed if the broken up gravestones from St Thomas' Church had not already been placed there.

Filling in the quarry (taken from Knowsley Road)



Houses were built near both quarries for the quarrymen and their families— known as club houses.



The ones on Church Street were “back to back” houses – three stories, with one family living in the front 3 stories and another in the back



Delph Lane Quarry

Robert Brooks (1), born in 1796 had two sons, Thomas and Robert (2), who both worked in the quarry at Delph Lane, with Robert later becoming quarry master.

In 1850 Robert Brooks, the quarry owner, lived at Anthonies and Jonathan Smith, another quarry owner, lived at Bull Fold

Robert (2) had 1 daughter and 7 sons. The first son was also named Robert (3) and he became the quarry owner

Mr Robert Brooks, (born on 13th January 1821), quarry master, of 7 Delph Lane, started the Methodist Church in Ainsworth

Brothers William, John and Walter all worked in the quarry and John became the quarry master and lived at Hey Cottage

There is mention of Robert (3) living in Hey Club Row and then at Quarry House, but there is no indication of where Quarry House was

The owner of the quarry was said to be like a father to his men – a grey haired old patriarch, with long white beard and true Christian spirit, he was tolerated to those who worked for him and was never known to sack a man.

Delph Lane Quarry Men – Rob Brooks, Grandfather Brooks, Will,
Robert Brooks Senior, Bob, Dick Morris



The weighbridge was situated at Brooklyn House on Delph Lane

The horse and carts had a problem turning into the quarry at the top of Delph Lane and when the quarry was in full operation, there was a sheer drop from the narrow lane



Delph Lane
Quarry in 1974



Radcliffe corporation started to tip refuse to fill in the discontinued quarry and there became a problem when refuse began to fall into the water, creating a terrible smell – one resident was so fed up with the smell she filled a bottle with the stinking water and went to the council office and removed the bottle stopper and said this is the smell we have to put up with please do something about it. So eventually they drained the water from the delph before dumping anymore rubbish.

Quarrying was dangerous work and accidents were frequent and tragedies were not unknown – in one case, the headstone for a child was made from the stone which killed him

