

Shared reading Who were the Wellington Weavers Part 1

Wellington woollen business can be traced back to John Were of Pinksmoor Mill. In 1772 the young Thomas Fox became a partner in his grandfather Thomas Were's serge (cloth) making company at Trade Court, South Street, Wellington.

Thomas went abroad to study languages and the woollen trade, and on his return the company was transformed from a small cottage industry into one of the most successful family-owned cloth manufacturers run by the Fox family for the next seven generations.

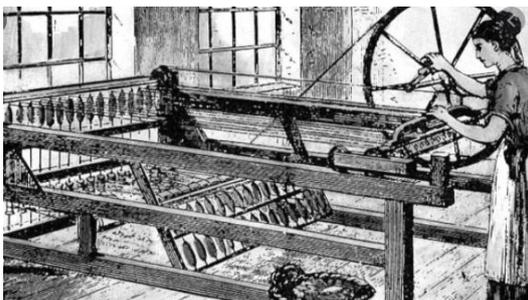
In 1796 Thomas Fox moved the business to the old flour mill at Tonedale, close to the water supply from the river Tone. Originally horse-powered, the mill became water and steam powered, before gas and then electricity later on. Designed by Thomas Fox and built in the early 19th Century, the waterways of the Basins ensured there was always a flow of water to the mill water wheel.

The complicated system of leats and sluices as well as the reservoir ponds at the Basins, ensured that the mill had enough water to power the water wheel even in times of drought.



Fox Brothers took the wool from sheep and made yarn to weave into cloth. Thomas Fox with his wife Sarah Smith, set to work to build up their business. Local supplies of wool were supplemented with imported wool from Ireland, fine merino wool from Spain, and later all the way from Australia and New Zealand.

As order and demand for their cloth increased, the factory's equipment was constantly updated. Spinning Jennies were replaced with more sophisticated looms.



The company looked after the welfare of their employees. They provided housing, a nursery, a canteen, chapels, schools and sports facilities for rugby, football and swimming. There were annual sporting matches, outings and parties at Christmas, and camps in the summer.

Retrieval:

- a. What is serge?
- b. When did Thomas Fox move the company to the old flour Mill at Tonedale?

Vocabulary:

- c. Explain the meaning of these words: Leat Sluice
- d. To manufacture means to: break spin make weave (circle the word)

Inference:

- e. The Fox family looked after the welfare of their employees. Why?
- f. Who runs the business now? How do you know?

Leat – a channel which takes water to a water wheel at a mill



Sluice: a gate that controls the flow of water



