The global connections of cotton in the Derwent Valley mills in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries

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Introduction

By the later eighteenth century cotton was a global product, key to processes of industrialisation in Britain, extensively grown in South Asia, Africa and on slave-worked plantations in the Americas and widely traded as cloth in domestic, colonial and overseas markets. Yet the geographies of cotton and the people and places tied together in its production and processing have often been downplayed and grounded studies of the particularity of such connections remain rare. This is especially the case in areas of early mechanised cotton thread and cloth production in rural areas of Britain where water power was available and skilled labour could be mobilised, including the Derwent Valley, Derbyshire. Home to the world’s first successful water-powered cotton spinning mill and now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Derwent Valley Mills’ connections with places and people beyond Britain appear truncated. This is typical of a range of rural heritage sites.

This chapter draws on historical research undertaken as part of a year-long Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Connected Communities project which has investigated the global cotton connections of rural Derbyshire. It follows on from a previous AHRC scoping project conducted by Seymour and Jones, which highlighted both the neglect of research on rural textiles from slavery and colonial history perspectives and a lack of consideration of such histories in rural textile venues. The Global Cotton Connections project set out to address these gaps through a specific case study of Derbyshire as a leading early rural cotton textile area. This chapter focuses on the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a period when the Derwent Valley was a key site in the industrialisation of cotton textile production in Britain.

The chapter firstly gives an overview of the wider Global Cotton Connections project and its aims. It then introduces the key debates with which this particular chapter engages and the approaches adopted. Turning to the Derwent Valley, it outlines the themes of cotton connections to be addressed – namely raw cotton supplies, cotton product markets and perspectives on slavery

and situates a range of Derwent Valley cotton mill owners in relation to these. It then focuses on a case study of the Strutt family business in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This work draws on material from a range of secondary sources, database evidence and archival research. The key questions posed are returned to in the concluding remarks.

The wider Global Cotton Connections project

The wider Global Cotton Connections project, sub-titled ‘East Meets West in the Derbyshire Peak District, UK’, set out to address a gap in both historical understanding and public communication of the global connections of rural cotton textile production in Derbyshire, a leading site of industrial change in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Peak District contains the UNESCO designated Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site, yet the global connections of this rural industrial area are in the main obscured, strengthening the feelings of alienation often reported by Black and Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups in British rural and heritage venues. The overall aim of the project was to examine the global histories and legacies of cotton in the Derbyshire Peak District through active engagement with local groups of diverse heritage backgrounds. Four objectives were set out:

- historical investigation of the global cotton connections of the Derbyshire Peak District;
- examination of the histories and representations of these in mill venues with diverse heritage groups;
- development of heritage legacy materials;
- reflection on processes of engagement with diverse community groups.

The historical investigation was just one part of this small project and only a limited amount of original research has been possible. The decision was made to undertake scoping of possibilities and to look for indicative, illustrative connections as a comprehensive, systematic study was not considered feasible in such a small project with multiple objectives.

The Global Cotton Connections project has drawn on a number of other research projects. In particular it has built from the AHRC Scoping study conducted at the University of Nottingham by Seymour and Jones on Reconnecting Rural Communities: Black Presences and Histories and Legacies of Slavery and Colonialism in the British countryside, c.1600-1939 and from the Sheffield Hindu Samaj Heritage Project, British Raj in the Peak District, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and facilitated by Esme Cleall from the University of Sheffield as part of an AHRC Researching Community Heritage initiative. It has also developed alongside another HLF project, The Colour of
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Money, run by the community organisation, Bright Ideas Nottingham, under the Slave Trade Legacies banner. The Sheffield Hindu Samaj, Bright Ideas Nottingham and the emergent Nottingham Slave Trade Legacies group have been key partners in the Global Cotton Connections project, providing the perspectives of local people from BAME groups, most notably those of African Caribbean and Indian heritage backgrounds. The Director of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site has supported the project and has been part of its advisory panel. The Arkwright Society has also been supportive, providing meeting venues free of charge and requesting feedback from the community groups and the wider project team.

