

## CRESSBROOK MILL 1810-1835

By M. H. MACKENZIE

CRESSBROOK mill was closed from January 1809 to May 1810, after the bankruptcy of Barker Bossley & Co. Samuel Simpson had now moved from Bakewell to Dunstall Lodge, Tatenhill, Staffordshire, another Arkwright property, and he wanted to get rid of Litton Frith and the cotton mill. John Leigh Philips and Francis Philips, cotton spinners of Manchester, took a lease of the Frith for 37 years as from 25 March 1810 at a rent of £82 p.a.<sup>1</sup> It was obvious that a firm of the Philips' standing was not interested in the small Arkwright mill, but in the site, which was worth buying as a business proposition and for its shooting and fishing. This intention was apparent from the wording of the lease, which contained a detailed description of each parcel of land. Four years later the freehold was purchased by Francis Philips for £5,500;<sup>2</sup> Samuel Simpson had made a profit of £2,400, which repaid him for the capital he had sunk in the Frith. He had walled off two acres round the cotton mill, which were now called Cressbrook Green. It is clear from the references to gardens, nut trees, fruit trees and certain paths, which led to the fishing areas on the Cressbrook, that the property had been well developed. This was the end of Cressbrook's association with the Arkwrights and with Bakewell; in future the mill would be connected with Tideswell and Manchester.

After bankruptcy in 1800 William Newton seems to have spent the next ten years in Cheshire or wherever he could find employment in the neighbourhood, "touring about into a variety of places & societies". Unfortunately we only know two or three of these places, Macclesfield, possibly Stalybridge<sup>3</sup> and Dane-in-Shaw, Congleton, where in 1809 he was managing a water spinning-mill for Ellis Needham's partner.<sup>4</sup> On the latter's death the mill was sold; in May 1810 he was free to accept the Philips' offer and for the next twenty years he was manager of the Cressbrook mills. It is not possible to be certain about the basis of remuneration; he presumably was paid a salary, but he was responsible

<sup>1</sup> Cressbrook papers, 22 February 1810, Derbyshire Record Office, hereafter abbreviated as D.R.O. Robert Arkwright, second son of Richard Arkwright II, was now manager of the Bakewell mill.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 March 1814. John Leigh Philips died in this year, but the firm continued to be known as J. L. Philips or Philips Bros.

<sup>3</sup> The Newtons owned a water spinning-mill at Stalybridge. (Will of William Newton junior, 9 July 1851, Lichfield.)

<sup>4</sup> He may have taken managerial posts, when the Arkwright water-frame was widely superseded by the mule, which was made by specialist firms.

for certain expenses and had financial interests, which he seems to have been free to pursue. The account book for the building of the Wye mill has survived, one section of which is headed: "Account of Money lent Will<sup>am</sup> Newton at sundry times by J. L. Philips & Bros." He could obtain temporary accommodation for various projects and did not have to depend on a bank for a loan; in this respect he was in a better position than Ellis Needham or Barker Bossley.<sup>5</sup> At first he found life dull: "I live here secluded from the world," he wrote to Montgomery in February 1811.<sup>6</sup> "I have been here since May last, and have not seen either Magazine, Review, Poem, Essay, except what I have read twenty times." Two months later Mr. Middleton, the visitor, came to inspect the mill. It was on this round of visits that the apprentices at Litton had complained of long hours and poor food and that William Newton had got a very satisfactory report.

After the purchase of the freehold in March 1814, the building of the big mill, or Wye mill, was begun<sup>7</sup> in October 1814 and workmen arrived at Cressbrook. From this date to the middle of 1826 some of the rough drafts of the Newtons' letters to Francis Philips have survived.<sup>8</sup> This correspondence records enterprising industrial development, happy relations with the apprentices, the evasion of the act of apprentices and serious trouble over settlements in Litton and recruitment in London.

