

MM&DHS - Our First Summer Outing 2022

On Saturday 18th June a group of 35 that included both society members and their friends joined together to enjoy a trip to Quarry Bank Mill and the Styal Estate, located near Manchester. We left Melton Mowbray at 08.00 and arrived back at 19.00 having rested on our “luxury coach” whilst continuing to enjoy one another’s company.



The property which consists of the 18th century Mill, the Owner’s House and Gardens and the Apprentice House and it’s gardens is a property of Historical importance in that it is the best preserved cotton mill from that period that can still offer a visitor a sense of what it would have been like to live and work there and together they provide the setting for a fantastic visit.

Below is a copy of the “Brief” provided for members to read on the journey in preparation of the day to come.

Samuel Greg and the beginnings of Quarry Bank.

How do you become a successful entrepreneur and found somewhere like Quarry Bank? For Samuel Greg, it was partially a case of being in the right place at the right time.

Born in Ireland in 1758, Samuel entered a world on the cusp of the Industrial Revolution. The son of Thomas Greg a successful merchant and his wife, Elizabeth Hyde, Samuel came from a wealthy family, but as a younger son, his parents knew he’d need to make his own living.

As a child he was adopted by his uncle, Robert Hyde, who had no children of his own. Robert was involved in the Belfast linen trade and Samuel left Ireland to live with Robert and his brother Nathaniel in Ardwick, Manchester, a prosperous area at this time.

Fortunate heir -

Samuel was sent away to be educated. Following this, he was put to business in Chancery Lane and travelled the Continent, taking orders for the House of Hyde. Samuel must have shown his business acumen, as Robert made him a partner in the business and gave him £10,000. Upon his death, in 1782, he made Samuel the heir to all his property. Samuel also received £14,000 in shares from his uncle Nathaniel Hyde when he retired, shortly after Robert’s death.

Founder of Quarry Bank -

Armed with the business experience he 'd gained working for his uncles and a generous inheritance, Samuel seized the opportunity to take advantage of the desperate need for the expansion and industrialisation of the cotton industry.

In 1783, he found the perfect spot for his vision and built Quarry Bank mill on the river Bollin, harnessing the awesome flow of the river to power the mill. It cost Samuel £3,000 to build and equip the first mill.

An advantageous marriage -

It wasn't all work and no play for Samuel. In 1789, he married Hannah Lightbody, an advantageous marriage which brought Samuel a further £10,000 through her dowry.

Their first home was in Manchester but by 1800 the couple had grown tired of the dirty streets of the city and Samuel built Quarry Bank House, a stone's throw away from his beloved mill. From this time, Hannah began to have more of an influence and Samuel increasingly relied on her opinion.

A growing family -

The couple had 13 children together, born between 1790 and 1808. The boys were sent to Unitarian schools in Bristol and Nottingham and spent some time at Edinburgh University, a Presbyterian stronghold. Hannah frequently acted as peacemaker with Samuel and their sons, for they didn't often see eye to eye. His relationship with their daughters was less contentious and one visitor commented that they possessed a 'delightful simplicity of people perfectly satisfied in their place'.

Building an empire -

Business was good for Samuel and Quarry Bank expanded with cottages in Styal village for the workers and the Apprentice House for the pauper child labourers.

The business continued to thrive throughout the Napoleonic Wars, enabling Samuel, in the 1820s, to expand beyond Quarry Bank and construct five other cotton spinning and weaving mills, employing more than 2,000 people. During this period Samuel was joined by his four younger sons in the running of his empire.

Family ties -

During 1825, with the advent of a banking crisis, Samuel's sons put increasing pressure on him to introduce looms to Quarry Bank, but he refused. This caused much tension, and the family unit was held together by Hannah. Unfortunately, in 1828, Hannah died, and so her bonding force was lost. Samuel refused to recognise the need to revolutionise his beloved mill and only retired from the business in 1832 when an accident left him lame. In 1834, he died. Whilst relations between him and his headstrong sons had been fraught, he'd provided them with a solid future and vast business empire, all of which emanated from Quarry Bank.

