

William Douglas and Co

of Pendleton

Cotton spinners

William Douglas (1745 - 1810) was notorious for his harsh treatment of child employees.

1792 Advertisement: 'To COTTON MILLS. ELOPED, From the Service of Mess. William Douglas & Co. Pendleton,

'SAMUEL SELF, aged 16 or 17 Years, fresh coloured, black Hair, stout made, had on when he went away, Corderoy Coat, Waistcoat, and Breeches, Red Silk Handkerchief on his neck.

'JOHN DIAMOND, aged 15 or 16 Years, slender made, had on when he went away, Corderoy Coat, Waistcoat, and Breeches.

'JOHN RITCHER. He is about 15 Years of Age, round faced, dark brown Hair, well made, had on when he went away, Corderoy Coat, Waistcoat, and Breeches.

'JOSEPH STEWART, 18 or 19 Years of Age, stout made, black Hair, had on when he went away, Corderoy Coat and Breeches, and Printed Waistcoat.

'JOHN ESSEX, 16 or 17 Years of Age, slender made, black Hair, had on when he went away, Corderoy Coat, Waistcoat, and Breeches.

'WILLIAM EMMS, 19 Years of Age, stout made, red Hair, and pitted with the Small-Pox ; had on a white Waistcoat, and a red Handkerchief.

'ROBERT WALKER, 15 or 16 Years of Age, has a remarkable red mark on his left Temple, had on a Corderoy Coat, Waistcoat, and Breeches.

'JAMES ELLARD, 15 years Old, had on a Corderoy Coat, Waistcoat, and Breeches.

'Whoever employs these Apprentices after this Notice, will be prosecuted, and any Person giving Intelligence of them at Pendleton will be handsomely rewarded.'^[1]

Comment: William Douglas's wish for these youths to be returned did not stem from his concern that they hadn't received the full benefit of apprentice training, but rather that they were his legal property. William 'Black' Douglas was one of many mill owners who took pauper children from various parts of the country, and, as indentured apprentices, made them work long hours in return for food, accommodation and clothing. This latter point explains why the advertisement was able to describe their attire so precisely. This type of child labour was more commonly found in mills in rural districts. In towns, the local population provided child labour at very low wages, perhaps providing a cheaper option for mill owners. Douglas's mill may have been a rural location (see 'Location' below).

1799 Advertisement: 'STOLEN, From William Douglas and Co's Warehouse, Eirchin-lane, near Church-street, A BAG of PERAMBUCO COTTON, weighing 116 lbs, Marks and Nos.... Whoever will give Information of the Person or Persons who committed the above Robbery, shall, on Conviction, receive Five Guineas from Mess. Douglas and Co. and Five Guineas from the Society for the Profecution of Felons and Receivers of Stolen Goods, at the Golden Lion in Deansgate, Manchester.'^[2]

Location

Various sources refer to the mill as Douglas Green Mill. The 1893 map shows Douglas Green close to Pendleton Old Hall (which had been William's residence). Also shown is [Irwell Bleach Works](#), on the bank of the River Irwell behind the hall, served by a weir. This is almost certainly the site of Douglas's mill. South west of the hall an estate of terraced houses had been built, but to the north and east the area consisted of fields.