

SAMUEL OLDKNOW AND
THE ARKWRIGHTS

*The Industrial Revolution at Stockport
and Marple*

by

GEORGE UNWIN, M.A., M.Com.

Professor of Economic History in the University of Manchester

with Chapters by

ARTHUR HULME and GEORGE TAYLOR, M.A.

MANCHESTER - - AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON, NEW YORK, &C. LONGMANS, GREEN & CO.

1924

Publications of the University of Manchester
No. CLXII.

PREFACE

THREE leading contemporary authorities on the early history of the cotton industry and of the factory system—Robert Owen, William Radcliffe, and John Kennedy—agree in attributing considerable importance to the achievements of Samuel Oldknow, who first turned the new spinning inventions to full account by the production of finer cotton fabrics in successful rivalry with the East. In his delightful autobiography, Owen has told us how, soon after he became an apprentice in Mr. McGuffog's shop at Stamford, Oldknow's British Mull Muslins began to displace those of Indian manufacture and were eagerly bought up by the nobility at half-a-guinea a yard. His subsequent account of Oldknow's beginnings as a master spinner and of how "the handsome and imposing mill at Mellor" proved a stumbling block to the ardent young Welshman's earliest ambitions will be found recorded in this book in Owen's inimitable style.

This cotton mill, which passed into the hands of the Arkwright family, was destroyed by fire in 1892, and has since that date been a picturesque and interesting ruin. A detached portion, however, lying by the river-side and within a stone's-throw of the residence built by Oldknow, was not burnt down, and though in a dilapidated condition has been used in parts for stabling or for minor industrial purposes. A body of Austrian prisoners was set to work there during the late war. The distribution of some eighteenth-century weavers' pay-tickets by an adventurous boy scout to casual passers-by led Mr. Arthur Hulme to obtain permission to explore the upper floor of this building, and here on January 1st, 1921, when I joined the search at his invitation, we found a great number of letters, papers, account books, and other business records of every kind and size, covering the whole floor of a large room and partly hidden from sight by

PREFACE

several inches of dust and debris. To all appearance the records had lain there for a century, and as the room since the fire had lost its windows they had suffered much from the weather and were in many cases indecipherable. The recovery, cleansing, and classification of the remainder, which filled several sacks, was the work of many weekends on the spot, and occupied the leisure of the discoverers for months afterwards.

From the first it was clear that by a piece of almost inconceivable good fortune the records of Oldknow's previous business as a muslin manufacturer at Stockport had been deposited at Mellor, so that the documents afforded a unique illustration both of the final phase of the "domestic industry" and of the earliest phase of the factory system. A long and vain attempt to interpret the factory records on the assumption that the fragmentary time books, wage sheets, etc., related only to the Mellor mill ended in the discovery that part of the records were those of a mill simultaneously erected at Stockport, whilst others concerned a bleach and print works previously established by Oldknow at Heaton Mersey; and a further series, which perhaps contributed most to the reconstruction of the whole, related to the very beginnings of Oldknow's enterprise at Anderton, and to the management of the branch there after his removal to Stockport and Mellor.

Inquiries made by Mr. Hulme in Mellor and Marple, where the tradition of Oldknow's achievements is still very much alive, showed that our interest in the factory and its records had naturally been anticipated by some of those whose fathers or grandfathers had been concerned in its working and management, and they kindly placed at our disposal many documents which furnished important links in our investigation. We owe especial gratitude for this fundamental service to Mr. E. Furniss, the agent

PREFACE

of the Arkwright estate; Mr. John Taylor, of Marple Ridge; Mr. John Smith, of Marple; and Mr. H. Wheeldon, of Didsbury.

Of the laborious task of bringing into some kind of intelligible order thousands of letters or other separate documents and upwards of fifty more continuous records, of transcribing or summarising the more important, the greater part was undertaken by Mr. Hulme; but valuable help was also given by Mr. G. Taylor, M.A., by Miss F. Collier, M.A., Research Assistant in the Commerce Department of the University, and by Dr. A. Redford, Assistant Lecturer in Economics at Liverpool University, each of whom brought the light of wider research to bear on the documents. Some portions of Mr. Taylor's thesis on the handloom weavers of the Stockport district are included in the present volume and its appendices. For supplementary material drawn from various sources, but chiefly from the advertisement columns of old Manchester newspapers, we are indebted to the generosity of friends who are engaged in investigating other aspects of the social history of Lancashire, and especially to Mr. G. H. Tupling, M.A., of Haslingden, Mr. A. P. Wadsworth, of Manchester, and Rev. W. T. Bushrod, of Chorley.

An attempt was made after a year spent in collecting, arranging, and interpreting this mass of material to give a preliminary account of it in the pages of the *English Historical Review*, under the title of "The Transition to the Factory System." In this article, portions of which with the corrections and modifications necessitated by subsequent research have been embodied in the present book, the important matter of the relations of Oldknow to Sir Richard Arkwright and to his son Richard had to be dealt with conjecturally for want of documentary evidence. This elicited an extremely kind offer

PREFACE

of assistance from the late Mr. F. C. Arkwright, the lineal descendant of the great inventor. A few months before his death he invited Mr. Hulme and myself to Willersley and laid open to our inspection the title deeds of the estates at Mellor and Marple, the various mortgages executed by Oldknow, and the deeds relating to the partnership between Oldknow and the second Richard Arkwright which was formed in 1800 and dissolved in 1805. William Radcliffe, in his *Origin of the New System of Manufacture*, says that he acquired his Hillgate premises from the firm of Oldknow and Arkwright. Our records for this period contained no direct evidence of such a partnership, and the statement made in my article that the evidence at our disposal seemed to show that neither of the Arkwrights exercised any internal control over Oldknow's business is to some extent justified by the clause in the partnership deed relieving Arkwright from the responsibility of taking any active part in the concern, whilst a further clause, requiring Oldknow to submit regular accounts, casts a new light on the series of monthly statistical statements which had been one of the most interesting of our discoveries.