Key debates about the Industrial Revolution in a global context
This chapter engages with two key debates surrounding the Industrial Revolution and its leading protagonists. The first of these is the relationship between the development of industrial systems of production in Britain and European colonial expansion including the slave trade and systems of production based on enslaved labour. The second is the roles played by British industrialists in struggles over slavery and abolition. Both debates are informed by Williams’ seminal 1944 work on Capitalism and Slavery which argued firstly that the slave trade and slavery were key to the economic success of Britain and its Atlantic empire until American Independence, and secondly that abolition of the Atlantic slave trade and slavery were driven mainly by economic rather than humanitarian motives. Both elements of Williams’ thesis have been strongly contested and critiqued, particularly in relation to the economic importance of slave trade revenues and the chronology of decline in the West Indian economy stimulating abolitionist support. However, a growing interest in the wider Atlantic economic context and the more recent work of Inikori on slavery and industrialisation, helped bring the debate over the contribution of slavery to British industrialisation forward again. By the later 1990s Drescher reported a ‘broadening consensus on slavery’s decisive role in the creation of the Atlantic economic system’ which has ‘continued to stimulate the more unresolved debate over slavery’s precise contribution to British industrialization’. There is certainly greater recent recognition amongst economic historians that Atlantic slavery contributed significantly to industrialisation in Britain. Indeed Beckert argues that the cotton industry was central to the making of modern global capitalism and that early cotton-based industrialisation in Britain was driven by ‘war capitalism’, ‘resting on the violent expropriation of land and labor in Africa and the Americas’, through imperial expansion and enslavement. Others have been more cautious, with Ellis and Engerman arguing that ‘while slavery had important long-run economic implications ... and ... certainly “helped” that

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Revolution along ... it did not by itself cause the British Industrial Revolution’. Such a perspective is supported by comparative studies of other European powers, heavily involved with transatlantic slavery but which did not experience early industrialisation. Nonetheless, the influence of the slave trade and Atlantic slavery is now firmly on the agenda of those interested in the Industrial Revolution, with debates broadened beyond the Atlantic world to include the wider international influences from the east and Indian subcontinent in particular.

The second debate the chapter engages with surrounds the role of industrialists in struggles over slavery and abolition. While many industrialists, fearful of negative impacts on their businesses, opposed movements in the eighteenth century to abolish the slave trade, a number of leading industrialists were abolitionists, including Josiah Wedgwood (1730-1795), and more modestly Matthew Boulton (1728-1809) and James Watt (1736-1819). Watt was a strong critic of slavery which he found ‘disgraceful to humanity’ and Boulton was a supporter of the Black abolitionist, Equiano’s anti-slavery tour visit to Birmingham in 1789.Yet this did not preclude them from having important business connections with slavery-based production systems. For example Boulton, Watt & Co’s steam engines found important markets on slave-worked plantations in the Americas in the early nineteenth century.

The case study work presented here does not pretend to resolve such debates. Instead it seeks to make a contribution through cultural and qualitative approaches by mapping out illustrative examples of global cotton connections and their wider significance. It does so through adoption of an approach developed by the geographer Ian Cook in his cultural economic strategy of ‘following things’ and their various impacts from production to consumption and by examining the ways in which Derwent Valley Mill owners engaged with slavery, both in terms of business linkages and professed attitudes.

The Derwent Valley cotton mill owners
The historical global cotton connection themes which are pursued here relate to raw cotton supplies, dealt with mainly via qualitative analysis but with some quantitative elements; product markets, considered mainly through tracing the Strutt family’s Nottingham clients; and the private views and public actions of the cotton mill owners and their families towards slavery.

In terms of raw cotton supplies the timeframe adopted in this chapter predates the domination of the British market by the slave-produced cotton of the southern states of America – by the time of the American Civil War the USA supplied over three-quarters (77%) in late 1850s) of the 800m pounds of raw cotton used in Britain. Instead, in the 1770s and 1780s most raw cotton imported into Britain came from the West Indies and Levant (particularly

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western Anatolia and Macedonia), with West Indian slave-produced supplies rising rapidly to over 12m pounds by 1790. Brazil was also an important source of raw cotton in the last two decades of the eighteenth century, second only to the West Indies, with supplies characterised by a long staple variety well suited to the new factory-based technologies. Early cotton production there was again dominated by enslaved labour and demand for its produce boomed following the outbreak of the American War of Independence (1776-1783). This was also a period during which, despite the recognised quality of cotton textiles produced in the Indian subcontinent, its raw cotton was deemed by the British to be inferior in quality and subjected to programmes of colonial ‘improvement’, especially after they took control of western India in 1818.