Before the McConnells in the 1850s made the outer road with its gentler slopes, bad communication with Tideswell presented Newton with difficulties, particularly during the building programme. From the time of his return he seems to have had his eldest son, William, with him. When the completion of the Wye mill was in sight, he brought James and Henry into the business, James to scour the workhouses of England for suitable apprentices and Henry to keep the books. Edward, the second son, is mentioned in the correspondence, but there was no special post for him. One of Newton's problems was to organize the regular payment of the men's wages, for Philips Bros. were often late with their drafts. On 19 March 1815 he wrote to the firm: "Circumstanced and situated as I am in a host of workmen, it must at a glance appear to you that money is always wanted — if I have not, I cannot pay it. Men who labour for their bread must be paid. I do everything in my power to accommodate everyone." The smooth running of the business depended on regular and quick communication with Manchester. The books went by mail coach, cotton by canal to Chapel-en-le-Frith and then by cart to Cressbrook, or, if speed was needed, by cart all the way. Sometimes stocks at Chapel accumulated, sometimes the mill was "quite without". "The post-office keepers" at Tideswell were very unco-operative, "neglecting or refusing to deliver our letters to the boy sent for them." The Newtons

<sup>5</sup> Cressbrook papers, D.R.O.

<sup>6</sup> *Shef. Lit. & Phil.*, 36-226, Sheffield City Library.

<sup>7</sup> D. Ternent, *Journal of Industry and Archaeology*, II, Cressbrook mill, 21-5, 82-5, August 1965.

<sup>8</sup> The following account is largely based on Dr. R. S. Fitton's notes, taken from the Newton letter books; he has very kindly allowed me to use them.

probably did better if the boy met the Manchester coach at Ashford. In snow-storms the roads and hill tracks had often to be dug open every day, so that the carts could reach Chapel. Considering the difficulties involved in Cressbrook's isolated position, the Newton brothers kept communications open fairly well.

Meanwhile William Newton, junior, who was not troubled by a poetic temperament, was thinking about modern machinery for the new mill. To judge from his correspondence, unlike his father, he derived great satisfaction from the mechanical problems of a cotton mill. Hitherto Cressbrook had been equipped with water frames only, but now there was to be expansion in the quantity and variety of the yarns produced. Throstles, mules, large jennies, and the equipment which went with these machines, were needed. On 2 March 1815 he wrote to Francis Philips: "The new erected Factory and Machinery of Sheffield<sup>9</sup> is now offered for Sale, the Machinery would suit this place if it could be bought at a reasonable price." On 15 May he could report with satisfaction: "There was a many purchasers but the machinery went off low." He had bought what he wanted and rejected what he could make "better and cheaper". The new mill, together with the old Arkwright mill, was to be worked by the Wye, not by the Cressbrook. The firm obtained a lease of the waters from the duke of Devonshire and in the autumn the water-wheel was fixed in position, but with considerable difficulty, because the river-bed of the Wye consists of gravel and loam to a depth of about twenty feet. William Newton, junior, was delighted: "Yesterday we set the new wheel to work — everything works uncommon well. It is impossible for anything to work better." In December they were too cold to do much spinning, but in January of the New Year he could reassure Manchester: "We have got the steam pipes compleated . . . the steam pipes answer extremely well." The big mill was built and modern machinery was installed; it now remained for young William Newton to learn to use this machinery to advantage. On 3 October 1816, he wrote: "We are reeling this week as quick as we can, but it is a new business to us which will take some time before they will be expeditious." In the following spring he hoped to have jennies and throstles at work, "as soon as I have had a little experience of the expence of Mule Spinning". Even when experienced, William remained an experimenter. In December 1818, he reported: "I have at last hit upon the method of spinning short cotton", and in February 1821: "Our 21 thread this morning looks very well. I picked this week bits from every bale I opened for it, which has improved it, so I shall continue it as it is the best we ever made." The jenny weft was unsatisfactory, so the jennies were sold off. He was always trying to find new lines, which would utilize the factory's products. He suggested making heavy stockings for men "such as are made at Litton . . . our

<sup>9</sup> The Sheffield cotton mill had been burnt down twice, in 1792 and 1811, and twice rebuilt. It had belonged to J. Middleton, possibly of Tideswell. When it was rebuilt for the second time it was filled with mules and throstles, which, before being used, were sold off. The building was taken over as a workhouse.

own 30 Mule is right". Then the costing followed: "They sell for 3/6 per pair when bleached." He was a good technician: after a visit to Cromford to study the principles on which the Arkwrights' scutching machine worked, he produced his own "blower" for the Cressbrook carding-room.