Another conjecture made in the article may be regarded as completely disproved by further investigation. The fact that Samuel Oldknow's father was buried at Rivington Chapel, and that his tombstone describes him as "of Nottingham, late of Anderton," led me to the mistaken supposition that the family had migrated from Anderton to Nottingham. Further evidence, kindly communicated to me by the Rev. T. C. Porteus, M.A., Vicar of Coppull, who is investigating the history of the parish of Standish, shows conclusively that the migration was taking place in the opposite direction, and incidentally furnishes another link in the story of Nottingham's early connection with the cotton industry.

PREFACE

In writing the chapter on the Industrial Revolution at Stockport I was very greatly assisted by Messrs. Johnson, of the firm of Henry Marsland Ltd., whose works occupy the oldest and most interesting industrial site in the town, and the title deeds of the Park Mills, placed at my disposal by the firm, have made it possible to trace the continuous history of the transference of the manorial water power from corn-milling to logwood-grinding and silk-throwing, and from silk-throwing to cotton-spinning.

Similar valuable aid was rendered to Mr. Hulme by the Rev. C. G. Mylrea, B.A., who facilitated his access to the parish registers of Marple, and thus enabled him to compile a list of some three hundred and fifty surnames borne by the inhabitants of the district before the building of the factory. This list was essential for the interpretation of the industrial records of over a thousand persons, for which he found materials in wage books and other sources, and which served as a basis for our chapter on the new community at Marple.

That I have been building upon foundations laid by Professor Daniels in his *Early History of the Cotton Industry* will be sufficiently obvious; and I have also to acknowledge much helpful advice from my other friends and colleagues, Mr. T. S. Ashton, M.A., Mr. H. S. Ferguson, M.Com., and Mr. H. M. McKechnie.

For permission to reproduce the portrait of Samuel Oldknow which serves as a frontispiece to the volume we are indebted to Colonel Wainwright, of Brabyns House, Marple; for the drawing of the Methodist Chapel and School to Miss May Malburn; for the drafting of Mr. Hulme's map of the estate at Mellor and Marple to Mr. C. H. Prince, and for the other maps and illustrations to my wife.

A list of the more important records discovered or con-

PREFACE

tributed has been placed at the beginning of the book, and as detailed references to them are impracticable an attempt has been made to indicate on this list the manuscript sources for each chapter of the book. The whole of the records (except those relating to purely local history and such letters as are here published in full) have been deposited by Mr. Hulme, for further investigation, in the Lewis Library of the Department of Commerce at the University, and, along with the records of the historic firms of McConnel, Greg, and Peter Stubs, form a unique body of materials for the history of the Industrial Revolution in Lancashire, Cheshire, and Derbyshire. The publication of researches into each of these sets of records is already in progress, and it is to be hoped that other old firms who possess similar title-deeds to a place in history will deposit them in the archives of the University.

GEORGE UNWIN.

Christmas 1923

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Preface	v
List of the Most Important Records found at Marple	xiv
CHAP.	
1 Muslin Making at Anderton	1
2 The Industrial Revolution at Stockport	21
3 The Handloom Weavers at Stockport and Anderton, by G. Taylor, M.A.	42
4 The London Warehouseman	55
5 The Yarn Problem : Negotiations with Arkwright	69
6 The Crisis of 1787-88	85
7 Expansion and Decline of the Muslin Manufacture, by G. Taylor and G. Unwin	103
8 Spinning Mills at Stockport 1788-91	115
9 The Estate at Mellor and Marple, by A. Hulme	135
10 The Crisis of 1792-93 : Oldknow and Drinkwater	147
11 Community Building at Marple and the Apprentices, by G. Unwin and A. Hulme	159
12 Oldknow's Paper Money	176
13 Mellor Mill at Work	194
14 High Farming at Mellor, by A. Hulme	204
15 The Marple Lime Kilns, by A. Hulme	215
16 Roads and Bridges : Peak Forest Canal : Church Building, by A. Hulme	222
17 Samuel Oldknow : The Man and his Work	236

CONTENTS—*Continued*

APPENDIXES	PAGE
A. List of Goods Manufactured by S. Oldknow, compiled from his Costing Book . . .	243
B. Specimen Costings, from Costing Book .	243
C. Percentage of Goods Manufactured 1784-94	244
D. List of Patterns worked up in the Finishing Room 1788	245
E. Sales Book	245
F. Oldknow's Customers <i>c.</i> 1789	246
G. Prices of Weaving	247
H. Radcliffe's "New System" in Oldknow's Stockport mill	248
INDEX	252

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
Samuel Oldknow from a Portrait . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Plan of Stockport in the 18th Century	22
Plan showing the Race for Water Power at Stockport	120
Notice about damage to Larch trees	136
Mellor Mill and Reservoir	146
Oval Stone Tablet at Mellor	163
Facsimile of Shop Note	183
Do. do. do.	185
A Notice to Workpeople	198
The First Methodist Chapel at Marple	235
Plan of Marple and Mellor, showing boundaries of Oldknow's estate	<i>at end</i>

LIST OF THE MORE IMPORTANT RECORDS
FOUND AT MELLOR

MUSLIN MANUFACTURE AT ANDERTON AND STOCKPORT

Chapter I.

