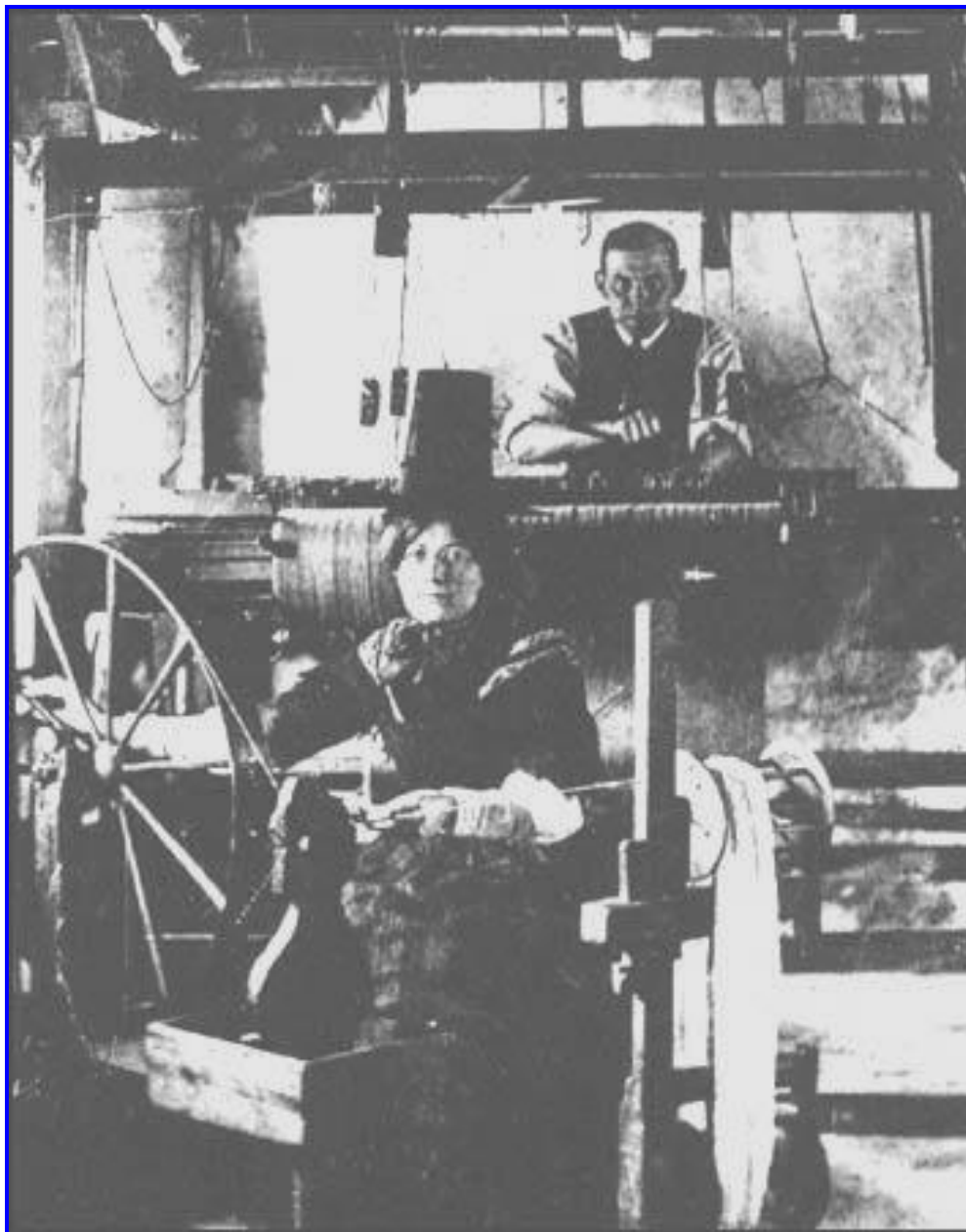


**RESEARCH INTO THE TRADE OF WOOLLEN CLOTH  
WEAVING AT GRIFFYDAM**



**BY SAMUEL T STEWART MAY 2021**

## **FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH**

A typical cottage industry scene showing the wife spinning the yarn and her husband weaving the cloth on a hand loom

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## **COMPLIMENTARY READING:-**

- **[WOOLCOMBING, YARN SPINNING AND FRAMEWORK KNITTING IN LOCAL VILLAGES \(free to download and read on the website\)](#)**

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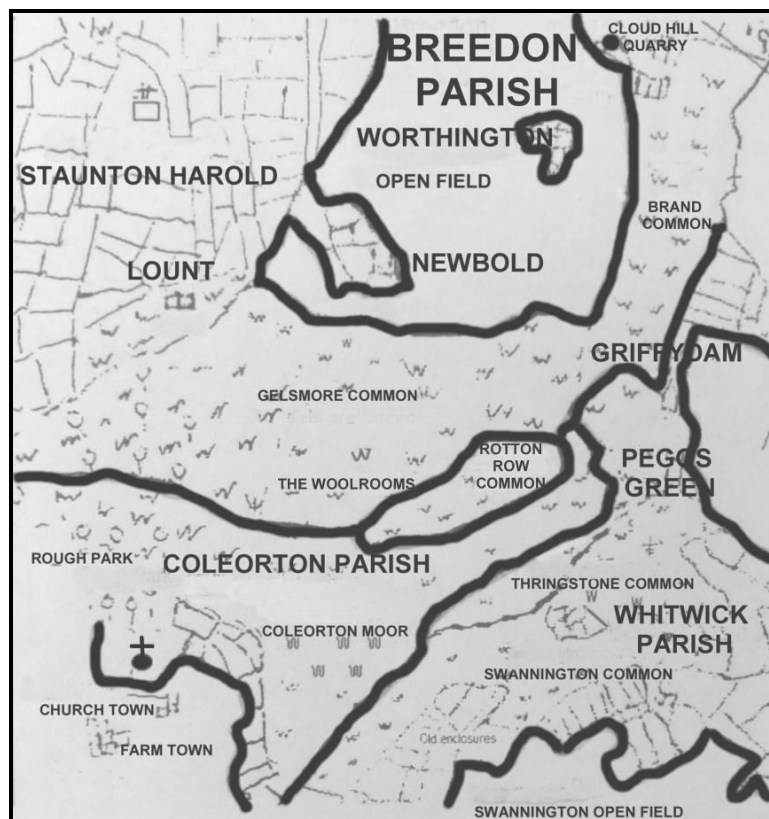
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## INTRODUCTION

The object of this publication is to combine a synopsis of the history of the processes involved in the making of woven woollen cloth as a cottage industry with what is known about Griffydam's involvement with this.

The following text in italics is transcribed from "Forgotten Industries" written by the historian H. Butler Johnson c.1910:-

*At one time, Coleorton was surrounded by large areas of open moor land; Gelsmoor, Newbold Moor, Worthington Moor, Swannington Common, Thringstone Moor and Cole Orton Moor were large areas of open land, unsuitable for cultivation, but ideal for rough grazing. Sheep were allowed to roam free over these moors, and in doing so, they maintained the scrub vegetation.*



The map is an attempt to provide a picture of the open moorlands in the locality of Griffydam based on a c.1760 map

*"The Woolrooms", are the designation of a small hamlet situated between Cole Orton and Griffydam, on the western side of what was formerly Thringstone Moor. They are currently in the parish of Worthington just north of the brook which forms the Coleorton / Worthington parish boundary - see the following map. This name, "The Woolroom"s, would seem to indicate a wool depot or storehouse having been located at this spot at some former time, probably in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries when the production of wool for export to Flanders was England's great staple industry.*