There is scattered evidence of raw cotton sources used by a number of the Derwent Valley mill owners but systematic sets of records over a number of years are lacking, with the exception of those of the Strutts. Original records relating to the Arkwrights’ operations in the Derwent Valley are not available in publicly accessible repositories. However, some insight into their raw cotton sources can be gleaned from secondary sources. From around 1790, Richard Arkwright senior reportedly transferred his business to Nicholas Waterhouse, the largest of the Liverpool cotton brokers. In 1799, Richard Arkwright Junior bought 1,300 bags of raw cotton worth £36,000 from Waterhouse. As Waterhouse was also the main Liverpool broker for the Strutts at this time it is not unreasonable to assume the raw cotton sources used by the Arkwrights during the 1790s were similar to those used by the Strutts (whose records are examined in more detail below). The raw cotton supplies of the Evans family of Darley Abbey from 1783 to 1810 are discussed in some detail by Jean Lindsay in her 1960 paper. She argues that the most important supply areas were the West Indies and Brazil, with some Sea Island cotton from the southern states of America sourced after 1804. She makes further reference to supplies coming from the Pernambuco and Maranhão regions of Brazil, Suriname and Demerara (now Guyana) on the north coast of South America and Domingo, Grenada, Barbados, the Leeward Islands, Tobago and Martinique in the West Indies. One of the named suppliers of Maranhans (from the province of Maranhão in Brazil) in 1798 was the Earle family, Liverpool merchants involved in the slave trade and also plantation owners. Entries in the out letter book for 1794-96 of another Derwent Valley cotton spinner, Peter Nightingale of Lea, reveal his interest in 1795 in ‘fine West India Cotton’ from London, and a request for ‘good Maranhon Cotton’ from his agent in Manchester.

There is less information on where cotton products from the Derwent Valley found markets. Lindsay reports the Evanses had agents in London, Manchester, Blackburn, Leicester and Nottingham (where clients included the hosiers, Cox

& Sons) and also sold considerable quantities of yarn direct to manufacturers. In addition they used Greaves, their London cotton broker, to sell knitting yarn and sewing cotton into domestic and overseas markets. There is also evidence of attempts by the Evanses to extend markets directly with hosiers in Bristol, Dublin and Boston.

None of the main Derwent Valley cotton mill owning families appear to have been investors in the slave trade, proprietors of plantations or recipients of compensation for enslaved Africans at abolition. Instead there is evidence that they had abolitionist sympathies in respect both to the abolition of the slave trade and slavery itself. Richard Arkwright senior was in business in Manchester with William Brocklehurst and John Whittensby, ‘both members of the Manchester Committee of the Society for the Purpose of Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade’. He also bought a small number of £50 shares (3) in the Sierra Leone Company (1791-1807). This Company was the more business-oriented successor to the failed Sierra Leone Settlement (or Province of Freedom) (1786-1791), a more radical philanthropic African resettlement project, involving emancipated and free Africans from London and the Americas as well as Black and white abolitionists, in which Granville Sharp was a leading player. The Sierra Leone Company was led by prominent abolitionists, including William Wilberforce, Granville Sharp and John Clarkson, brother of Thomas and its first superintendent. It had many other investors drawn from the Anglican evangelist Clapham Sect but also included industrialists and West Indian proprietors as shareholders. Driven more by Christian than emancipatory zeal, it mixed the desire, in the words of one of its directors, to promote ‘just government, arts and civilization among the Natives’ and opposition to the slave trade, with ‘fair progressive trade’. The Company was expected to yield returns to its shareholders and, unlike its predecessor, was governed from London. Arkwright’s investment may signal an interest in developing cotton supplies direct from Senegal; West Indian investors reportedly were likewise keen to develop sugar production. The Company’s successor, the African Institution (1807-1827), certainly promoted the growing of raw cotton in Sierra Leone though the motivation in the early years seems to have been more to guard against interruption of supplies caused by trade disputes with America than to replace slave-produced raw materials with free labour cotton. Walter Evans (1764-1839) of Darley Mill was another Sierra Leone Company investor, with 5 shares. Walter, was a known philanthropist and married Elizabeth Evans (née Strutt), widow of his half-brother, William, who had links with Wilberforce (see below). Elizabeth’s son William (1788-1856), by her first marriage, was an active and persistent abolitionist, a director of the African Institution and a frequent anti-slavery petitioner in parliament.
where he supported Buxton’s 1832 call for the immediate abolition of slavery. The chapter now turns to a more detailed account of the Strutt family, their raw cotton supplies, product markets and stance in relation to slavery.

The Struts – raw cotton supplies

By the early nineteenth century, the Struts were amongst England’s largest cotton thread producers. Jedediah Strutt (1726-97), hosier and partner of a device to manufacture ribbed stockings, had been a junior partner (with Samuel Need, a Nottingham hosier and disserter) in the first successful water powered cotton spinning mill venture at Cromford, led by Richard Arkwright senior. He left this partnership in 1782 shortly after the first mill at Belper had been completed and developed his family cotton empire at Belper, Milford and Derby. This spinning and textile empire was fuelled by raw cotton supplies from across the world, where the empires of European states were being developed. The following section considers the Struts’ raw cotton sourcing in terms of mapping where the cotton came from, outlining the relative importance of different source locations, considering who supplied the cotton and investigating local contexts.