In these letters the interest is centred on the apprentices; there are very few references to adult workers, the men at the mules or at the water machinery. The one clear reference suggests a grievance: "Our spinners have made a turn out, but they will be glad to come in again." This is not enough evidence to prove that the Newtons did not get on with the men at the mill. In 1823 young William Newton asked Francis Philips to build six workmen's cottages, but the latter was not prepared to do this. The Newtons themselves provided the Ravensdale cottages, known to later generations as "Newton's folly", presumably because they were less attractive than the McConnel cottages, but for the date when they were built they were adequate.

The build up and maintenance of a labour force was in the hands of James Newton. A large number of apprentices was always needed to supply a comparatively small number of adult spinners with prepared cotton, but at Cressbrook the ratio of juvenile labour to adult labour was unusually high.<sup>10</sup> When William Newton returned to Cressbrook in May 1810 he probably got some of his sixty parish apprentices from the workhouse of St. James, Westminster, but, with the opening of the Wye mill, he needed over a hundred more children. From the autumn of 1815 James Newton had to work hard, visiting the better run orphanages and workhouses in Liverpool, Chester, Bristol and London. Wagon loads of apprentices began to arrive at Cressbrook, but, as the new apprentice-house was not finished until 1817, temporarily the boys must have slept in the attic, which runs the whole length of the Wyedale mill. Meanwhile they had to be fed, and in November William Newton, junior, wrote to Manchester: "I have had 30 Apprentices from London, they are fine healthy Children. The expences upon them will be about £66, but in 3 years there will be about 63:0:0 to receive from the Parish the Children came from, so that it will bring the expences to about 3:0:0, but in the mean time I shall be much obliged to you for a little assistance in paying for them." Two days later: "I will thank you for £50. I will be as frugal as I can, but we have so many hands to be in readiness for the new mill that the Spinning will not support them."

But there were serious problems ahead connected with the employment of parish apprentices: government intervention was expected in defence of the latter and the township of Litton, remembering the experience of Taddington, was becoming apprehensive about the rates. On 27 July 1816 William Newton, junior, wrote to Francis Philips with the disturbing news that Sir Robert Peel's act for apprentices was published: "I have had a letter from Jim at Bristol, he has seen the new act for

<sup>10</sup> Factories Inquiry, R. Com., 1st rep., 1833 (450), XX, 24.

regulating apprentices. It enacts that after the first of October no Child shall go more than 40 miles from home and that not without the consent of its parents and in other respects I believe it is very vexatious. I shall not fail to profit by the time clause." We can see the Newtons' point of view; they were dependent on parish apprentices, preferably from a London workhouse, and they were conscious of their own rectitude in dealing with them, but they could not understand the justice of Sir Robert Peel's argument<sup>11</sup> that a poor child ought not to be cut off from his parents or foster-parents — perhaps for ever — by distance, and that the centre of this objectionable traffic in young people was London. The Overseers of the Poor claimed the right to apprentice the children of any family receiving relief. The new law<sup>12</sup> introduced stricter controls and laid the onus for their enforcement on four justices, two in the child's home district and two in the district to which he was to be sent. They were responsible for making inquiries as to the suitability of the prospective employer, for obtaining the consent of the parents or guardians, for seeing that there was reasonable communication between the home and the new place of work, for supervising assignments to new masters and for enforcing the 40-mile limit, which was to be absolute for London children, but which, at the discretion of the magistrates, could be waived in respect of a small distance for children outside the London area.