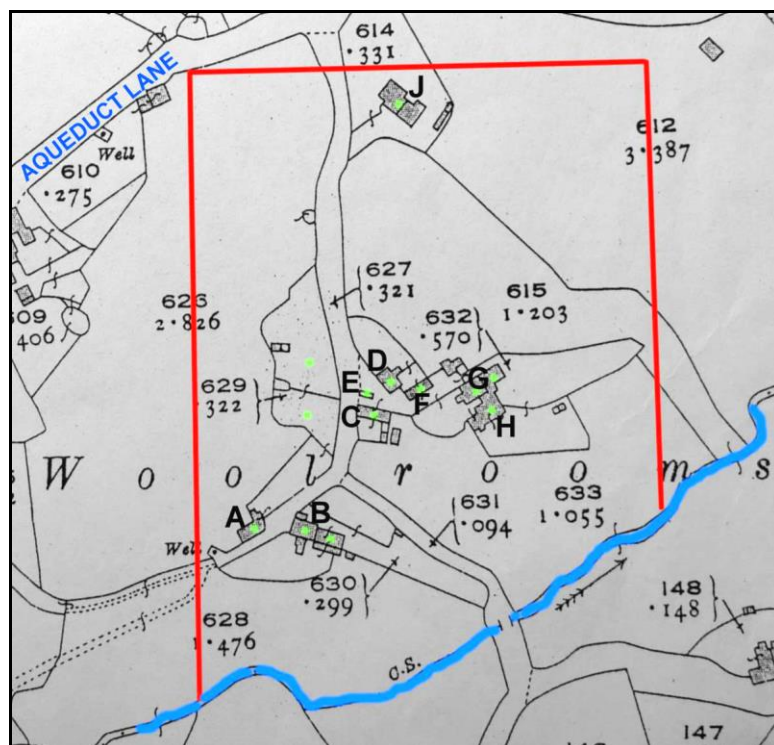
*This view is borne out by the fact that the Monks of Garendon Abbey, near Loughborough, owned a bercary (Medieval Sheep Farm) or Sheepfold in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, which must, if we have interpreted one of the surviving charters of the abbey*

correctly, have been situated in the mile length of district lying between the Breech (Le Breechad) on the west side of Swannington village and the hamlet of Newbold. The Woolrooms would come about midway, and as a monastic bercary, included not only folds but also wash pits and all other appendages of a sheep farm, amongst which would be storehouses. It is not unreasonable to assume, that this bercary of the monks must have been situated close by the brook, which now in an attenuated form, runs by the Woolrooms towards Griffydam. This establishment of the Monks, would from the outset connote one or two dwelling places for those employed amongst the sheep, and these would be added to from time to time until the present hamlet came into being. Apart from the presence of a bercary, the hamlet would have been a very suitable site for a wool depot six centuries ago, surrounded as it then was by hundreds of acres of common and moor land on which sheep were kept.

In the middle ages, this land was owned by Garendon Abbey, who obtained income from the wool trade with Flanders. It is believed, that the original Woolrooms consisted of a small number of dwellings used by the monks, with a sheepfold in that area, where the wool would have been processed and stored, prior to transportation to a port.

Sheep raising abounded everywhere and in the fifteenth century, **the best fleeces came from England**, however by the sixteenth century, Spanish merino sheep demoted English sheep fleeces to second choice.

Presumably, the bercary was established near to the brook because a copious supply of water would have been required for cleaning the wool prior to being bundled ready for transportation.



**1925 PUBLISHED O/S MAP**

**(Within the red line is the approximate area known as the Woolrooms. Worthington Parish is to the north of the brook and Coleorton Parish to the south)**

It is not difficult to imagine that as the brook meandered its way on through Griffydam, then a similar situation to that at the Woolrooms would have been established there. Although we have no concrete evidence that Garendon Abbey also owned the land around Griffydam, based on other evidence of land they owned in this area, it is most likely that they would have done so.

A series of Acts of Parliament dating from 1604 were passed which empowered the enclosure of open fields and common / waste land in England and Wales.

Almost 200 years later, a specific Act of Parliament passed in 1802 included the dividing, allotting and enclosure of land. At this time, the Parish of Breedon on the Hill included the manor of Breedon, the chapelry, township and manor of Worthington and township of Newbold. Gelsmoor and Griffydam appear to have been included in the township of Newbold at this time. The enclosure enactment for Worthington including Newbold, Gelsmoor and Griffydam was not apparently completed until 1806. Further reference is made to this enclosure in the last section of the publication entitled - **"The Treatment and Finishing Processes Associated with Woven Woollen Cloth"**

In the 18th Century, the production of textiles was the most important industry in Britain. As A. L. Morton, the author of *A People's History of England* (1938) has pointed out: "Though employing far fewer people than agriculture, the clothing industry became the decisive feature of English economic life, what which marked it off sharply from that of most other European countries and determined the direction and speed of its development."

During this period most of the cloth and the processes involved was carried out in the family home and therefore became known as the domestic system or cottage industry. There were up to five processes involved in the making of woollen cloth, all of which are described later.

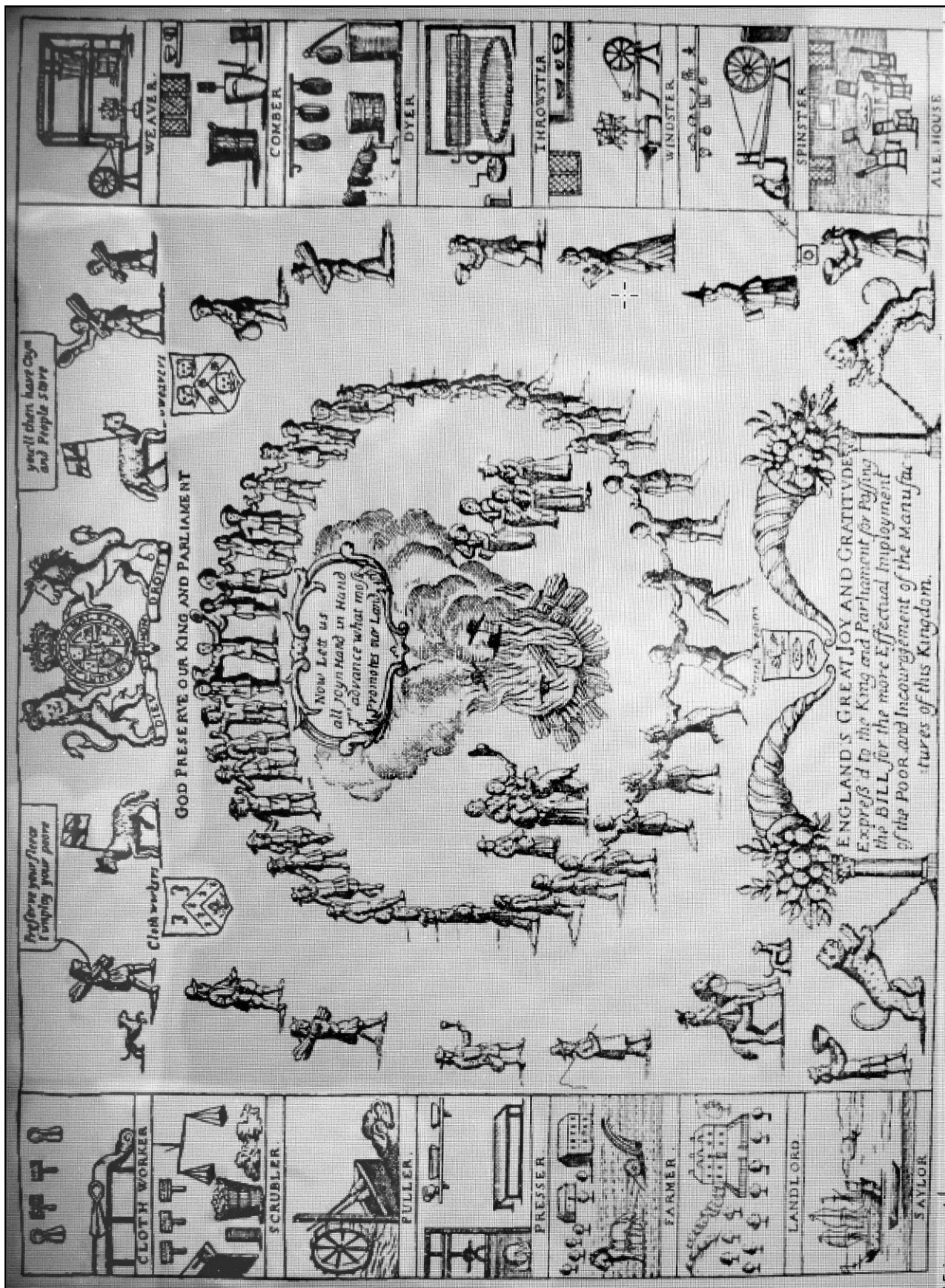
In medieval times, poor families had such a need for yarn to make their own cloth and clothes that practically all girls and unmarried women would keep busy spinning, and "spinster" became synonymous with an unmarried woman. Subsequent improvements with spinning wheels and then mechanical methods made hand-spinning increasingly uneconomic, but as late as the twentieth century hand-spinning remained widespread in poor countries. Spinning was always seen as a job for women and weaving on hand looms which took a lot of stamina as a skilled job for the men helped by the children.