Ledger, 1782-86, containing accts. of creditors and servants, not of customers.
Account Book, 1782-4, containing Day Book of Sales, 1782-4; Cash Book, 1783; Balance Sheet, Stocktaking, List of Weavers and Spinners for 1783; Petty Expenses of S. O., 1783-4.
List of Yarn Deliveries in 1784, on sheet of brown paper.
Accounts of Carriers, Bleachers, etc., for 1782-4.

Chapter III.

Weavers' Ledger, complete with exception of occasional pages for most of 1784-5, fragments of other ledgers for 1786 and 1790.
Weavers' Taking-in Book from Nov. 1786 to May 1787.
Winders' Ledger, 1788
Day Books of Sales for 1786-7, 1788, 1789-90.

Chapters IV. and V.

Letters of S. Salte, R. Arkwright, S. and T. Oldknow, 1786-88.

Chapter V.

Spinners' Ledger, 1787-8: Accounts of about 50 small spinners in Stockport District.

Chapter VII.

Ten Warping Books, 1787-94: A record of the daily output of 13 mills.
Finishing or Cutting Frames Book: Record of work on 30 frames, March to July 1787. Also Time Book of about 50 girls.
Fragments of Daily Accts. of Sizing and Finishing Output for 1788.
Costing Books: One fairly complete, and fragments of another, undated.
List of Piece Goods wanting places in Sales, 1788.
Stocktaking Records, 1789-93.
Reeds and Healds in Weavers' Hands without Work, 1789. Stock of Weft. Stock of Materials in Weavers' Hands, Aug. 21th, 1790.
"Stock of Weft and Twist, 1790." Stock of Weft, Twist, and Warp, no date.
"Stock taken Sept. 1st, 1791": Gives an account of the materials on each of the machines in the newly-built Hillgate factory. Also Stock of Materials at the Carrs Shop. (Chap. VIII.)
"Stock of Reeds and Gears, Aug. 1st, 1792"
"Stock taken July 1st, 1793": Piece goods, twist, and weft.

LIST OF THE MORE IMPORTANT RECORDS
FOUND AT MELLOR—Continued

Chapter VII.—Continued

List of Weavers, with Materials in hands of each, 1793: Another list classified according to their products.
Prices of Weaving, March to June 1791.
Weavers' Pay Tickets, 1789-94: A great many daily bundles; two complete months in 1794.
Lists of Goods delivered from Croft, 1791-3: Separate sheets, each with a day's record.
Anderton Fortnightly Accounts of Payments to Spinners and Weavers.

SPINNING AT STOCKPORT

Chapter VIII.

Carrs Spinning Accts. Five Wage Lists, Oct. 1789—Feb. 1790.
"Sent to Mr. Oldknow," a daily account of output, May 1790—Oct. 1791.
A Book of Orders for low counts of yarn.
A Cotton Deliveries Book.
Time Book for Hillgate Factory for most of 1792 (does not include piece-work spinners).
Spinners' Weekly Accounts for piece-workers, Mar.—Nov. 1793.
"Manufacture to Spinning, Dr. Acct.," Dec. 1791 to Dec. 1793.
Stockport Cotton Pickers' Wage Book, 1790-1.

Chapter X.

Letters of Richard Arkwright junior, S. Salte, H. Norris, 1791-4.

SPINNING AT MELLOR

Chapters XI. and XII.

Time Books of Workers in Mellor Factory, 1793-4 and 1794-5.
Two Pickers' Wage Books, 1792 and 1795.
Shop Notes for 1793-4 (detailed account in Chap. XII.).
Book of "Notes Delivered Out," with dates of return, Dec. 1793 to April 1794.

Chapter XIII.

Statistical Statement of Output for January 1797, with Estimate of Costs.
Daily Statistics of Output from May to Sept. 1797.
Stock of Cotton in Mill, Sept. 1st, 1798.
Fragment of Ledger with leading accounts for 1801-4.
Two detailed Output Books for Years 1806-1812.
Twenty-one Monthly Sheets of Mill and Estates Statistics between Feb. 1804 and Feb. 1807, numbered 61 to 100.
Four Sheets and Two Books of Fortnightly Wage Accounts: the sheets relate to 1803-4-5; the books to June 1805—April 1806, and Oct. 1810—July 1811.
Nine Monthly Sheets of Output and Cost Statistics, for Dec. 1811 and Jan. 1812.

LIST OF THE MORE IMPORTANT RECORDS
FOUND AT MELLOR—*Continued*

Chapter XIII.—*Continued*

May, Oct. to Dec. 1812, on same pattern as that for Jan. 1797.
Nine Monthly Sheets of Wage Statistics—two for 1811, seven for 1812.
Three Pocket Memorandum Books with notes of debts, orders, and contracts,
1803, 1805, 1807

MISCELLANEOUS MELLOR AND MARPLE RECORDS

Chapter IX.

