

# Cotton CONNECTS

## Project

### Background to the project

The textile industry has played a central role in the history of Britain for over 500 years. The starting point was centred around wool and later cotton became the major commodity that was influencing the economy.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the textile industry received the technological advance that it needed and this in turn pushed Britain into the world's major proponent in the textile industry.

The importance of the textile industry in Britain has been well documented, however, the stories of people working in Preston's textile industry from the 1950s is not as well documented, especially for people who arrived from abroad.

The 'Cotton connects' project was established to address this gap.

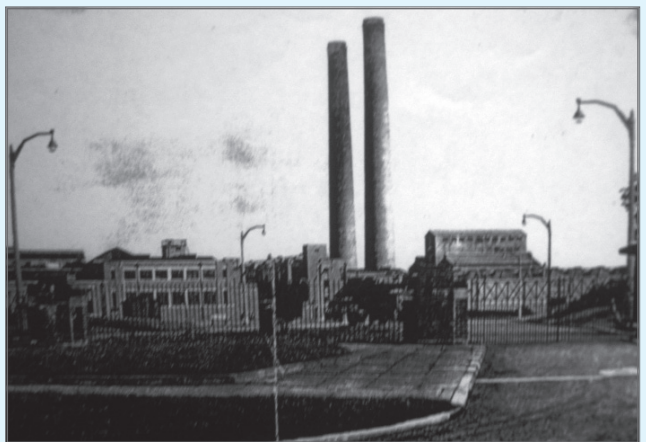
### Textile industry in Preston

The first cotton mill to be erected in Preston was in 1777 at Moor Lane, on the site now occupied by the British Telecom building. It was operated by a partnership of two men, Collinson and Watson, and initially in the absence of a suitable stream, was driven by a combination of horse and wind power, although it closed soon after.

Preston's cotton industry continued to grow and in 1800, with the arrival of steam power in the town, there were 16 spinning mills operating.

The 1930's also saw the arrival of another textile dynasty; the Courtaulds family opened up a factory at the Red Scar site in Preston.

▼ *Courtaulds site in its heyday*



The Courtaulds Red Scar factory was to play a big part in the lives of people who arrived to Preston from the 1950s, mainly from South Asian and Caribbean countries.



▲ *Some of the people who worked at Courtaulds*

▲ *Former workers re-visiting the Red Scar site*

## Rise and fall of the textile industry

From its height of production in the 19th century and into the 20th century, the textile industry began to decline in Britain, due to competition from abroad and the cost of raw cotton going up.

Matters came to head when in 1980, Courtaulds closed its Red Scar factory, which was once the worlds largest rayon producer and with it over 3000 people were made redundant, a third of whom were from a minority ethnic heritage.

## The future

Many of the people who worked in the textile factories managed to get other jobs and in some cases did much better than they would have done working in a textile factory. All the people who took part in the project mentioned that whilst the work was hard, they had fond memories of working in a textile factory and they made good friends there. Whilst the physical legacy of the textile industry is only to be found in derelict buildings or buildings being used for other purposes, the Cotton Connects project has ensured that the memories of people will continue for future generations.

## More information

For more information about the 'Cotton Connects' project, the report and DVDs produced, go to [www.k-solutions.org.uk](http://www.k-solutions.org.uk)

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