A "clothier" could be one man and his family, who together performed most of the steps of cloth making. The majority of clothiers were not large concerns and it was usually a cottage type industry combining a little farming on the side, mainly raising vegetables and crops that did not require a lot of attention. Attached to the clothier's cottage would have been a piece of land that ranged in sized from one to fifteen acres. The clothier would have perhaps kept some animals: poultry, pigs, a cow or two, a horse and/ or an ass. Combing / carding and spinning were usually done by the clothier's wife and children or purchased from another local person specializing in these processes. The small clothier, assisted by his son or apprentice, would have warped the hand loom and carried out the weaving. Often, as would probably have been the case in Griffydam, local weavers of woollen cloth would bring their cloth from other areas for the final processes of fulling and dyeing, this being a specialized process which required a copious water supply which was available at Griffydam at Cart Brook. The processes carried out there are featured later in the publication.

Shearing and napping and dyeing, appears to have been carried out by Andrew Sharpe in Griffydam and his services would have been in great demand, making him one of the more wealthy local people in the trade.

There would only have been a small number of cottages at Griffydam where people would have been engaged in this industry where women, children and men folk from the youngest to the ancient would have been cleaning and sorting wool sheared from the sheep, woolcombing / carding, spinning and weaving etc. to earn a pittance in order to put bread on the table.

The contribution of women and children was critical to the economics of working family life during the early 1800s, preserving the textile cottage industry in the face of increasing industrialization.



A 17TH CENTURY BROADSIDE ILLUSTRATING THE PROCESSES OF THE WOOLLEN & WORSTED INDUSTRIES

## THE PROCESS OF WOOLCOMBING OR CARDING

- Robert Artless of Griffydam in his will made in 1831 states his profession as a "Woolcomber".
- The 1841 and 1861 censuses give Thomas and Joseph Haywood as **Woolcombers** respectively.

### WOOL SORTERS

Prior to the woolcombing process, experienced persons would sort the wool into various qualities after shearing and washing.



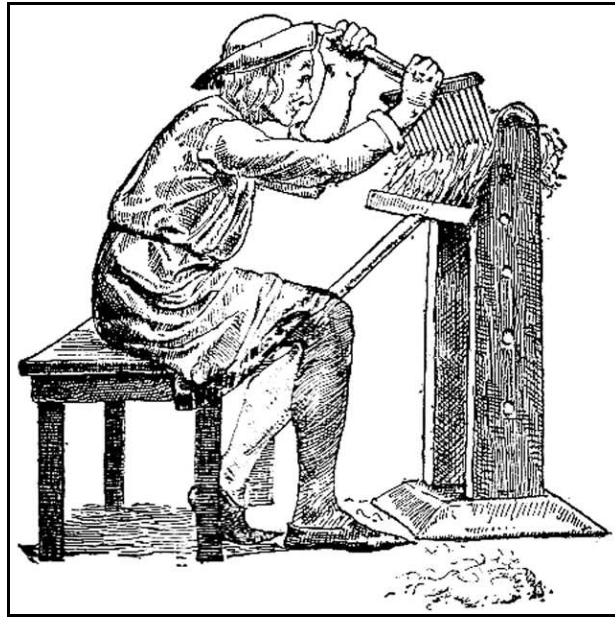
### WOOLCOMBING OR CARDING

A Woolcomber was one whose occupation was to comb wool in order to disentangle and straighten out the fibres in order to prepare them for spinning into what were known as worsted or woollen yarns dependant on what type of wool fleece the wool came from. Worsted yarns were of a fine texture suitable for making into clothing, stockings, gloves etc which was preferred by the Framework Knitters. Yarns which were rougher in texture and thickness were used by the woven woollen cloth weavers.

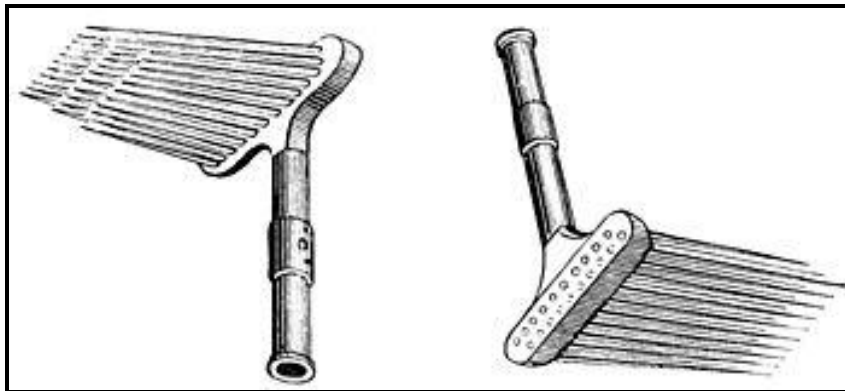
Woolcombing at this time was generally carried out by hand in local communities. The first machine to be really successful at combing fine wool (botany wool), was invented in 1843 by a Mr. Lister, and after that, machines began to be quickly introduced, bringing about the demise of the hand comber.

The process of woolcombing or carding as shown in the photograph below, involved pulling the wool through fine toothed steel combs. However, there were many arguments surrounding the quality of the end product, price, waste etc dependent on whether the wool was combed by hand or on machines which came later.