Today -

Quarry Bank is one of Britain's greatest industrial heritage sites, home to a complete industrial community.

The early Industrial Revolution changed our world forever. At Quarry Bank you can discover a complete industrial community and experience the very different worlds of owner and worker, who lived and worked here side by side.

In 1784, monumental change was brought to the village of Styal when Samuel Greg established his cotton mill. Powered by the water of the river Bollin and the toil of the workers, the Greg family business was part of a turning point in our history. In the mill you can discover what it was like to work in a cotton mill. Experience heritage machinery in action and feel the floors shake beneath your feet as the spinning machines turn and the looms weave. Find out about the life and legacy of Samuel Greg, the founder of Quarry Bank, who arrived in England from Belfast as a young boy and went on to found a cotton empire. You can also discover more about the global cotton trade at the start of the

Industrial Revolution and get a sense of the working conditions for the men, women and children who toiled in the mill.

You can explore the domestic life of the Greg family in their home, Quarry Bank House, and wander through the stunning picturesque gardens. Rising up the banks of the river valley, the gardens offer stunning views and spectacular changes through the seasons. In the restored glasshouse and kitchen garden, you can see the array of exotic fruits and vegetables that were grown for the wealthy Gregs' table.

By contrast, take a guided tour of the Apprentice House to step into the lives of the pauper children who worked in the mill. Children as young as eight years old were apprenticed at Quarry Bank, working 10 hour days in the mill and living cramped together under the control of the Apprentice House superintendents. Stroll to Styal village along the paths used by Quarry Bank's workforce to see how many of the other workers lived. In the village hub, a permanent exhibition explores the living conditions of the workers and the growth of Styal. A unique tour of a worker's cottage offers a fascinating insight into more than 150 years of history and invites you to compare your life to those of the workers. Styal remains a thriving community today and we ask you to be mindful of our tenants' privacy.

Our Visit –During our time at Quarry Bank today and as members of the MM&DHS we have arranged for separate guided tours of both the Mill and the Apprentice House. For the Mill Tour we will be split into 3 groups and the tours will begin at 11.00. For the guided tours of the Apprentice House we be split into 2 groups with timings set for 14.00 & 14.30.

At other times throughout the day your time is your own to explore the wider Quarry Bank site, particularly Quarry Bank House. This is a perfect example of early Industrial Revolution social change. It is a genteel house, showing off the status and good taste of the Gregs. With their children, it became a family home and a lively hub of debate, discussion and education. Quarry Bank House was also the centre of a community of like-minded Unitarian thinkers and members of the local business community. Hannah Greg created a setting for the exchange of ideas, where intellectuals, politicians, artists and industrialists mixed with ease.

We must also remember not to forget the Tea, Coffee, Cake etc. The Weaving Shed Restaurant, Garden Café and Stables Ice Cream Parlour are all open, serving a range of hot food, snacks, sandwiches, cakes and bakes, ice creams and hot and cold drinks. Indoor and outdoor seating is available at the Weaving Shed Restaurant and Garden Café.

Note: A Shuttle buggy service offering transfers to various parts of the site, including Visitor Reception and the Mill Yard, is available. Please speak to Visitor Reception on arrival. The buggy can carry foldable wheelchairs.

Secretary's Note:

Both during and following our time at Quarry Bank members expressed their pleasure at being able to enjoy the visit to this historic heritage site and really appreciated the work, time and effort that had gone into arranging it for them. In particular they enjoyed the “private tours” of both the “Mill” and the “Apprentice House” where local guides provided a real insight into what it was like for those who lived and work there.

It was also widely acknowledged by everyone that this first “Outing” had been a huge success with everyone saying how much they had enjoyed what had been a real treat and that they were very much looking forward to our next “Outing” which was taking them to visit “Brodsworth Hall”.

Thank you for your support and comments. (Sec).