Detached Accounts of Farming and General Labour, 1787-90.

Chapter XI.

Wages Paid at Mellor: 18 weekly and fortnightly lists, 1791-3.
Three Flesh Books, 1792-3; Three Coal Books, 1792-5; Three Gardening
Books, 1804-09-10. Contain accounts of supplies to workpeople and others.

Chapters XIV., XV., and XVI.

Book containing Directions for Outdoor Labour, Farming, Stone-getting
Building, etc., 1797-8.
Book of all Wages for Outdoor Labour for 1799-1800.
Wage-tickets for Outdoor Labour, in fortnightly packets, spread over the years
1801-12.
Canal Permits, 1797-1805.
Canal Accounts.
Canal Toll Accts.
Wage Book of Outdoor Workers, 1809.

Chapter I.

MUSLIN-MAKING AT ANDERTON

1782-4

IT has generally been claimed by those who have won wealth or distinction in commerce or industry that they were of yeoman origin, and as the term yeoman has been employed loosely for many centuries to cover all enterprizing holders of land who were not gentlemen, serfs, or labourers, the claim might be made out in many cases if the facts were known. But as most Englishmen of whatever origin who have made money in trade have become land owners, and as it was quite common down to the 18th century to carry on farming in conjunction with a town business, the reference to yeoman origins as a basis for large social or economic generalization is of dubious value. The close connection between the two fields of enterprize is however an extremely important aspect of social and economic history which will receive ample illustration in the course of our narrative.

Thomas Oldknow, the grandfather of Samuel, died in 1787 at an advanced age at Calverton, a village some six miles to the north of Nottingham, and it is not improbable that he was born there and held some land. But it is fairly certain that in middle life he carried on business in Nottingham and very probable that the draper's shop kept by his son Thomas in 1780 had been established by him sometime before 1750.

About that time another son, Samuel, the father of our hero, was probably sent to Anderton in Lancashire to learn the business of a manufacturer, as we find him in 1754 at the age of 20 described as a tradesman of that place, in the register of his marriage with Margaret, daughter of Thomas Foster of Anderton. At Roscow Low, one of the leasehold estates inherited by his wife

SAMUEL OLDKNOW

from her father, who died soon after, Samuel Oldknow carried on his business and erected a new building for the purpose, which still bears his initials and the date 1759.

In that year he died at the early age of 25 and was buried at Rivington Chapel near Anderton, where there is a tombstone bearing the inscription "Samuel Oldknow of Nottingham, late of Anderton." The widow remained on her estate at Roscow Low with her three children: Samuel (born in 1756), Thomas, and Elizabeth, and later on married John Clayton, a farmer. The records give us many glimpses of the Clayton family. We hear of three children: Margery, Sam, and John. The last-named joined Samuel Oldknow at Mellor and succeeded to the management of the mill after his death in 1828.

In course of time young Samuel was apprenticed to his uncle Thomas at Nottingham. In 1781, when in his twenty-fifth year, he was taken into partnership with him, and shortly afterwards it was proposed that, whilst retaining his connection with the Nottingham business, he should return to Anderton and set up as a manufacturer of cotton goods and fustians.

The Nottingham shop would furnish the beginnings of a market, but there was to be a saleroom in Manchester, and Samuel might, as a further string to his bow, undertake an agency for Nottingham hosiery. There can, however, be little doubt that the production of muslins, which within eighteen months had become the essential feature of the enterprize, was from the first under consideration. Professor Daniels in his *Early English Cotton Industry* has shown how favourable in 1781 the conditions were to such an undertaking. The disallowance of Arkwright's patent for carding as a result of the trial of that year, and the almost simultaneous publication of Crompton's invention, gave an immense stimulus to the manufacture of the finer cotton fabrics.

MUSLIN-MAKING AT ANDERTON, 1782-4

It took me [says the inventor of the Mule] from 1778 to 1779 to finish it. From 1779 to the beginning of 1780 I spun upon it for my own use both warp and weft. In the beginning of the year 1780 I began to spin only and left off weaving . . . I had not used it constantly more than Six Months before I was beset on every side by people of various descriptions from the distance of 60 miles and upwards as well as my neighbours . . . whose curiosity was excited by the superior quality and fineness of the yarn I spun hitherto unknown, and which at that time the trade was much in want of. In the end of 1780 it was made public.

The Mule was first known as the Muslin Wheel, and the inventor himself later described it as "that piece of mechanism that has produced and increased one of the first manufactories in Europe, viz., the fine Muslin and Cambric."¹

To succeed in the production of muslins had long been the highest ambition of British manufacturers. An attempt had been made at Paisley in the days before the Union, but it had failed to meet the test of Indian competition. There is a tradition that the first English muslins were woven at Anderton in 1764, by Joseph Shaw, and this suggests the possibility that the business set up by Samuel Oldknow the elder in 1754 had been connected with an experiment of this kind. If so, the enterprize of his son in 1782 may be regarded as suggested to some extent by filial piety. But the emergence in the Bolton district of a supply of fine yarn, for the want of which previous attempts had failed to achieve permanent success, must have prompted many ingenious persons to renewed experiments, and it would be as difficult to disprove as to prove the claim made in the *Manchester Courier* for April 18th, 1829, and renewed in the *Bolton Journal and Guardian* for January 13th, 1922, that the

¹ Daniels: *Early English Cotton Industry*, pp. 168-9.