**A Woolcomber at work**



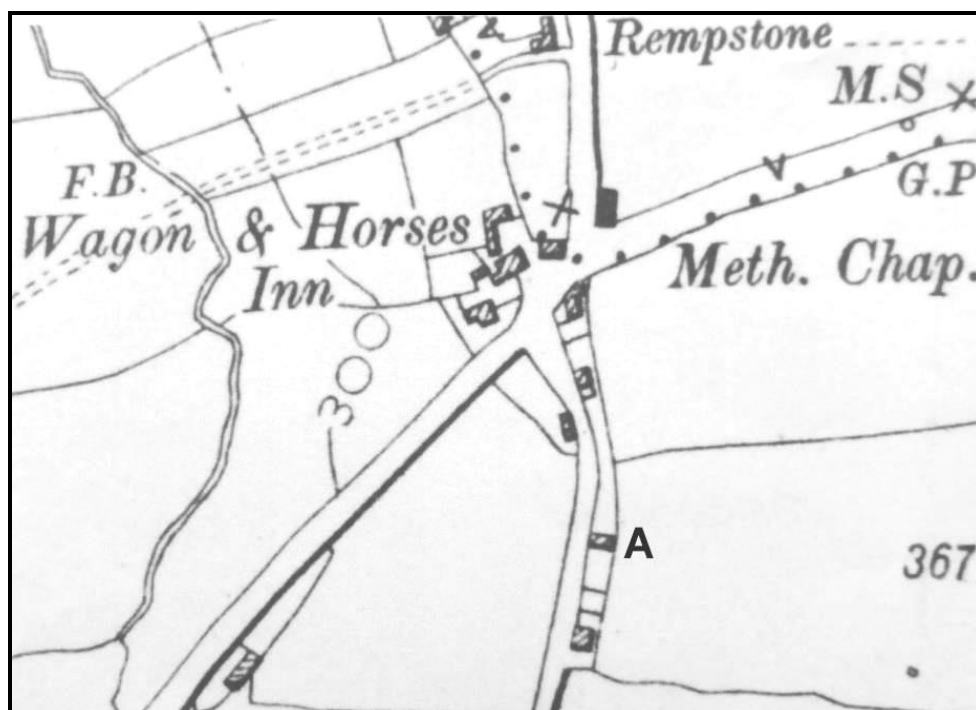
**Typical Hand Combs**

This method of combing the wool was a Flemish invention. The hand-comber employed two combs, one known as a “pad” comb, which was subsequently fixed to a post as shown in the above photograph. The raw material, after being properly prepared, washed, oiled, and separated into convenient handfuls, was secured into the comb prior to fixing to the post. However, it was necessary to heat the wool to a correct temperature to ensure successful combing. After the pad comb was charged with wool, the comb was placed in a comb-pot on a specially adapted stove until it reached the correct temperature. Once properly heated, and with one comb attached to the post, the other held in the hand, the process of combing began. Each comb became a working comb alternately, the teeth of one passing through the tuft of wool upon the other, until the fibers became perfectly smooth, straight, and free of short wool, or “noil,” which was left imbedded in the comb-heads. The wool was scrapped off in rolls (cardings) about 12 inches long and just under an inch thick.

The residue was called the “top”. In the late 1700s, the “wool combers” would have earned 12s. to 14s. per week which compared very favorably with the spinners of wool, who earned in the order of 1s. 6d to 3s. per week. However, most of the wool spinning was carried out by women as a cottage industry as shown below. To put this

into perspective, beef at that time was 3½ d. to 5d per pound, and milk 1½ d per quart.

When Robert Artless wrote his will on July 14<sup>th</sup> 1831 a copy of which follows, he owned a cottage and out-buildings in Elder Lane, Griffydam. The original part of the cottage still exists. It was built sometime between 1806 and 1830. When the enclosure map was drawn for the commissioners in 1806 there was no house shown there. The cottage is the second house in on Elder Lane on the left hand side when entering the lane from the Rempstone Road. The location of the cottage is marked **A** on the 1903 O/S map below.



**An extract from the 1903 published O/S Map**

An indenture for a cottage on Elder Lane, Griffydam, dated 1830, refers to the sale of the 'piece, plot, parcel of land with messuage or tenement buildings' by Joseph, William and Thomas Kidger to **Robert Artless**.

In his following extract from the "Will" of Robert Artless (see next page), he is referred to as a Woolcomber and also in an 1831 indenture as a 'Jersey Woolcomber'. Presumably, Jersey refers to the now extinct breed of Jersey Sheep which were probably being used in the locality to provide a good grade of wool at the time. Leicestershire sheep provided a good supply of long stapled wool which was ideally suitable for worsted spinning and knitting as preferred by the framework knitters. The woven woollen cloth weavers did not demand or need such high quality wool.

This is the last will and Testament of me Robert  
Artlefs of Griffydaw in the parish of Breedon on the  
Hill in the County of Leicester Woolcomber. I give devise  
and bequeath all my real and personal Estate whatsoever  
and wheresoever to my Sons in Law Richard Dolman  
and Joseph Wardle In Trust to permit and suffer my  
wife Mary to receive and take during her life (or so  
long as she may remain a Widow) for her own use  
all the rents and profits of my said real Estate and to  
have and enjoy the use of my personal property - and  
after the decease or second marriage of my said wife  
In Trust to pay and discharge all my just debts and  
particularly those hereafter mentioned that is to say a  
debt of Twelve pounds due to Joseph Kidger, a debt of  
Ten pounds due to my Daughter Sarah if she shall be  
then living or being dead shall have left any child or  
children and a debt of Three pounds due to my Daughter  
Elizabeth if she shall be then living or being dead shall  
have left any child or children - And my will further  
is that the said Richard Dolman and Joseph Wardle  
shall as soon as conveniently may be after the decease  
or second marriage  
of my said wife sell dispose of and convert into  
money all my real and personal Estate & <sup>after</sup> payment of  
all my just debts funeral Expenses and the Expenses  
attending the proving and executing of this my will  
pay and apply the residue of the money to arise  
from such sale of my said personal and real Estate  
in equal parts shares and proportions amongst my  
seven children hereinafter mentioned or amongst such  
3 of them as may be then living - the child or children

## THE PROCESS OF YARN SPINNING



**Turning the wool-comber's material into yarn on a spinning wheel was a cottage industry**

The spinning wheel was reputedly invented in the Islamic world by 1030. It later spread to China by 1090, and then spread from the Islamic world to Europe and India by the 13th century. As the design developed over many years the rotation of the wheel and spindle was operated by a treadle system.

In medieval times, poor families had such a need for yarn to make their own cloth and clothes that practically all girls and unmarried women would keep busy spinning, and "spinster" became synonymous with an unmarried woman. The subsequent improvements with spinning wheels and then mechanical methods made hand-spinning increasingly uneconomic, but as late as the twentieth century hand-spinning remained widespread in poor countries:

As explained under the previous section (cardings) about 12 inches long and just under an inch thick were produced by the woolcomber. These cardings were then turned into a continuous thread by the lady at the spinning wheel. In one old method of spinning the thread, what was known as a distaff was used. This was basically a stick about 3 ft long onto which the carding rolls were placed. This was held under the arm, and the fibres of wool drawn from it were twisted spirally by the forefinger and thumb. As the thread was spun, it was wound onto the spinning wheel spindle.



**AN EXAMPLE OF WOOL CARDINGS**

## THE HAND LOOM WEAVING OF WOOLLEN CLOTH

Apart from the following, we have little research information available on hand loom weavers in Griffydam at the date of writing:-

- In the Griffydam 1841 census John Stanage is listed as a weaver (not a Frame Work Knitter)
- *An inventory on the possessions of Clement Jaram in Griffydam in 1689 (see following page), **looms and goods that belong as to the trade**. This inventory is difficult to transcribe and interpret due mainly to the spellings used, but it certainly demonstrates that Clement Jaram was a poor man and the total value of everything he possessed only came to £4 5s 8d, which was bolstered by £1 3s 4d for his looms and associated items. It was witnessed by Thomas and Joseph Boulbee, who surprisingly only made their mark when doing so.*



7<sup>o</sup>

This is the account of Content Givam

his pens and apparel	0	13	4
his fine brass	0	4	0
his bed and his bedding	0	10	0
one box and one wooden tub	0	4	0
Sum wool and other adthings in the chamber	0	8	6
one rowlboard	0	4	0
one bed table and a form	0	3	0
a lot of brass pot and a tub	0	7	6
herd brass	0	2	0
Sum other of things in the house	0	2	6
one you and one lamb	0	4	6
his looms and gress that belongs to the trade	1	3	4

The whole sum    4 - 5 - 8

proved by Joseph Boulter and Thomas Boulter

Joseph Boulter his mark    Etern or 24 Auguste  
 1689 of Marianne Jorner  
 Legate's gift in the Court of  
 Thomas Boulter his mark    1689 of Marianne Jorner  
 Legate's gift in the Court of

The next process was to weave the yarn / thread into cloth using a handloom. The handloom was originally brought to England by the Romans. The process consisted of interlacing one set of threads of yarn (the warp) with another (the weft). The warp threads are stretched lengthwise in the weaving loom. The weft, the cross-threads, are woven into the warp from a shuttle passing through a shed between the warp and weft made by heddle frames which formed the pattern for the weave. After each pass of the weft through the shed the operator would compact the weave with a pivoted beating frame as shown in the illustration on the preceding page.

It was often the case that a farmer had looms in his farmhouse and controlled all the processes from carding to spinning, weaving, fulling and dyeing. The farmer and children, when farm labour did not take priority, would size the warp, dry it and beam it in the looms. Weavers usually wound their own warps and prepared their own bobbins for the loom.

