

OAKBANK MILL

DID YOU KNOW?

Between the years 1801 and 1881 the combined population of Blairgowrie rose from less than a thousand to over seven thousand. This was directly attributable to the growth of the spinning industry which, at its peak, employed about two and a half thousand people.

Unskilled workers came from many different places including Ireland (escaping the famine), Highland Scotland (victims of the clearances), and from the slums of Glasgow and Dundee. Skilled workers were highly prized; many of these had travelled widely between different textile manufacturing centres in Britain and on the continent.

The working week consisted of six days from 5.30 am to 7 pm with an hour off for breakfast and another for lunch.

Working conditions were harsh by today's standards, especially in the early 19th Century. The factory floors could be cluttered and hot with dust and oil fumes which led to the spread of respiratory diseases such as bronchitis. The machinery was also very noisy and many workers went deaf. Quite young children were employed, working similar hours to their parents.

Flax, which the Blairgowrie Mills spun before Jute, is amongst the oldest crops in the world. It has been grown since the beginnings of civilisation, primarily for its use in linens, though the seed (linseed) is also a valuable source of oil.