The effects of this legislation on isolated cotton mills in Derbyshire and Cheshire can be summarized. The Newtons in future could not legally take parish apprentices from London, a prohibition which came into force in the very year in which the Wye mill was approaching full production. Samuel Oldknow at Mellor needed some apprentices, but he was not as dependent on pauper labour as the Newtons, because there had been time for a settlement to grow up round his mills. The Christies of Edale broke the law and took parish apprentices, when needed, from Hull and Edinburgh to supplement free labour from Castleton. The act inflicted less hardship on the Gregs, who were well placed at Styal to find free labour in Cheshire and were within forty miles of the Liverpool workhouse.<sup>13</sup>

Pauper labour was not cheap, when the employer had to accept a proportion of children, who would never earn their keep, but who had to be fed until they were twenty-one years old. Masters were trying out the experiments of short contracts and the payment of wages or pocket money, so that they could get rid of unwanted hands within a reasonable time and establish better discipline through a system of fines.<sup>14</sup> From the correspondence it is clear that the Newton brothers were interested in these progressive ideas, but at the beginning of the 1820s their attention

<sup>11</sup> Children in Manufactories, Report of Sel. Cttee., 1814-15, vol. V (304), 1567.

<sup>12</sup> Statutes 1816, c. 139.

<sup>13</sup> Quarry Bank records, C5/5 *passim*, Manchester City Library; M. Hall, *New Castleton Guide*, 19-20 (1839); Return of Apprentices (1841), D.R.O.

<sup>14</sup> S. Pollard, *Economic History Review*, "Factory discipline in the Industrial Revolution", 2nd series, XVI (1963), 261-8.

was focused on the growing opposition of the Litton farmers to their cotton mill.

After Robert Needham's death in December 1816 Lord Scarsdale cancelled the Needham's lease and let Litton mill to Mr. Birch, the owner of what Pilkington described as a "machine" in Miller's Dale, but he only stayed about a year.<sup>15</sup> The mill again stood empty and "Tideswell people came in troops to plunder", causing more than £100 worth of damage to the buildings and windows. At this point the Newtons became involved in Litton mill; they were short of room and wanted to use it temporarily for storage. They put in four caretakers and tried to interest Francis Philips in the property, in which work might be found for Edward. News of these negotiations between Francis Philips and Lord Scarsdale leaked out during the Christmas of 1821/22, and the people of Litton, who already looked askance at the Wye mill, jumped to the conclusion that apprentices were to be brought back to Litton mill. A petition, signed by Lord Scarsdale's tenants within the parish of Litton, was taken to Kedleston, the latter was threatened with a reduction in his rents, High Peak magistrates were lobbied not to bind apprentices for the Newtons. William Newton, junior, wrote bitterly to Francis Philips: "They have not anything to say against the treatment of the children, but that they will belong to the township." During the crisis the Newtons kept in touch with Samuel Oldknow and the Gregs, counsel was consulted and informed opinion was on the side of the Newtons. At the end of January young William Newton could report: "His Lordship gave his word not again to disturb us." But in December of the same year he was still nervously making inquiries whether magistrates would bind two children from Chester, if he presented them.<sup>16</sup> In January 1823, he felt sufficiently confident to suggest — what he had obviously had in mind for some time — the building of the third mill or Cressbrook mill.<sup>17</sup> This would involve general reorganization and an increase in the number of apprentices to three hundred. This third mill was built on the south side of the Arkwright mill and at right angles to it. The apprentice-house of 1817 stood on raised ground opposite the mill and consisted of two storeys, one for the boys and one for the girls. By the use of separate doors and staircases the boys and girls never met. In 1823 when more accommodation was needed, the building was extended and Apprentice Row began to look as we know it today with the Newtons' house on the extreme right and the "gothic" on the extreme left. The "gothic" was a small, later addition, so-called because of the lancet windows; it housed a staircase which led from the boys' dining-room to the music gallery on the first floor, where William Newton trained the voices of musical boys. On the first and second floors, galleries ran the length of the building.

<sup>15</sup> J. Pilkington, *A view of the present state of Derbyshire*, II, 411 (1789); Land Tax Assessment, Litton, 1819, D.R.O.

<sup>16</sup> William Newton was careful only to raise the question of settlement; Chester was within the 40-mile limit, but within an acceptable distance.

<sup>17</sup> At a cost of £1,800 — worked by the Cressbrook.