In 1733, John Kay devised the Flying Shuttle. By pulling a string, the shuttle was rapidly sent from one side of the loom to the other. This invention not only doubled the speed of cloth production, but also enabled large looms to be operated by one person. When Kay showed his invention to the local weavers it received a mixed reception. Some saw it as a way to increase their output. Other weavers were very angry as they feared that it would put them out of work.

By the 1760s, weavers all over Britain were using the Flying Shuttle. However, the increased speed of weaving meant there was now a shortage of yarn. Kay therefore set himself the task of improving the traditional spinning-wheel. When local spinners heard about Kay's plans, his house was broken into and the machine he was working on was destroyed.

According to William Radcliffe the standard of living of people improved during this period: "In the year 1770... the father of the family would earn from eight to ten shillings at his loom, and his sons... along side of him, six to eight shillings per week... it required, six to eight hands to prepare and spin yarn for each weaver... every person from the age of seven to eighty years (who retained their sight and could move their hands) could earn... one to three shillings per week". As one observer pointed out: "Their little cottages seemed happy and contented... it was seldom that a weaver appealed to the parish for relief."

In the areas like Yorkshire the woven cloth was sold to merchants called clothiers who visited the villages with their trains of pack-horses. These men became the first capitalists. To increase production, they sometimes sold raw wool to the spinners. They also sold yarn to weavers who were unable to get enough from family members. Some of the cloth was made into clothes for people living in this country. However, a large amount of cloth was exported to Europe. In areas like Griffydham, the weavers would have possibly visited wool markets in Nottingham and Leicester to sell their woven cloth directly.

The production and export of cloth continued to grow. In order to protect the woollen cloth industry the import of cotton goods was banned in 1700. In the time of Charles II the export of woollen cloth was estimated to be valued at £1 million. By the beginning of the 18th century it was almost £3 million and by 1760 it was £4 million. However, this all changed when James Hargreaves invented the spinning-jenny in 1764. The machine used eight spindles onto which the thread was spun from a corresponding set of rovings. By turning a single wheel, the operator could now spin eight threads at once.



## THE TREATMENT AND FINISHING PROCESSES ASSOCIATED WITH WOVEN WOOLLEN CLOTH

As explained previously, a series of Acts of Parliament dating from 1604 were passed which empowered the enclosure of open field and common and waste land in England and Wales. We are dealing here with a specific Act of Parliament passed in 1806 which affected Griffydam

At the time of the enclosure, both George Harry, Earl of Stamford & Warrington and John Mynors Bulstrode, Gent were given as sole **Lords of the soil** of that common called Griffy Dam. Although we have no way of knowing the extent of the Griffydam common and waste land, it was probably relatively small. In 1863, the whole of the area of Griffydam was adjudged to be c.200 acres.

The original schedule for the enclosure is quite complex and in parts confusing, although it is very detailed in the information provided, which is quite unusual for this type of enclosure enactment schedule.

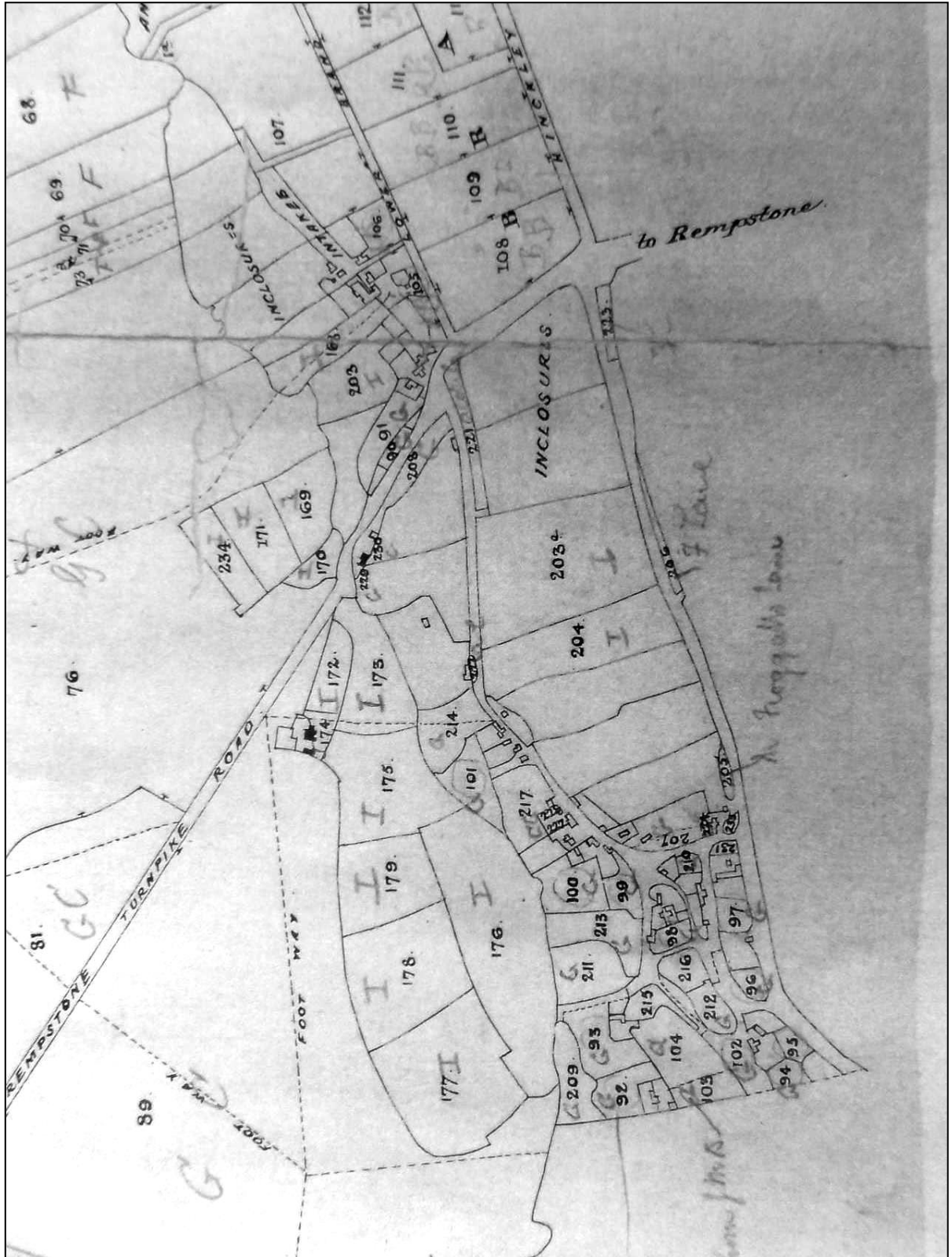
As part of the schedule it lists three parcels of land as follows:-

- An enclosure called the Dye House Close No. 173 containing 2 acres 1 rood and 19 perches.
- An enclosure called the Dye House Close No. 175 containing 3 acres and 29 perches.
- An intake called Dye House Close No.214 on Griffy Dam containing 1 acre 20 perch

These parcel of land numbers can be related to the map on the next page which is an extract from the 1806 Enclosure map centred on Griffydam and the Breedon Brand and drawn for the commissioners by William Henry Smith, Surveyor.

This information is key in that it helps to establish in conjunction with Andrew Sharpe's will which follows later that the processing of woollen cloth took place on the site of the land belonging to the old cottage shown on the plot of land marked 222 on the west side of Elder Lane. The old deeds of this property also confirm it was located on Dye House Close.