SAMUEL OLDKNOW

muslin manufacture was permanently established by Thomas Ainsworth at Bolton in 1780. All that can be claimed for Samuel Oldknow is that he first achieved eminence in the industry. In the last half of the 18th century a draper's shop often provided a stimulus to new industrial enterprize. Robert Owen and David Dale shared this starting point with Samuel Oldknow, and many of the founders of the great warehouses of Manchester had received the same training. Owen attributed the success of his former employer McGuffog, who had commenced as a travelling packman, to his skill as a buyer rather than as a salesman. It was the draper's business to find out where the best goods were being made, to stimulate their production, and to secure the handling of them. In this way he might become either a manufacturer like Samuel Oldknow or develop a great warehousing business like the Potter Brothers of Manchester, who set out about the same time from a similar draper's shop at Tadcaster.¹

The fortunate survival of a number of letters rescued one by one from the factory debris at Mellor, and of two of Oldknow's earliest account-books with only a few pages missing, enables us to follow in some detail his operations as a manufacturer from his settlement at Anderton about Midsummer 1782. The letter bearing the earliest date supplies the best introduction to what follows and sheds that kind of light on the subject which the historian is always seeking and seldom obtains. It is from a business friend of the Oldknows in Manchester whose advice has been asked concerning the proposed enterprize. But if the ambition of making muslins had been already conceived, it was thought wiser to conceal it.

¹ E. Meinertzhagen : *From Ploughshare to Parliament*.

MUSLIN-MAKING AT ANDERTON, 1782-4

Samuel Hardman to S. Oldknow :

“ MANCHESTER, *December 22nd*, 1781.

“I duly received your favor of the 2d Currnt and observe you have come to a final resolution to embark in the Cotton Manufactory—in which I sincerely wish you success. As you say, you certainly will have many difficulties to encounter, and I think your first Plan shou'd be to engage an *honest Man* for a year, or as long as you think proper, that understands the manufactory well in all its different branches, and as soon as you can by application and attention to make yourself Master of the Business. You mention you intend to divide your time between Anderton and Manchester. I think one day in a Week wou'd be enough to Stay in Manchester, at present, and you might save some expence by being at Anderton the remainder of the week, besides being in the way to attend immediately to making of Gray Goods. You mention you cou'd Wish a Warehouse and Lodging together near the Center of Business, but I think you are not apprized that such an one as you describe wou'd be a very high Rent—and tolerable Warehouses are very difficult to be got—but shou'd I see anything I think wou'd suit, will advise you.

“I think your intention of selling Hosiery Goods wou'd not answer, few of them wou'd be sold here, and to a Person that bought your own Manufactory wou'd have an appearance as if you dealt in many things foreign to the Cotton Trade— . . . The Fustian Trade is often varying tho' the first Principles are much the same.”

The first six months were obviously a period of experiment. The weavers whom he was recruiting for his muslin manufacture had at first to be employed on the articles they were accustomed to make. These were the fancy cotton goods of which James Ogden in his famous

SAMUEL OLDKNOW

description of Manchester in 1783 has attempted an enumeration—Ververets and Velveteens, King's Cords and Queen's Cords, Herring-bones and Buff Jennets, Dyed Pillows and Waistcoat Jeans, etc. Not until November does the despatch to several customers of three pieces of Ballasore handkerchief suggest that Oldknow's career as a muslin manufacturer is beginning. During the three months from September 24th (when the record of sales begins) to Christmas about £400 worth of piece goods were sent out. Half of these were disposed of by the Nottingham shop and by a firm of linen drapers in Mansfield, and one of the remaining quarters was taken by Mr. Samuel Mather, who is probably the silk and fustian manufacturer of King Street mentioned in the Manchester Directory of 1788. As Oldknow spent far more on cotton than on yarn at this time, he must have found work for a number of small spinners in the neighbourhood of Anderton. He likewise opened an account with Messrs. Peel and Yates for printing and with a fustian calenderer for the finishing of his goods.

In the beginning of 1783 a new epoch opens in the affairs of Samuel Oldknow. The partnership of uncle and nephew ceases, though the uncle continues to have important financial relations with the nephew and to offer friendly advice. The chief market for the goods produced is no longer found in the Nottingham connections or even in Manchester. From this time onwards two London firms, Messrs. S. & W. Salte and Messrs. Parker, Topham & Sowden, take about two-thirds of the rapidly increasing output of Samuel Oldknow's manufacture. But—most important of all—it is from the spring of 1783 that Oldknow becomes primarily a maker of muslins. Within three years he was recognised as the first in the kingdom.

Though the detailed record of his sales for this year is wanting, a ledger containing the accounts of his

MUSLIN-MAKING AT ANDERTON, 1782-4

creditors, an account-book containing a cash account of receipts and payments, a full inventory of his stock-in-trade in August 1783, a list of the spinners and weavers in his employ, and an account of his personal expenses furnish full particulars of the expansion of his business, and enable us to form a sufficiently clear idea of its commercial and industrial organization. But the central clue to the reconstruction that is taking place is to be found in Oldknow's correspondence with the two London firms above referred to.

