

John Shaw Brown of Edenderry

There had been a bleach works on the site at Edenderry since the late 1700s, which had later been turned into a flourmill. John Shaw Brown acquired the flourmill at Edenderry converting the existing premises to a weaving factory and erecting another large weaving shed.

The factory, known as the St. Ellen Works, developed from 1866 onwards into a successful enterprise, trading under the name of John Shaw Brown and Sons.



*Site of John Shaw Brown
& Sons factory at Edenderry*

The site, which John Shaw acquired, extended to 46 acres of rich pasture bounded by clusters of mature trees. The Russell family had built their bleach works on the low-lying land close to the riverbank harnessing the waterpower in a mill dam and race. From 1866 onwards, houses, which formed the village, were built on the level above the factory buildings in a cul-de-sac surrounded by an attractive landscape of hills and mature trees bordered by the river.

Richardson, Sons, & Owden .

The Richardson family were one of the biggest linen families and owned a number of mills, bleach works and warehouses covering all aspects of the linen trade. They had extensive bleach works at Glenmore, beside Lambeg.

The site at Lambeg Bleaching Dying and Finishing Company had been a bleaching green, since 1626. In more recent times the site was taken over by Coca Cola who turned it into a bottling plant.

Hilden

Louis Crommelin, a French Huguenot who settled in Lisburn in 1700, is largely credited with the development of the linen industry in Ulster in the early 18th century. He set up a bleach works in Hilden in the early 1700s.

In 1784 John Barbour, who came from Scotland, established a linen thread works in Lisburn. At the same time, his son, William, bought the derelict bleach green at Hilden and set up business. Later, the thread works were transferred to Hilden and as early as 1817, it was employing one hundred and twenty-two workers. In 1823, William Barbour bought a former bleach mill at Hilden and built a water-powered twisting mill. The Linen Thread Company was founded 1898 and it quickly became a large international company. In fact, it became the largest linen thread mill in the world.



*Barbour Thread Mill
at Hilden as it is today*

By 1914, it employed about 2,000 people. The company built a model village for its workforce in Hilden, which consisted of three hundred and fifty houses, two schools, a community hall, children's playground and village sports ground.



Some of the few remaining mill worker terrace houses in Hilden

Another of John Barbour's sons, Thomas, was a founder of the linen thread industry in the USA.

Lagan Valley Island

In 1760, Messrs Thomas Gregg and Waddell Cunningham built a Vitriol factory in Lisburn on the island that had been created by building the canal. It produced vitriol or sulphuric acid, which was used to bleach the brown linen white. This greatly speeded up the process of producing the linen. The island was named "Vitriol Island" after it. In 1840, the Richardsons who changed it to the manufacture of linen and thread purchased it. In 1867 they set up the world famous Island Spinning Company.



Locks at Lagan Valley Island

Coulson's Factory

In 1764, William Coulson established a handloom damask manufactory. Damask linen was woven with an intricate pattern and damask weavers were the elite. Coulson's was an early factory, before this, most weaving was done in the home. The cloth was finished at a nearby bleach yard until 1823 when a bleach works was built at Sprucefield. Between 1823 and 1826, the Coulsons of Lisburn and Michael Andrews of Ardoyne introduced the Jacquard machine (invented by Louis Jacquard of Lyons in France in the year 1801). Coulson's reputation for the highest quality linen was sealed when Queen Charlotte, wife of George III, ordered a set of table linen from them. The nobility of Britain and Ireland and other countries then ordered their linen from Coulson's.