The girls' dormitories were on the second floor over the boys' quarters. The rooms on the ground floor were separate dining-rooms and living-rooms for the boys and girls.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile James had not been wasting his time in London; he had persuaded Lieutenant-Colonel Williamson, Commandant of the Royal Military Asylum, Chelsea, to accept Cressbrook on his apprentice list. This institution, under the patronage of the duke of York, was founded in 1803 to care for the children of soldiers killed in the wars against France. The girls, who had to be under ten years of age, were sent to the Southampton branch, the boys, who had to be under twelve, were kept at Chelsea. The children received education for at least three or four years up to the age of fourteen, when, for the next seven years they served an apprenticeship. There were only two openings for the girls, domestic service or the factories of the north, which were inspected carefully before any young person was sent off, at the Asylum's expense, with her clothes and books. The Royal Military Asylum was not a workhouse; it was under military supervision and had no connection with parish officials, therefore the children were not parish apprentices; so argued Samuel Oldknow and William Newton. They accepted the commandant's terms, which were unusual: no premium for the master, a premium of £5 for the apprentice on the completion of a successful apprenticeship of seven years and the receipt by headquarters of a certificate by the master of the mill to this effect. William Newton now had no difficulty in bringing his labour force up to three hundred and in keeping it up to full strength, by drawing on the Southampton branch every few months, as death or the completion of a term of servitude reduced numbers.<sup>19</sup> With time the labour position improved, for the majority of apprentices opted to stay on and married in the district. When Henry McConnel bought the property in 1835 he took over 167 girl apprentices, and when the system was challenged in 1841 there were only 16 left, who were working out their term.<sup>20</sup> There must have been by that date a settlement at Cressbrook, though only two of the old cottages have survived.

By 1825 the Newtons seemed to have overcome their difficulties: the third mill was built, they had found an orphanage which, with a show of legality, would send them a good type of apprentice, the magistrates and Lord Scarsdale had accepted the position so that the opposition in Litton could not take action. William Newton even hoped that Francis Philips would now take Litton mill, but during the last years of his life he was faced with uncertainty of tenure. Francis Philips seems to have been a pleasant and fair-minded master to work for: he sent oranges for the apprentices and accepted most, though not all, young William Newton's expansionist schemes. But far from taking on Litton mill, he wanted to sell out at Cressbrook. On his father's death, in 1824, he had

<sup>18</sup> M. Sterndale, *Vignettes of Derbyshire*, 47 (1824).

<sup>19</sup> W.O. 143/28, 30 *passim*, 143/52, apprenticeship book 144, 272-89, 290-301, Public Record Office.

<sup>20</sup> Return of apprentices, 1841, D.R.O.

moved into Bank Hall, near Stockport, and probably felt that he did not need the amenities of Cressbrook; he could enjoy shooting and fishing nearer home. Moreover, Cressbrook had involved him in some disagreeable incidents and, though there is no evidence that the mill was not paying its way, it may not have been very profitable. One disturbing fact emerges from the correspondence; in dry summers there was serious loss of time through lack of water, though the Newtons were quick to point out that, if they had not made such a good job of the weir, the loss of time would have been more serious. Francis Philips was a wealthy man and preferred gradually to withdraw from business to enjoy the pleasures of country life and of his charitable hobbies in Stockport.<sup>21</sup>

As William Newton began to understand the position better, he showed no resentment, but behaved with tact and consideration for his employer's interests. "Now I wish it to be clearly understood," he wrote in March 1824, "that I have not the least wish for Litton Mill, ——— but at the same time if *you* think proper to do anything with it, I will render you every assistance in my power ——— but it shall be your own actual deed."

"You was mentioning Ew<sup>d</sup>: if you think proper I will fit him up a room of machinery, but it must all come spontaneously from you." In the October of the same year he told Francis Philips that he would like to take Bugsworth mill: "My object in taking it is this — to spin — weft (for you if you please). I should fit E/wd up at it, as it is a shame to see him spend his youth to so little purpose." Apparently, Francis Philips did not welcome these suggestions and it was not until eighteen months later, when it was common knowledge that Cressbrook was for sale, that William Newton expressed his point of view.