Oldknow, who had already improvised a warehouse in Anderton in a building adjacent to the house of his stepfather, had entered, in January 1783, into occupation of a salesroom in Manchester on the premises of Mr. Cririe, a merchant in St. Ann's Square, at a rental of £13 a year. Here he accumulated a stock of his goods for show, and rode up weekly at the recorded expense of four or five shillings to push sales and to buy cotton weft and twist. But no sooner were his weavers adequately trained, and a steady flow of muslin products begun, than he discovered that London, and not Manchester, was the most effective market for his wares. The travelling partners of the two firms of Parker, Topham & Co. and S. & W. Salte, who were eagerly looking out for the latest novelties in Manchester goods for the spring trade, had prospected a gold-mine in Oldknow's muslins, and each of them was offering to take more than he could produce. Oldknow was in a dilemma. His artistic tastes and his impulsive and speculative temperament urged him to throw himself unreservedly into the manufacture of muslins, but apart from a possible lack of fine yarn and skilled labour there were two serious obstacles to the expansion of the business. His output was limited by the smallness of his capital and credit, and the muslin manufacture was liable, not only to all the fluctuations of

SAMUEL OLDKNOW

a seasonal trade, but to a sudden and severe burst of competition whenever a large cargo of Indian muslins came into port. Whilst, however, he needed considerable advances of capital and the guarantee of a steady market for his goods, he did not wish to purchase these advantages by a complete sacrifice of his independence. A draft of a letter to S. & W. Salte on April 22nd shows him cautiously feeling his way in this negotiation. Each of the two firms was willing to make advances of capital, but each bargained for an exclusive agency. Oldknow compromised the matter by dividing the London agency between them, and they continued to take two-thirds of his entire output for a number of years.

Draft of letter in S.O.'s handwriting :

"MR. MOWER,

"SIR,

"Pardon me Sir, I take this liberty of requesting of you some friendly information, but previous [to my saying of what nature it is] it may be proper to say who I am. I am the same Samuel Oldknow that was in partnership with Thos Oldknow of Nottingham in 1781 & 1782 and now I am a resident of Lancashire in the Cotton Manufacture [just beginning to sell the produce of my manufacture]. Muslins is an article I have made. I have recd. considerable orders from your late partners Parker & Topham and have sent 'em to the amount of £150. It is a great satisfaction in business to know the ground one acts upon and I shall esteem it a particular favour you will inform me whether Parker and Topham are safe people to do business with. Whatever you think proper to communicate to me on this head you may depend on silence with respect to your name."

T.O. junior to his nephew S.O., probably in March or April 1783 :

MUSLIN-MAKING AT ANDERTON, 1782-4

... I have been in London again . . . to you last on Bro Johns affairs. Sam Salte desires you will send him Samples of what you have coming forward as soon as you can. I am off opinion he will take all you can manufacture, if you can make them like what you sent mee now. With regard to what you hint about the House in Watling Street I cannot say anything about it. I only know that whenever I have call'd at the warehouse he hath always been on the spot & I always think that hath a good look.

"I shall send you this week by way of Derby to be forwarded by coach to be at Manchester on Saturday Cash £100.

"I purpose being in Lancashire some time this month. I am not in want of many goods and I think it will be better in the print line rather later . . .

"With regard to the Bond to Mr. Abraham Crompton, you had better get a bond filled up to his own mind leaving out the dates till it is executed."

S.O. to S. & W. Salte (?) (draft) :

"ANDERTON, *April 22, 1783.*

"GENTLEMEN,

"By this days coach I have forwarded you a small assortment of Muslins (invoice inclosed) agreeable to the directions you was so obliging to give to my Uncle on my account. I am sorry it has not been in my power to send them sooner. I have not sold three times more than the quantity I have now sent you and they are principally gone to a house in London who visited me hear previous to the receipt of your order. They want to take all my manufacture. I have just recd. a letter from them which seems to be written in anger because I do not send them fast enough. I am equally as much attached to the service

SAMUEL OLDKNOW

of your house as theirs, but upon my present plan of my Muslin Manufacture I cannot serve anyone with many. (((I will just speak to the diff't sorts of goods I make and to the present situation of my Muslin Manufacture with a view to have your opinion on the british Muslins and that I may judge whether it will be prudent to go wholly into that manufacture, for [to] do it capitally it will very much alter my mode of proceeding.)))

“To do anything capital in the Muslin business I must very much alter my mode of proceeding. As yet I make other articles in the fustian line. Now if the Muslin trade will answer at all it is of that magnitude as will engage all my attention as (((as five times more money than I))) a business of itself and to go into that line entirely—to serve a London connexion—I should have no occasion for a warehouse at Man'r or to give a day or two attendance every week there (((upon the sale of goods and to give up these one ought to))). If I could be certain of the Muslin trade continuing with us hear I shd not require a moment to determine what to do. The prospect is at present very propitious (((but at a time when East India Muslins are exceeding scarce and in all probability will not long continue so—it may not be))) but how will it be when East India Muslins are more plentiful. I do think there are some sorts of very broad muslins we have the lead in and in all others we are daily improving—fine spinning is what we are most shot of & even that we are on the road to procure. The finishing part is what we have long been striving to master and in this I wish you to say what you think of mine. I do them myself and the people I employ in that department are under an obligation not to disclose the secret. It is in the ydws [yard-wides] you are to judge by for in them we have made an improvement in the selvages. I shall esteem it kind you will give me your opinion on the whole as soon as convenient for

MUSLIN-MAKING AT ANDERTON, 1782-4

what you say on the subject will be an important argument with me on stepping further into the business. I take very great delight in the manufacture and shall always be anxious to excel. I am not making any more $5/4$ Stripes, $6 \text{ \& } 7/4$ is what I mean to make in future—the narrow cord is not fine enough to answer—it is very expensive and I intend to drop making unless you think such an article will take, Waiting your answer, I am—

((())) = crossed out.

