



What was Huddersfield like during the Industrial Revolution?

Newspaper Analysis

This extract - Magistrates in Petty Sessions: Breaches of the Factory Act at Meltham was published in the Huddersfield Chronicle on the 7th of October 1865. The key points from the article are provided.

BREACHES OF THE FACTORY ACT AT MELTHAM.—Messrs. Walker and Ramsden, New-bridge Mill, Meltham, were charged with employing, on the 1st September, two children, named Walker Whitwam and John Mortimer, under 13 years of age, without having obtained a schoolmaster's certificate to show that they had attended school during the previous week. Mr. Beadon, sub-inspector of factories, prosecuted. It appears that the inspector visited the mill, and ascertained that the defendants had employed two children, but had neglected to procure a schoolmaster's certificate of their attendance at school. He (Mr. Beadon) thought it was possible the children had attended school, but there was no certificate to show it. —Mr. Ramsden stated that the children, who were "short timers," had gone from one school to another, and had neglected to take the book with them. The offence had been committed in ignorance as far as the firm was concerned. He (Mr. Ramsden) was ignorant of the fact that it was their duty to see that the children went to school. They had only been worked the proper time, and the breach of the Act had arisen from an oversight. —Mr. Beadon added that it was too bad to plead ignorance on such a simple point of factory law. Abstracts of the laws were posted in the mills, and it was a shame therefore to pretend to be ignorant on a matter like that. —Defendant: That is the simple fact, whether or not. —The Chairman: It is your duty to inspect the school book every Monday morning. —Mr. Beadon stated that the penalty was from £1 to £3. —The Chairman said, although the children might have gone to school, there ought to have been a schoolmaster's certificate. There had been no entry made during the six months, and if the defendant had not pleaded guilty, a heavy penalty would have been inflicted. Fined 20s. and costs; total £1 6s. in each case. —A separate charge was then preferred against Mr. James Ramsden, who is the occupier of the Albion Mill, Meltham. The charge was that Mr. Ramsden had wilfully made or connived at the making in the register of a false entry of the time when a certain young person commenced working in the factory. —Defendant's plea was that it had not been done wilfully. —Chairman: You must plead "guilty" or "not guilty." —Defendant: It is no use pleading not guilty, because the case is before you clear enough. —Mr. Beadon said it was a serious case, and if the defendant denied the word "wilful," he should not plead guilty. He (the inspector) was in a position to adduce very strong evidence in support of the case. It was the most serious charge he had had to bring before the Bench since he had been in the district; and he hoped that the publication of the case would be a warning to Mr. Ramsden and other people in the district. The fine was from £5 to £20; or, at the discretion of the Bench, the offender might be sent to prison for a period not exceeding six months. The offence, he had reason to know, was one often committed, but difficult of detection. He could prove that the entry was in Mr. Ramsden's own handwriting; that the lad was working three months earlier than the date of the entry; and that Mr. Ramsden knew the meaning of the date affixed to the name, —in fact, that it was done purposely to evade the law, and to deceive the inspector. —Complainant assured the Bench that there had been no wilful evasion of the law. —In reply to the Chairman, Mr. Beadon reiterated that he hoped the case would be a warning to others. It was an annoyance to them to prefer these charges. —Chairman (to defendant): He states that the entry is in your own handwriting. —Defendant: Of course, I write them all. —Chairman: You must have known that that was wrong. In a district like this, with its large manufactories, we feel it our duty to make an example of this case. —Mr. Beadon: As far as I am concerned, this being the first charge of the kind made since I have had the district, I shall content myself with the mitigated penalty. —The Chairman's expression had not fallen from the higher penalty would have been imposed. —then fined in the sum of £5; total £1 15s.

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Read the key points from the article and retrieve the information to complete the table below:

NAME OF ACCUSED	Mr. JAMES RAMSDEN
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OFFENCES COMMITTED	
VERDICT (GUILTY/NOT GUILTY)	CASE 1: CASE 2:

What does this article tell you about the laws protecting child workers at the time?

What does it tell you about the attitude of mill owners at the time?



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Local History

Teacher's Pet is proud to be working alongside Historic England, to allow teachers in and around Huddersfield, to enjoy our range of Local History resources.



Teacher's Pet









Historic England

Who are Historic England?

Historic England protect, champion and save the places that define who we are and where we've come from as a nation. We care passionately about the stories they tell, the ideas they represent and the people who live, work and play among them.

At [Historic England Education](https://www.historicengland.org.uk/education) we want every child to be inspired by their local heritage and every teacher to have brilliant resources to use inside and outside the classroom.

Our Heritage Schools programme aims to help school children develop an understanding of their local heritage and its significance to make sure that:

-  Children develop a sense of pride in where they live
-  Children understand their local heritage and how it relates to the national story
- ☒ Teachers are more confident in making effective use of local heritage resources in delivering the curriculum
-  Local historic context is embedded in the school's curriculum
-  Heritage providers are more connected to the needs of local schools
-  Parents are engaged in their children's learning
-  Communities are more deeply involved in the life of the school