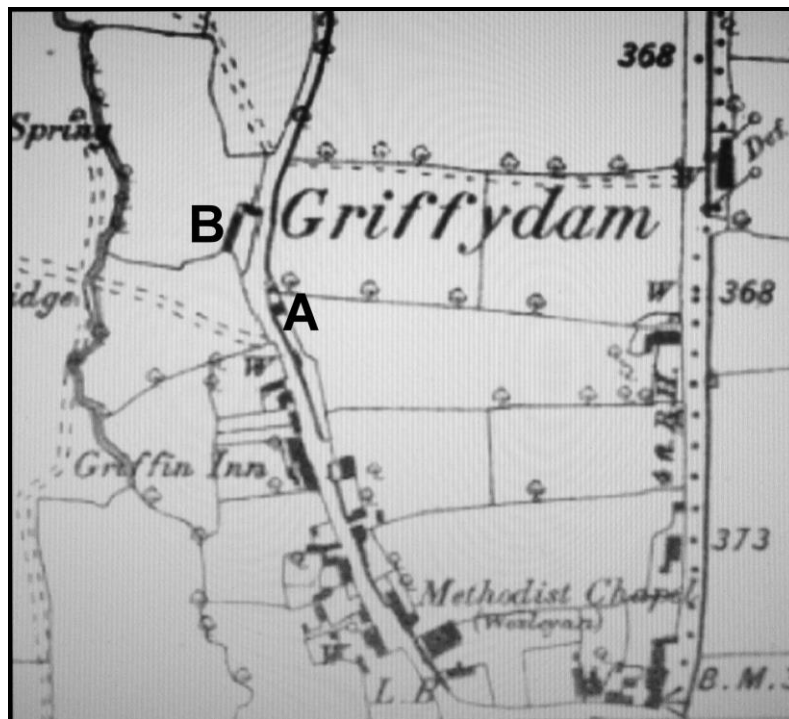
EXTRACT FROM THE 1806 ENCLOSURE PLAN



The photograph below is of the property previously referred to on the 1806 enclosure map sited on plot 222 and owned by John Haywood in 1806. This was demolished in 1996 and a new property built on the same site. Its location is marked **E** on the map below. The three fields referred to as Dye House Close at the time of the 1806 enclosure are shown coloured green on the map on page 23. This area was known as the cunneries where rabbits were once farmed in medieval times and probably linked to Breedon Priory. The footpath which passes through the area is raised into a causeway either side of the footbridge over the brook which is known as "Cart Brook".



This photograph of John Haywood's former house was taken in 1996 prior to the property being demolished



The location of John Haywood's House is shown marked **B** on the above 1881 surveyed, 1885 published O/S map.

There is no doubt in the author's mind that the following "Will" coupled with existing geographical evidence shown in the annotated map on page 23 confirms the existence of woollen cloth treatment / finishing processes being carried out in the area of the Dye House Closes adjacent to Cart brook in the valley below the property marked E. There they would have had a continuous supply of water available, essential to both the fulling and dyeing process.

## TRANSCRIPTION INTO MODERN ENGLISH OF THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF ANDREW SHARPE OF GRIFFITH DAMM DATED 1733

*In the name of God Amen, I Andrew Sharpe of Griffy Dam in the parish of Breedon and the County of Leicester, **Shearman Dyer**, being weak in body but of sound memory, blessed by God, do this 8<sup>th</sup> day of September in this year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and thirty three make and publish this last Will and Testament in the manner following, that is to say, first I give and bequeath to my son John Sharpe all my **coppers and furnaces in the Dye House and all other my tools and implements belonging to my trade of Shearing and Dyeing cloth** on condition he pay to my two sons Andrew Sharpe and William Sharpe or their assigns the sum of ten pounds of lawful money of Great Britain, that is to say to each of them five pounds in twelve months after my demise, but if my son John Sharpe shall default or refuse to pay the said sum of five pounds of lawful money of Great Britain to my son Andrew Sharpe and the sum of like lawful money to my son William Sharpe monthly, my express wish is that I give to my son John Sharpe only one shilling of lawful coins of Great Britain, and all my said **copper furnace in the Dye House and all other tools and implements belonging to my trade of shearing and dyeing of cloth**, that I therefore gave to my son John Sharpe, I give and bequeath them to my son Andrew Sharpe and my son William Sharpe and to their assigns to be equally divided between them. Also, I further give to my son William Sharpe all books of debts due to me and one copper and one long table in the house and one bedstead ?? and mat, one bed bolster and pillows with the blankets thereto belonging. Also, one set of curtains and two pairs of sheets. I also give to my two daughters, that is to say to my daughter Ann Sharpe and to my daughter Sarah Sharpe and to their assigns all the rest and residue of my household stuff, goods and chattels and personal estate whatsoever on condition they pay all my debts and defray my funeral expenses. And I make and ordain my daughter Anne Sharpe and my daughter Sarah Sharpe exortrixes of this my last Will and Testament hereby revoking, disannulling and making void all former Wills and bequests by me made, and believing this to be my last Will and Testament. – In witness whereof I have here unto set my hand and seal the day and year above written.*

*Signed, sealed and delivered, published, pronounced and declared  
By the said Andrew Sharpe on and for his last Will and Testament  
Andrew Sharpe*

*In the presence of us who were present at the signing and sealing thereof  
(own Signature)*

*And saw the interlinement? of and one copper and long table in the house  
Being interlined betwixt the ?? and four with lines ? before the  
Signing and sealing hereof.*

*Eliz Doleman  
Francis Doleman*

## THE FULLING PROCESS

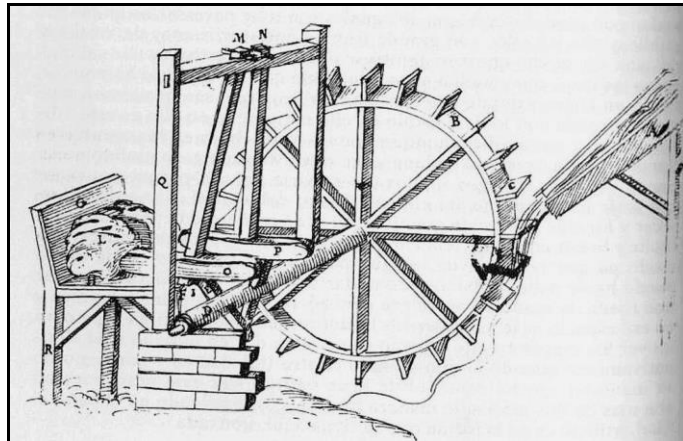
Woven cloth from the weaver's loom still contained the sheep's natural oils and greases. Its fibres also had an open, loose texture. It was the job of the fullers to turn this basic cloth into the finished article. This meant cleaning it, shrinking it and then re-shaping it to produce a thickened and textured fabric.

The first step in this process was scouring, to rid it of some of its grease and other impurities, the cloth was smeared in soap and soda, submerged in troughs full of hot water and trampled by foot or put between rollers.

It was next transferred to a fulling mill where it first put into a trough of human urine and pounded beneath large wooden mallets known as 'fulling stocks'. Cloth might be passed through the stocks several times, with the contents of the troughs being changed each time. The cloth was again pounded in troughs containing 'fuller's earth', a natural form of dry/powdered clay. Together, the urine and clay, cleansed and thickened the cloth's fibres. Lastly, the cloth was pounded in troughs holding soapy water.

