

MENSTON 2025 HERITAGE GROUP

Rombalds Moor Bleach Works - Bleach Mill

The building was built in the 1840's probably as a woollen mill. By 1860 it was being used as a bleachworks. In 1870 it was bought by Joseph Gill. The firm owned almost all the land between Moor Lane and Church Lane. By 1890 it employed about 40 people including some women.

The firm constructed the present Bleach Mill Lane to replace the ancient track behind South Piece cottage for horse and cart and workers.

Until the end of WW1, it was engaged solely in bleaching linen yarn which was manufactured at mills in Leeds. Collection and delivery was done by horse and cart. After Menston Station opened in 1875 the coal and chemicals came by rail and were also collected by horse and cart. 30 horses were kept at Low Fold behind Hagwood Farm and some in stables at the Mill. The white linen was laid out in the fields to dry.

After 1918 and the decline of linen manufacture the firm bleached cotton rag for recycling as cotton dusters and paper. By the time the firm closed, tarpaulins were also being bleached.

Most workers lived in Menston. Some employees came from Ireland to deliver the linen and settled here. Others came from Scotland to dress the linen. There used to be a row of cottages for workers near the dam.

During 1920's there was growing concern that the toxic waste flowing into Dry Beck and Carr Beck was killing fish in the river Wharfe. In 1927 the works closed and became derelict. The chimney and many buildings were dismantled and the large iron bleaching vessels scrapped.

References

<https://yorkshire.u08.eu/burley-in-wharfedale/62309/>
shows map and aerial photo of site

Elsie Fletcher 1952 The Story of Menston at Coronation year. Republished 1977 for 25 year Jubilee of Coronation by Frank Voigt

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Alastair Laurence 1991 A History of Menston and Hawksworth