

Newby Mill in the news.

It may seem an odd decision now to build a cotton mill at Newby in the early second half of the 19th century. Especially since at that time when many huge cotton mills were springing up one after another in the growing towns on the south side of Pendle Hill, and also in Clitheroe. People and families were not only migrating from the surrounding villages, including Rimington, into these towns to work in the burgeoning cotton industry, but emigrating too. Its peak of population was in the 1840s. It stood at 722 in 1841 and had fallen to 290 by 1901.

However the constant handloom weaving cottage industry and experience with an earlier cotton mill at Howgill meant there were local skilled and talented people, old and young, to be tapped into for the workforce needed to run and maintain the machinery. (And it has to be presumed there was more water flowing in the beck beside the mill than does today to meet the needs of any steam power required.)

Please see Mike Rothwell's study of the mill in the Industrial Archaeology section of this website. What follows here is some of the history of the mill through the regional newspapers.

Preston Herald Saturday 16th May, 1885

Newby Cotton Mill – During last week the small cotton mill which has been running for many years at Newby, near Rimington, has been stopped in consequence of bad trade, the occupier having given up the mill, and it has not yet been again let. This is serious for the district, many families being thrown out of employment. The mines in the district have also been doing badly of late, and are now only employing a small number of hands. It will then been seen that the prospects of the working people in the district is not of a hopeful character.

Craven Herald April 3rd 1936 - In their 50 Years ago column [1886]

It is announced that the Newby Cotton Mill, situated at Newby, near Rimington, has been let to Messrs W & J Radcliffe, of Great Harwood. It is expected that the mill will commence running at once. It is about 12 months ago since the neighbourhood was thrown into a depressed state, as the lead mines also stopped working at the same time. There has been much distress in the district during the past winter, many families being entirely out of work.

Clitheroe Times 15th Jan 1890 Rimington Mill Fire

Great Commotion was caused in Rimington, on Friday evening last, by the alarm being spread that Newby Mill was on fire. The report proved to be correct, and there were quickly half the inhabitants of the district flocking to the place. The mill is only a small one, and is the only one in the district. It is run by Messrs J. Cook & Sons of Clitheroe. There is a reading room attached to the mill, and on Friday evening, at about half past seven, some of the members of this reading room noticed flames on the second storey of the mill. An alarm was at once raised, and it was found that the fire had originated in the call room on the second floor, and had got a good hold of the room. A large number of willing hands with buckets, at once set to work to subdue the flames, and as there was a good supply of water in the lodge, which was very convenient, they were soon able to have a beneficial

effect. A hand pump belonging the mill was also very useful, and by one way and another the fire was extinguished in about two hours. It was supposed the fire was started by a match dropped whilst the lamps were being lighted. On Saturday morning, about eleven o'clock, the fire again broke out in the same room, but it was extinguished in a short time. The damage done was chiefly to healds and machinery, and amounted to about £150 which is covered by insurance. The affair caused great excitement in the neighbourhood, for a good many of the inhabitants have to depend on the mill for their means of livelihood.

Clitheroe Times Jan 9th 1891

The Restarting of Newby Mill – Messrs Haythornthwaite & Bairstow, of Nelson, have taken over Newby Mill and will commence running it at once. One of the partners has already taken up his residence in the village. It is expected that the workpeople who have had to remove for work, will now return to the looms, and the village once more assume a more animated aspect.

Clitheroe Times Apr 8th 1892

Newby Mill - Newby Mill is once more resounding with busy hum of machinery. Over a hundred looms are at work and the remainder are being 'gated' as quickly as possible. The present occupants Messrs W & R Ratcliffe of Victoria Mill, Nelson, have purchased the place and there is now a better prospect of the mill being run successfully than has ever been the case before. The same firm ran the mill some months ago but at that time they were simply tenants and matters are now on a much more satisfactory basis.

Clitheroe Times Aug 16th 1892

Closing of Newby Mill – We regret to state that Newby Mill was again closed on Wednesday last, owing to the difficulties in which the employers, Messrs W & T Radcliffe, have found themselves. A large number of villagers have consequently been thrown out of employment and will be compelled to seek work elsewhere unless the mill is running again, of which at present there appears to be no prospect.

Clitheroe Advertiser and Times May 8th 1903

Rimington Improvements – The clerk [of Bowland Rural District Council] had written Mr Hargreaves, with regard to the road at Newby Mill, and had received a letter saying that instruction had been given for a temporary fence.

A resolution was also submitted from the Rimington Parish Council recommending that Messrs Hargreaves' offer to give land to widen the road at Newby Mill, three feet eight inches, subject to the Council rebuilding the wall, be accepted. There was also a recommendation for further widening the highway, and a proposal to give sufficient hard dry material to raise the culvert to a height of 18 inches, and level the road so as to ease the brow...

The article also discussed what wall stones would be required at a cost of 2s 6d per cubic yard. It was decided the work be done, taking two feet off the top of the brow at the whole cost est. @ £20 exclusive of rolling the road.

Plans for three cottages for Mr Simpson at Newby Mill, were passed.

NB. Besides the few remaining visible flagstones and quorn stones Mike Rothwell mentions in his article about Newby Mill, the above mentioned culvert was probably totally rebuilt using the stones from the mill. The late Mrs Mary Bairstow told of the mill stones being used to raise height of the culvert which is substantial higher than 18" now, and the bed of the stream under the culvert is flagstones.

Brian Stott February 2021