

Worsley before 1750



The map above shows the area in 1786, with Worsley lying between the huge area of Chat Moss and the smaller Kearsley Moss. It lay in a small agricultural 'island' surrounded by boggy wastes which were mostly uninhabited and were difficult and dangerous to cross.

Farming was a very important activity - almost all food had to be produced locally. Wool from the local sheep would be spun and woven to make cloth - all members of the family had to help in this process, even the children. Women and girls did the wool preparation, spinning and dyeing and the men did the hand weaving, using their extra height to be able to weave a wider cloth. All this work was done at home in addition to farm work, collecting fuel and providing food. By 1750 hand-loom weaving had become an important cottage industry in the Worsley area. Yarn was brought and finished cloth collected by traders using pack horses.

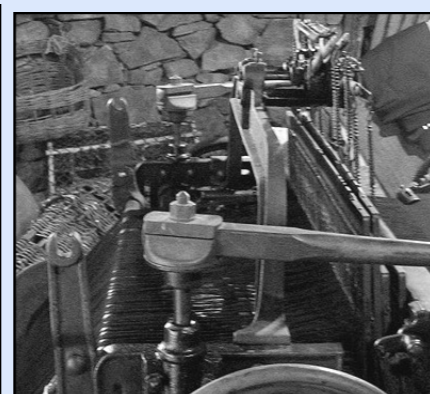
A rare and welcome event would be the visit of a chapman or pedlar, carrying an assortment of goods in a large pack - pins and needles, buttons and ribbons. He might carry pots and pans and would bring food and other items from neighbouring districts - he would also be a source of news and gossip.



Ploughing with oxen - no mechanisation



Spinning



Hand-loom weaving

The large boggy areas of Chat Moss and Kearsley Moss were not useful as farmland but provided peat, a source of fuel for cooking and heating, dug from the mosses. The peats were dug in spring and summer, then stacked to dry, before being carted home for use during the winter. This fuel does not burn with enough heat for metal working so was no use to blacksmiths - they used charcoal which burns much hotter than either peat or wood. It is made by heating earth-covered piles of timber to exclude air.



Peat cutting - a community affair



Mossland - wet, boggy and difficult to cross



Worsley Old Hall, one of the oldest houses in the area, was built by and was home to the Breretons, whose income came from coal mined in shallow workings and bell pits especially in the Little Hulton area. After about 1600, the landowners did not live at Worsley but simply took the money the estate earned.

This changed when Francis Egerton inherited the estate in 1745 - he was definitely not an absentee landlord, but very much hands on - he made sure his workers had decent housing and was generous to their families. It is said that he dressed and spoke like his tenants - not at all like a Duke!

Design: jeffinogue@gmail.com

Worsley Landowners

Worsley was originally in the manor of **Barton**.

In the 12th Century a member of the **Barton** family gave lands in **Worsley** and **Little Hulton** to Elias who took the name '**de Worsley**'.

The Sheriff of Lancashire's records show that Sir **Geoffrey de Worsley** made 15 shillings per year, an enormous amount of money at the time, from digging and selling coal from his pits in Little Hulton in **1376**. He was the last of the **Worsley** line.

The **Massey** family inherited the Worsley estate by marriage and in **1428** had a tenant called **John the Collier**. The Massey line ended in the 16th Century.

The estate passed to the **Breretons** of Malpas, Cheshire. The last of the Breretons, Sir Richard, died in 1598 without an heir. His widow Lady Dorothy was the half sister of Sir Thomas Egerton to whom the estate passed.

Sir Thomas Egerton was also **Keeper** of the **Great Seal of England** and **Solicitor General** to **Queen Elizabeth I**. After her death he became **Lord Chancellor** to **King James I** by whom he was created **Earl of Ellesmere** and **Viscount Brackley**.



Sir Thomas Egerton

John, Thomas's son, added to the titles - Earl of Bridgewater and Lord President of the Welsh Marches.

Thomas's great grandson, **Scroop Egerton, 4th Earl** was created **1st Duke of Bridgewater** in 1720. He died in 1745.

His son **John, 2nd Duke**, died in 1748 and the title of **3rd Duke** passed to his brother **Francis**, aged 11. He was the '**Canal Duke**'.