24 July 1826. William Newton to Francis Philips.

"I now see you have given up all thoughts of Litton Mill. While there was any prospect of your taking it, I did not express a wish, but now I say I wish to take it. There are two or three things unconnected with cotton that I could make a small profit from as waste silk spinning and linnen making. The machinery for both cost but little ——— I rather wish I secure a living, in case Cressbrook is sold and at the same time not to enter into anything that might cause jealousy with you." This correspondence comes to an end in October 1826, by which date the Newtons were probably negotiating with Lord Scarsdale. Francis Philips had to wait nine years for a purchaser, William Newton and his wife died in November 1830 and their eldest son carried on as manager until 1835, when he moved into Litton mill on the sale of the Cressbrook estate to Henry McConnel.

More evidence is available for the last twenty years of William Newton's life than for earlier periods. Chantrey, Rhodes, Mrs. Sterndale and inspectors from quarter sessions, from London workhouses and from the Factories Inquiry Commission of 1832, wrote warmly about some aspect

<sup>21</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, August 1850, 217-8.



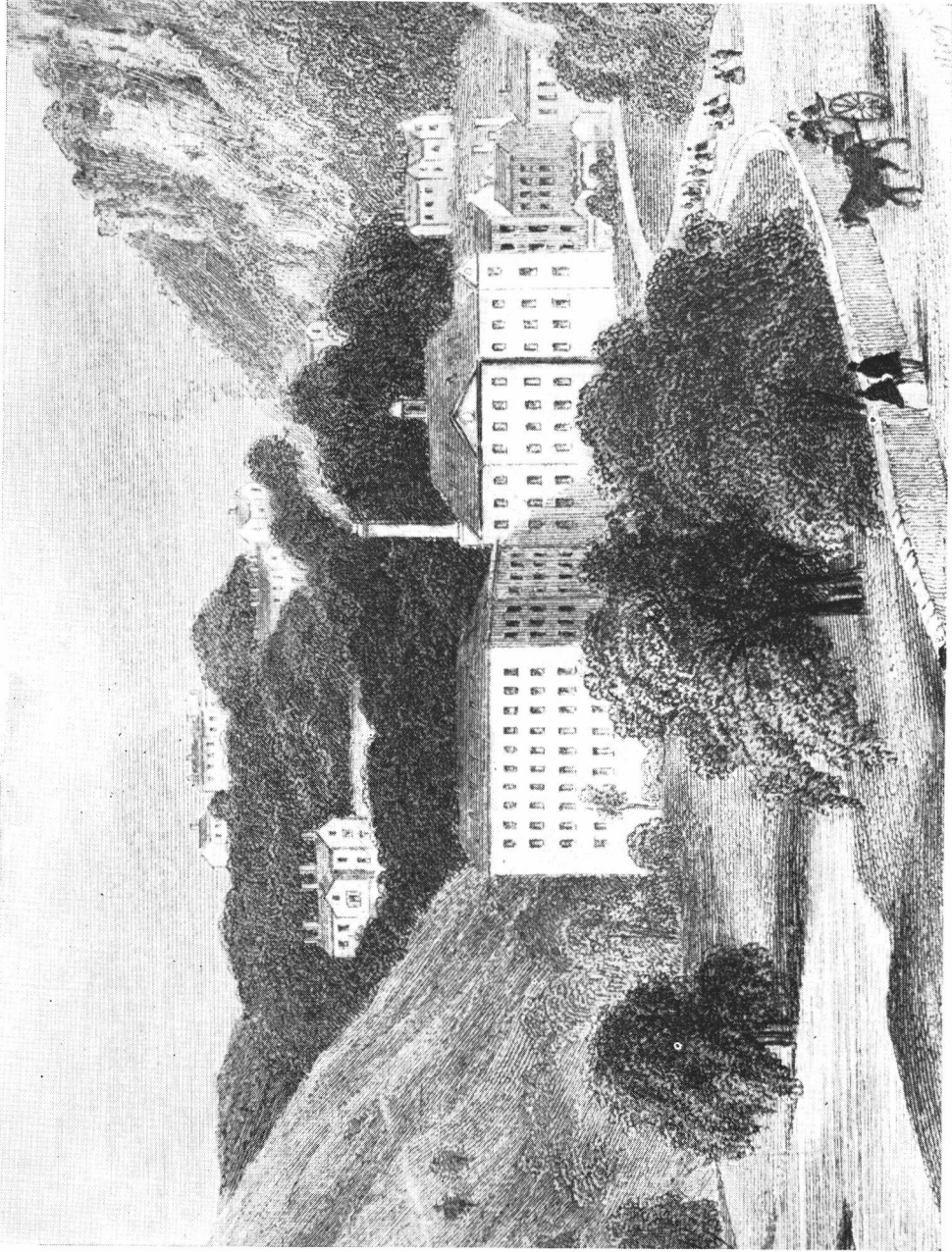
of his work or character. Chantrey described his meeting with a shabby, old peasant in Monsal Dale, whose clothes were covered with tufts of cotton wool, but whose powers of conversation were remarkable. The old man could talk with authority on a range of subjects. On reaching Cressbrook he found that this was "the manager, also the director, master and friend of 300 children, ——— which the then existing law of our land permitted to be selected from the Orphan Asylums and Charity Hospitals of our large towns". He spent the day with the Newtons and, before he left, sketched William's profile, "a slight but expressive token of my gratified feelings".