Care was needed to ensure the whole cloth received an equal, consistent beating, and the operators needed to be skilled enough to know when the cloth had been fullled sufficiently. Any lack of attention could lead to holes in the fabric, ruining a whole bolt of cloth

## THE WORKINGS OF A TYPICAL BASIC FULLING MILL

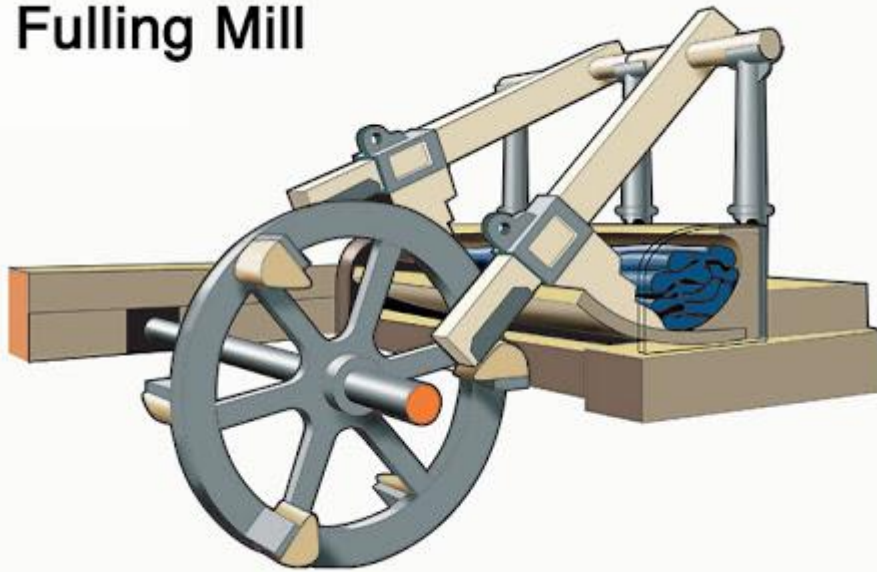


**"The basic operation of a Fulling Mill"**

In the above diagram water is directed from the Leat (water course) onto an undershot water wheel which in turn drives a form of cam shaft with tappets which operates the "Fulling Stocks" to pound the cloth which would have been in an enclosed trough as described above.

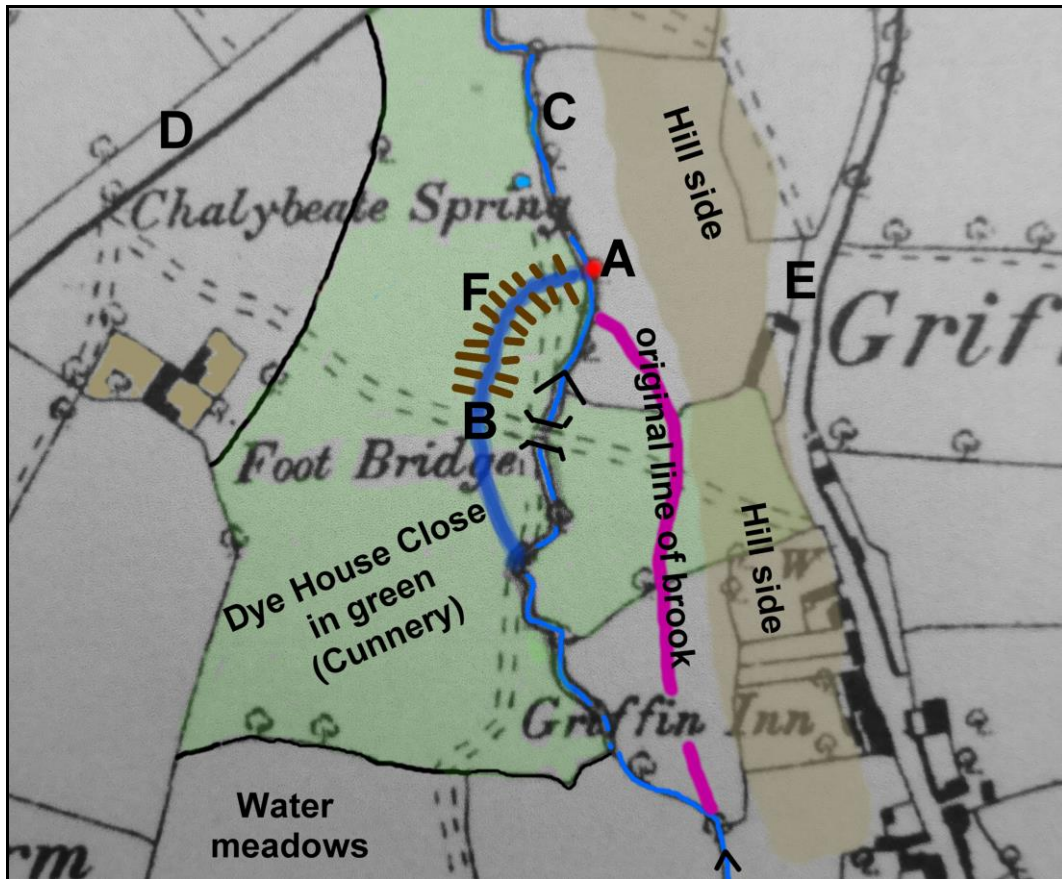
**This would have been a similar arrangement to the "Fulling Mill" at Griffydiam. See the following page.**

## Fulling Mill



**AN ALTERNATIVE DESIGN**

## THE SITE OF THE FULLING MILL AT GRIFFYDAM

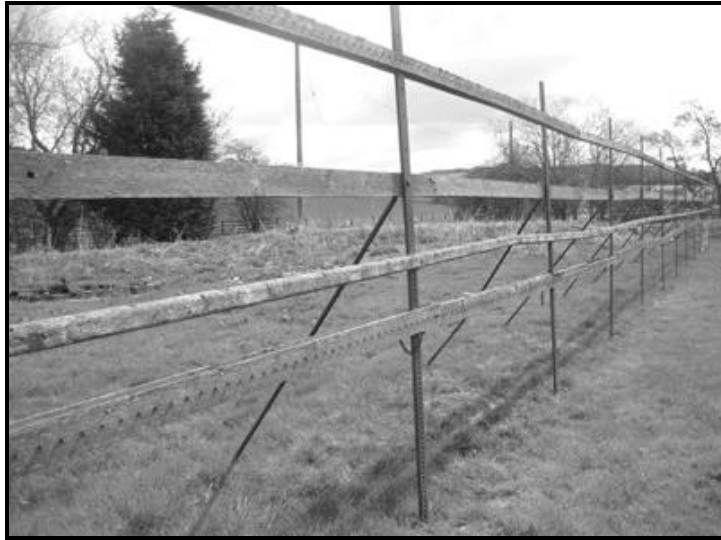


The above annotated illustration is based on the 1881/2 surveyed 1885 issued O/S map.

- A** Site of a “Fulling Mill” and buildings to house and heat the copper vats used in the dyeing process.
- B** Leat (water course) diverted from a high point on Cart Brook to drive the fulling mill water wheel as shown on the preceding page
- F** Leat Embankment
- C** Area known as Cart-brook as well as being the name given to the brook
- D** Rempstone Road
- E** The old property on Elder Lane which was demolished in 1996.

The footpath, shown as a dashed line through the area is raised into a causeway either side of the footbridge over the brook.

## THE TENTERING PROCESS



Following the fulling process, the cloth was attached to a tentering frame in order to stretch it to the required size by setting the weave to a consistent dimension and tension. It also acted as a way of evenly drying and bleaching the cloth in the sunlight.

As shown above, the tentering frame was a wooden framework, similar to a fence, consisting of a number of upright posts or rails set at intervals in a line, fixed to which, one above the other, were two long horizontal bars stretching from one end of the row to the other. Whilst the top bar was set, the lower one, set parallel to the upper one, was adjustable to suit the required width of the fulled cloth. Fixed all along the bars every three or four inches were tenterhooks, L-shaped iron hooks, pointed at both ends. The tenterhooks on the top bar were set so they pointed upwards, while those on the lower adjustable bar pointed downwards, this meant that after fixing the edge of the fulled cloth to the tenterhooks, the frames could be adjusted to cope with the differing widths of cloths.



In the background of the first photograph can be seen rows of "open sided" tenter sheds where the tenter frames could be placed during inclement weather.

The expression "to be on tenterhooks" came from this process. During the fulling process the cloth was subject to considerable shrinking in both length and width. Racking or tenting would stretch the cloth to replace some of its length lost during fulling, if necessary, but there was an Act of Parliament against stretching cloth excessively, passed in 1550, which was directed particularly at the Welsh cloth makers.