S.O. to S. & W. Salte (draft) :

“*May 1783.*”

“Your esteemed favor on the 26 of last month I recd. in due course in consequence of which I have sent as by Bill annexed. I have gone this afternoon to Manchester and will forward them to morrow as at foot— $6/4$ & $9/4$ Stripes and Checks I have not any ready, indeed I have very few made—but I am setting more Looms to work as fast as possible in order to supply you. I have added 4 demi small checked Cords more than you ordered—if you think that article will not sell—will thank you to say so in your next and I will certainly drop the making of them—You may depend on my always doing the best in my power for you—at present materials are too high to make Muslins very low. I buy no warps at any cheaper rate than of Messrs. Arkwrights & Co. & their Twist is too dear to make them at any lower prices. I see a way to procure materials that will at least render each ps at $7/-$ less—but cannot accomplish my design without a little time—I thank you for the priviledge you allow me in Drawing upon you, and when I have occasion to make use of it will regularly advise you—

“I wish for a personall conversation with you on the subject of Trade, Muslins in particular, and if my business will allow me a fortnights absence my intentions is fixd for a journey to London in the Month of September.”

SAMUEL OLDKNOW

S.O. to Parker & Topham :

“ ANDERTON, *May 17, 1783.*”

“ DEAR SIRS,

“ Your favor of the 12th inst., I have this day received. You say you have made some remarks on some of my Handfs being charged rather higher—I do assure you I have sent you none but what I believe would have sold for $7\frac{1}{2}$ pr ct in the Manchester Market, nay I am certain of it. . . . you expect I am sending the whole of my manufacture to your house and on that account you have declined an offer. I shd recommend you to accept of any offer that is likely to be of advantage to you—I do send you a considerable share of my manufacture—but I cannot engage the whole to your house—this I will promise you that no one shall be charged lower than you are. I thank you for the liberty you allow me in drawing upon you. I have a few of every kind coming forward but I cannot get supplied with fine materials to go on with—or should be able to send you more—this I trust will not be the case long.”

S. & W. Salte to S.O. :

“ LONDON, *May 24, 1783.*”

“ We rec'd the muslins and neckcloths etc & also your letter—to make short of the business we wish you could spare time to come to Town—we can do more by conversation than letter & settle all our future plans & be assured we mean to make it a Mutual Interest. We have a Muslin Sale next month—we can, if you come to London, shew you Patrns and give you directions which a letter cannot convey properly. With respect to any assistance in our power, you may comand it—we wish to encourage merit wherever we find it—but we profess a personal attachment & Friendship for you. Do send the $6/4$ & $7/4$ chks & stripes & as many neckcloths as you can. We

MUSLIN-MAKING AT ANDERTON, 1782-4

rather wish to take the whole you make, as another person interfering may be of no advantage to either. Give us an answer soon & and let us know when we may expect to see you.”

T. Oldknow Junior to S.O. :

“ NOTTINGHAM, *May 14, 1783.*”

“ DR. NEPHEW,

“ I have been with Mr. Robinson and he says he cannot send any twist till next carrier when he will send you a part off the order by Spencer Car. paid to Mancr. He says building &c hath swallow'd so much money that at present he sells for ready cash. I told him he might have the cash when the goods was sent off allowing the usual disc't & that if the article suted, you would be glad to be supply'd weekly which he could do.”

Having learnt something of the external relations of the new enterprize, we may now turn to consider its internal economy. Ample data for this purpose are provided by the recorded stocktaking of August 1783. But first as regards the warehouse at Anderton, in which the business was centred in 1783, there is an interesting letter, undated but clearly belonging to a later period, asking the landlord for a lease on the ground of improvements effected by Oldknow, probably in 1784. A plan is attached to the letter showing that the original structure adjoining Mr. Clayton's house was 31 feet 2 inches long by 19 feet 6 inches wide, and that the addition made by Oldknow had practically doubled the accommodation at a cost of £90. That an eminent manufacturer who claims to have established a new industry should regard £90 as a considerable outlay shows how small a part fixed capital in buildings or machinery as yet played in industrial enterprize.