<sup>22</sup> Rhodes, who was no friend to cotton mills and who referred to the children "incarcerated" within the factory, allowed that Newton was "an indulgent master". Rhodes described his poetry as "very creditable" and clearly considered his management at Cressbrook as far more important.<sup>23</sup> To quote only one extract from the Newton letters on inspectors from London workhouses: "Two gentlemen from London was here yesterday to inspect the children. They appeared highly pleased." The most comprehensive report on William Newton's work was written by Dr. Hawkins from the Factory Commission, two years after his death. Dr. Hawkins noted that the Newtons received no premium with the children, but gave them board, lodging, washing, clothes and pocket money — 6d. to 1/6d. a month — that on Sundays prayers were read to them in the apprentice house, except on the rare occasions when they could walk up to Tideswell and that two Sunday School masters taught the younger children. "I must state to the honour of Mr. Newton, that after a very minute and unexpected examination of his establishment, and of the apprentices in private, I could ascertain no point in their treatment that savoured of niggardliness nor of harshness. The remoteness of the situation, the distance from public opinion, the absence of parents and relations, all afford an opportunity for abuse, but that opportunity is not seized. I particularly questioned the children separately, and obtained from them the following particulars of their diet. Their breakfast is of milk and porridge and bread, as much as they please; their supper is the same. They have meat six days in the week for dinner and as much as they choose with potatoes and broth. There are separate eating as well as sleeping-rooms for the boys and girls. The girls also have a separate piece of ground to play in. They have clean sheets once a fortnight, and clean shirts and shifts once a week. The beds are clean and neat, and not too many in a room; three little ones sleep in one bed. The greater part remain and marry in this establishment."<sup>24</sup>