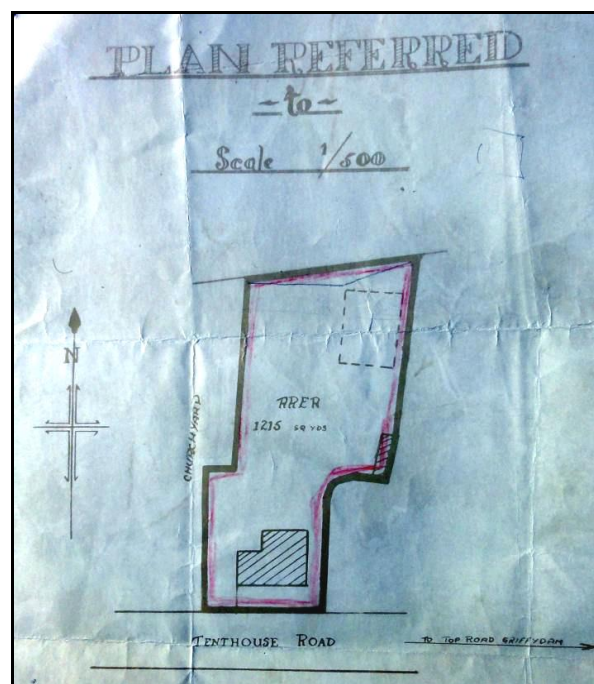
The tenter-frames, also known as "racks", were usually set up in fields adjacent to the fulling mill, and the land on which this took place was often referred to as "Rack Close".

### THE "TENTAS", GRIFFYDAM – NAME THOUGHT TO HAVE DERIVED FROM "TENTHOUSE"

The following is transcribed from a publication by H. Butler Johnson c.1910 entitled "Forgotten Industries":-

*The name, the "Tenthouse", of a building in the hamlet of Griffydham affords a hint, and a hint only, of the making of cloth here at some former time; a tenthouse being the shed containing the tenter frame on which the cloth was stretched after being dyed. The modern expression "on tenterhooks" will doubtless be familiar to our readers.*

In fact, an old conveyance for the sale of the "White House" includes the following plan showing that the road now known as "The Tentas" was in fact named "Tenthouse Road" and it was still called that in 1929. By the 1939 register it was being referred to as the "Tentus" with a house named "Tentus House". The present name "The Tentas" did not appear to have come into being till c.1959. Altogether very confusing



It is quite plausible to imagine that Tenter Frames were made in a building there with

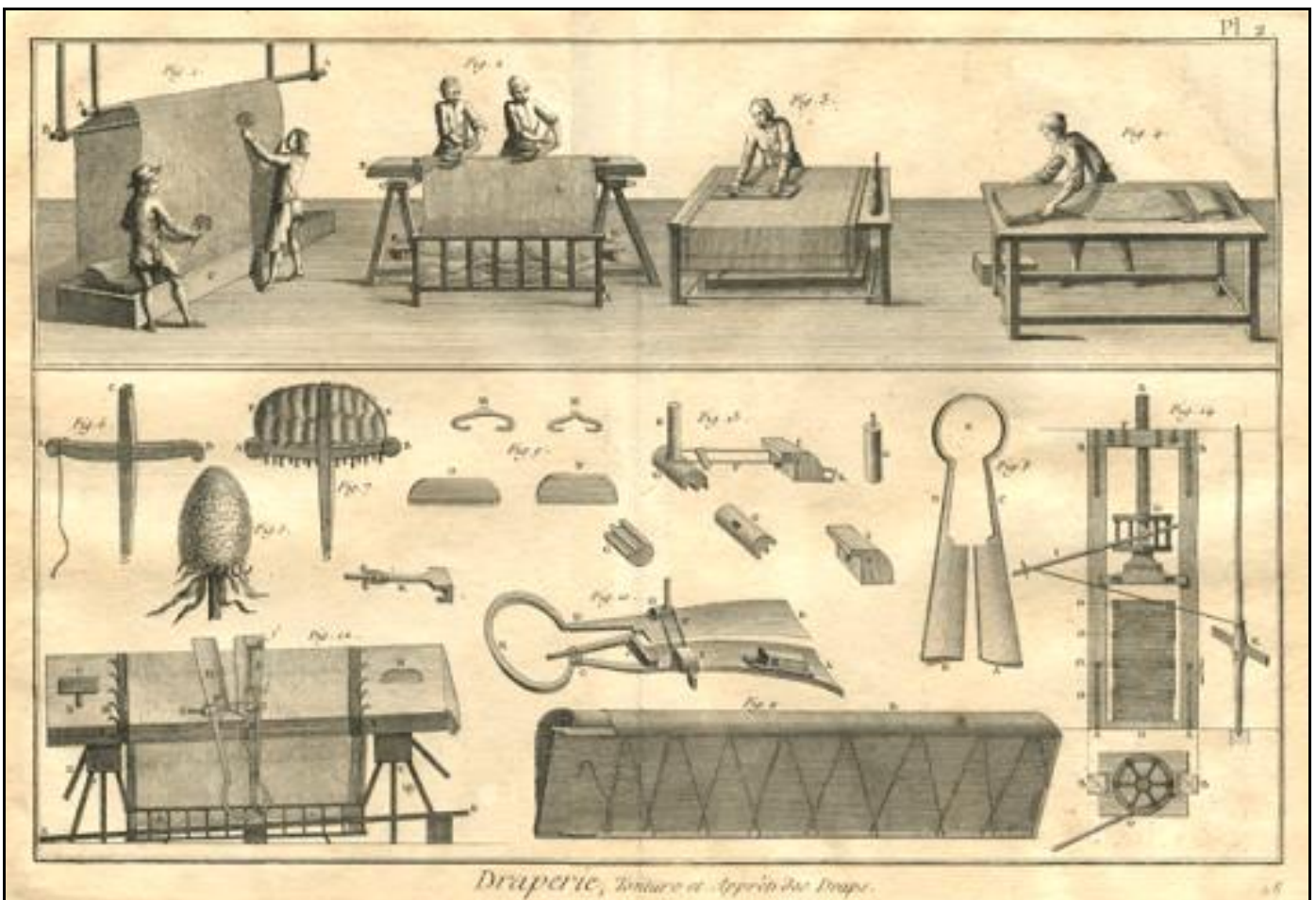
the Tenter Hooks made by a local blacksmith.

Tenter frame sheds were open at the sides to allow the wind to blow through in order to dry the woven woollen cloth. They would have been quite long and it is difficult to imagine that there would have been space for those on the Tentas or in fact any reason to site them there away from where the fulling processes were carried out.

It is unlikely that proof will be found as to what H. Butler Johnson was referring to when he wrote his history about trades in the local area

## SHEARING THE CLOTH

The reference to shearing in Andrew Sharpe's Will was not sheep shearing as we now know it, but was a method of removing nap from the woven cloth caused particularly when curly haired woollen yarns were used. Following the cleaning and fulling processes, and the cloth had been stretched and dried on the tenter frames, a shearer would use razor sharp blades to remove the excess wool to give a finer finish to the cloth. After this, the nap was raised again often with the use of dried teasel plant heads, and the whole process repeated again until the smooth and soft quality of cloth required was achieved. The woollen cloth was stretched out onto hooks on a frame to make it taught whilst the shearing process was carried out.



## THE DYEING PROCESSES

The dyeing of the cloth would normally have been carried out after shearing or napping to deepen the colour and make it more attractive to the eye. However it could have been carried out either after carding the wool or after the yarn had been spun and made into skeins and then perhaps as a final process after shearing and napping to deepen the colour.

Dyeing in the yarn would give the hand loom weaver the opportunity to weave coloured patterns but it is hard to imagine this would have been an important requirement in local villages in the 18th century. However, yarn produced for the framework knitters would most likely have been died at that stage. .

In Andrew Sharpe's Will he makes the following statement:-

***I bequeath to my son John Sharpe all my said coppers and furnaces in the Dye House and all other my tools and implements belonging to my trade of Shearing and Dyeing cloth.***

This seems to be adequate proof that Andrew Sharpe was only involved with the dyeing of cloth and not yarn.

One can reasonably assume that the dye house and shearing house buildings would have been located in the vicinity of the fulling mill and numerous 18th century bricks can be found in the brook adjoining the fulling mill site:-



**18th century hand made bricks in cart brook**