INDEX

- Mason, H., 64, 183
 Mather, Samuel, 6
 Meikle, Andrew, 209
 Mellor, 2; survival of letters at, 4; spinners, 36, 70; purchase of land and water power in, 85; Wm. Radcliffe born at, 112; laying foundations for mill at, 123; Owen's description of Mellor mill, 124; mill sole survivor of O.'s industrial undertakings, 127; low counts spun at, 128; village, 135; estate boundary, 141; Podmore farm, 142; new industrial regime at, 147; wages bill in 1792, 151; Oldknow concentrates his enterprise at, 156; increase of population at, 160-2; building of mill at, 162-4; number employed, 166; parish apprentices at, 170-175; shop notes issued at, 179, 181-193; mortgage of S. O.'s Mellor properties, 194; mill statistics of, 195-7; fines for using bad language at, 198; estate development, 200; Richard Arkwright, Jun. acquires possession of, 202; output of mill, 203; farming and estate improvements at, 204-213
 Merino sheep, 206
 Mersey, 23, 125
 Middlemen, 55-6
 Migration of labour, 162
 Monthly statements, 194-7
 Mortgages on Oldknow's estate, 140, 156-8
 Mule, the, 2-3, 69
 Municipal reform, 37
 Muslin, made at Paisley, 3; at Anderton in 1764, 3; by Ainsworth at Bolton, 4; by Oldknow, 6; London market for, 7-9; competition of Indian m., 10; m. sale at Salte's, 12; made at Stockport, 43-5; strong demand in 1785-6, 59-60; observations on, sent to Council for trade, 62; competition of Scotland and Lancashire, 64-6; glaze given by cylinder, 73-4; sale by commission of, 76; improvement of manufacture, 79, 82, 83; parcels sent to Rouen and St. Petersburg, 90; large cargo from India in October 1787, 96; John Livesey & Co. open warehouse for, 97; Oldknow's sale room in Manchester, 103; sales abroad, 104; form nine-tenths of O.'s output in 1789, 105; subsequent decline, 1792-3, 105-6; factory system introduced into production of, 106-10; wages paid for weaving, 112-4; finest goods made at Paisley, 133
- NAPOLEONIC War, 190; effects on prices, 212-3; effects on cost of S. O.'s lime burning, 216
 Navigation inn, 210
 New Lanark mills, 71, 159
 New Marple, 210, 221, 225
 New Mills, 229-30
 Nightingale, Mr., 197
 Norbury smithy, 231
 Norfolk, 34
 Norris, Henry, 149-51
 Nottingham, 1, 2, 6, 8, 13, 17, 18, 80, 85-7, 91
 Nursery for trees and plants, 211
- OAK bark, 212
 Oats, growing in Mellor, 208
 Offerton, 223, 230
 Ogden's *Description of Manchester*, 5-6
 Oldknow, Joseph, 85-6
 Oldknow, Margaret (S.O.'s mother), *see* Clayton
 Oldknow, Samuel, Senior, 1
 Oldknow, Samuel (of Mellor), apprenticeship at Nottingham, 2; sets up in Anderton, 3-5; makes muslins for London market, 6-12; his warehouse, stock, and workers,

INDEX

- 13-15; negotiations with Arkwright and first loan, 16-20; sets up at Stockport, 42; expansion of his business, 43-5; relations with his weavers, 46-8; his managers, 49-54; business relations with S. & W. Salte, 56-7; S. Salte's correspondence with him, 58-68; relations with spinners, 69-70; negotiations with the Arkwrights in 1786, 72-83; correspondence with W. Strutt, 79-81; further loans from the Arkwrights, 85; death of his grandfather, 86-7; buys Mellor estates, 88; visits mills at Holywell, 94-6; his letters about India sales, 96-8; visits Dr. Cartwright's factory at Doncaster, 98-9; supports Protectionist agitation, 100; reorganises his business, 1787-8, 103-4; develops factory system in his muslin-making, 106-110; his weavers' wages, 110-114; sets up as a master spinner, 123-4; reasons for this, 125-6; large plans of 1790, 127-8; spinning at Carrs shop, 129-30; his Hillgate factory, 132-3; failure in high counts, 133-4; acquires estates at Mellor and Marple, 135-41; his beginnings as an improver, 142-3; letters from J. Clayton, 143-5; financial difficulties in 1791-2, 147-8; his debt to Arkwright, 149; loans from Henry Norris, 149-151; crisis in 1792, 151-2; engagement with Miss Drinkwater, 153-5; abandons all his schemes but Mellor, 156; founds a community at Marple, 160-3; finds work for fathers, 167-9; employs parish apprentices, 170-3; was a humane employer, 173-5; his cash supplies from banks, 177; his shop notes in 1793-4, 181-9; continued during the war,
- 190-3; state of his business of 1797, 194-7; offers his Stockport property for sale, 199-20; his partnership with Arkwright, 201; increasing indebtedness, 202; character of his spinning business, 202-3; chairman of Peak Forest Canal Co., 223; Peak Forest Canal shares held by, 227; brought up a dissenter, 232; initiated a Freemason, 232; letter to Bishop of Chester, 233; death and burial, 234-5; his work and personality, 236-42
 Oldknow, Thomas (S. O.'s grandfather), 1, 86-7
 Oldknow, Thomas (S. O.'s uncle), 1, 2, 6, 8-9, 13, 85, 86
 Oldknow, Thomas (S. O.'s brother), 2, 17-18, 87, 96-9, 106, 151
 Oliver, John, 40
 Osiers, 213
 Outram, Benjamin, 228
 Oxen used for draught, 205
 Owen, Robert, 4, 71, 117, 118, 124-7, 133-4, 147, 152-8, 159-60, 170
- PAISLEY, 3, 133, 236
 Parish apprentices, 170-5
 Park mills, 23-5, 119
 Parker, Robert, 156
 Parker, Topham & Sowden, 6, 8, 12, 58, 104
 Payne, Tom, 222
 Peak Forest Canal, 194, 215; toll, 217, 220; opening, 223; tramway, 226
 Peel, Robert, 82, 205, 250
 Peels, the, 72, 75, 250
 Peel & Yates, 6
 Phillips, Sir G., 125
 Phillips, John, 104
 Phillips' *General History of Inland Navigation*, 226
 Phoside, 206
 Pickford's waggon, 60-8, 77, 79, 83
 Pleasley, 98