There are four principal reasons for William Newton's success as a mill manager. Firstly, he and his wife regarded the apprentices as two large families; they did not appoint a master and mistress of apprentices, but filled these posts themselves. Secondly, in addition to a few servants, the

<sup>22</sup> (1860) *Reliquary*, I, 193-4, editor Llewellynn Jewitt.

<sup>23</sup> E. Rhodes, *Peak Scenery*, II, 43-6 (1819).

<sup>24</sup> *Factories Inquiry*, R. Com., 1st Report, 1833 (450), XX, 24.



Cressbrook mills from Monsal Dale, c. 1850.



domestic staff were as competent and hardworking as the mill staff. Mrs. Newton was assisted by her daughter Mary, her sister, always known as Aunt Nancy, and an army widow, who had survived the campaigns of the Peninsular War and could face any crisis at Cressbrook. Thirdly, the health of the mill was good. Between 1825 and 1835 there were 300 young workers and 40 deaths, i.e. an annual death rate of 1.3%. In the correspondence there are a few references to accidents, epidemics and deaths, but the carding-room was probably responsible for most of these deaths. The Newton blower may, of course, have helped to purify the air. Fourthly, William Newton allowed time on Sunday for recreation and, though he arranged, or at any rate approved, the kind of things the apprentices could do, they were given a modicum of choice. In this respect he was advanced in his management. The girls could take a walk up the Litton road or along Monsal Dale to certain defined points. The boundary farm on the Litton road is still referred to as "the leisure", because apprentices used to walk to it on Sunday, which was their leisure day. Mrs. Sterndale suggests that, when the girls were taking their recreation in Monsall Dale, they could do what they liked — garden, sew or walk about, but the emphasis probably was on quietness. It is doubtful if a boisterous game would have been allowed. It is pleasant to read of this small measure of freedom, but, of course, the scouts were out when the children were out to watch that no one escaped. The unmusical boys, apparently, could play freely in the corridors. There is no mention of disciplinary problems and it is interesting to speculate on the effect of the pocket money, the possibility of fines and the prospect of £5 premium in achieving this good result.<sup>25</sup>

But there is a less pleasant side to Mrs. Sterndale's picture of life at Cressbrook; hours of work were long, night-work was introduced and the view that the law of 1816 did not apply to children at the Royal Military Asylum was challenged. The Newtons had the reputation of working long hours; the average working day was over the statutory twelve hours, how much over depended on the state of the market and of the river. William Newton, senior, insisted that every apprentice should have eight hours of uninterrupted sleep, so at busy periods there was not much opportunity for recreation during the week. More serious was the reference to night-work, if it was a regular policy. "I expect to begin spinning in the new mill," William Newton, junior, wrote in December 1815, "we shall work the card-room in the old Mill in the nights." If apprentices were employed, and it is difficult to see how this could be avoided, it was in direct contravention of the 1802 act.

On 14 December 1840, the Clerk of the Peace at Derby received the following notice for the printers from Mr. Chandos Pole, chairman of quarter sessions: "Mr. Chandos Pole to call the attention of the Court & Visitors appointed under the Act of Parlt to the state of apprentices bound

<sup>25</sup> Recommendation for the £5 premium was not automatic, but over three-quarters of the Newton apprentices got it.

from a distance into the Mills & manufactories within the County, with a view to ascertaining the truth or fallacy of certain reports now prevalent respecting them.”<sup>26</sup> The accompanying letter suggested, without defining, the nature of these reports: “If you will, as soon as they are printed, send me half a dozen notice papers (as I want to forward one or two to the Orphan Asylum at Chelsea, which is the real point I am driving at) you will very much oblige Chandos Pole.” Critics were now questioning not settlements in Litton, though farmers in that parish may have engineered this move, but the right of the Royal Military Asylum to claim exemption from the 40-mile limit, and the right of certain mill managers to engage apprentices from that establishment, on the grounds that the children were not parish apprentices. A questionnaire was drawn up, which elicited the information that during the ten years ending 1840 Mellor mill had engaged 27 children from the Military Asylum, Edale 13, and Cressbrook large numbers, which by the date of the inquiry had been reduced to 16. John Clayton & Co., successors to Samuel Oldknow, and Lorenzo Christie would not admit that the girls from the Military Asylum were, in status, parish apprentices, but William Newton, junior, now master of Litton mill, and Henry McConnel did not record their opinions.<sup>26</sup> They were probably embarrassed by the inquiry.

It would be difficult to prove that for twenty years the Newtons had deliberately broken the law;<sup>27</sup> they were probably acting in good faith. In company with Samuel Oldknow, the Gregs and Lorenzo Christie they had found a way round the 1816 act and in doing so had rendered nugatory some of its most useful and humane provisions, but they had increased quite quickly the working population of Cressbrook. The act of apprentices was intended to protect children from being forcibly uprooted and transported far from the home district. If they had no parents, it was the more important that they should be kept in touch with their own kith and kin. William Newton knew that Sir Robert Peel was right to regret the break up of poor families, and on this point he tried to forestall criticism by allowing relatives visit the apprentices and by extending hospitality to those who had come from a distance. But this gesture of kindness would only touch a few cases. Here was a humane manager successfully defying the humane intentions of the law.

### *Acknowledgements*

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<sup>26</sup> Return of Apprentices, Q/AG a 16, D.R.O.

<sup>27</sup> It is significant that though a Parliamentary inquiry had been thought certain, none was held.