In analysing the raw cotton supplies of the Struts we have drawn on Fitton and Wadsworth’s use of their cotton records information from 1794-1817. This includes annual information on bags of cotton purchased and the types of cotton organised by broad geographic region. We have mapped this information for the overall time period, and for the two time periods distinguished by Fitton and Wadsworth, 1794-1803 and 1804-1817. The maps show the relative importance of different locations in terms of proportion of the overall numbers of bags of cotton supplied. As the weight of bags varied considerably (though not consistently by cotton type or location) we also checked these distributions using actual weight data (gross weight) for a period of around five years from Sept 1793 to Sept 1798 using an original cotton ledger in the Derbyshire Record Office (DRO) and compared this to the bag data reported by Fitton and Wadsworth for 1794-98 which is a roughly comparable five year period. Unfortunately Fitton and Wadsworth do not clearly identify the sources used for their analysis in the 1950s.

While the Struts were not slave traders or plantation owners, in the early years of operation their Derbyshire mills relied heavily on raw cotton produced by enslaved people in the Americas. From 1794-1817 the bag data presented in Fitton and Wadsworth suggests their main sources of raw cotton came from Brazil, the West Indies, Guyana and Suriname, with smaller amounts from the southern United States and India (see Figure 1). They certainly seemed to favour the long staple varieties characteristic of South American supplies, at least at

Belper. The broad picture over the 1794-1817 time period reveals Brazil to have been the leading source of raw cotton for the Struts, with nearly half of their supplies (46%) coming from there. Just under a fifth (19%) came from the West Indies, with a similar amount (17%) from the area of modern Guyana and Suriname. The southern states of America accounted for just over a tenth (11%) of bags supplied. Smaller amounts came from the Indian subcontinent (just under 5%), with traces from other areas of South America and Europe. The picture is also one of increasing supplies of raw cotton over this period, from an annual average of 2481.8 bags in 1794-1803 to 3922.6 bags in 1804-1817, a rise of over 50% (58%).

Figure 1:
The origins of raw cotton supplies of the Strutt family mills in Derbyshire, 1794-1817 (based on cotton bag data from Fitton Wadsworth, The Struts, 1958)

Considering the earlier period 1794-1803 (see Figure 2), the Fitton and Wadsworth bag data suggests that almost three quarters (73%) of the Struts’ cotton supplies came from South America, with 41% from Brazil alone and a further 28% from Guyana and Suriname. Just under a quarter came from the West Indies (24%). Very small amounts (around 4%) were sourced from the southern states of America, beginning in 1798. While the broad patterns of supply dominated by sources in the Americas is confirmed, a comparison of the bag data reported by Fitton and Wadsworth for 1794-98 with the cotton weight data from the DRO ledger for 1793 to 1798 reveals the West Indies to have been a more important supply area in the 1790s (see Table 1 and Figure 3). The cotton weight data for the five years suggests that South America
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Figure 2: The origins of raw cotton supplies of the Strutt family mills in Derbyshire, 1794-1803 (based on cotton bag data from Fitton and Wadsworth, *The Strutts*, 1958)

Table 1: The origins of raw cotton supplies of the Strutt family mills in Derbyshire, by bag and weight 1794-1798 (Fitton and Wadsworth, *The Strutts*, 1958; DRO D6948/2/5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>% supply bags (1794-98)</th>
<th>% supply weight (9/93-9/98)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>70.64</td>
<td>54.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>59.95</td>
<td>42.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Pernambuco)</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>28.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Maranhão)</td>
<td>12.78</td>
<td>12.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyana</td>
<td>7.13</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suriname</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest South America</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Indies</td>
<td>29.07</td>
<td>45.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carriacou</td>
<td>17.25</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>5.08</td>
<td>6.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>5.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest West Indies</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>9.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

supplied 55% and the West Indies 45% whereas the comparable bag data suggests a 71% contribution from South America and 29% from the West Indies. Both the cotton weight data and the bag data imply that the small Caribbean island of Carriacou, located just north of Grenada in the Windward Islands, was a very important source area for the Strutts at this time. The weight data suggests it supplied almost a quarter (24%) of the Strutt’s raw cotton, which is more than implied by the comparable bag data (17% of supply). By contrast, the importance of the Pernambuco region in the north east of Brazil, highlighted as the origin of almost half (45%) of the Strutts’ raw cotton supplies during the 1790s using the bag data, is lessened if the weight data is used, although at 28% it remains the main region of supply, just ahead of Carriacou.

From 1804-1817 (see Figure 4), the absolute volume of bags of cotton imported for the Strutts increased by just over a half but there was a relative decline in the importance of South America which supplied just under two-thirds (62%). However, the importance of Brazil increased to almost half of overall supplies (48%) and the annual average bags sourced from there rose from 1012.6 in 1794-1803 to 1871.7 in 1804-1817. In contrast Guyana and Suriname declined markedly as source areas in relative (13%) and absolute terms (from an annual average of 698 bags in 1794-1803 to 500 in 1804-1817), with the exception of the Demerara region where supplies showed a slight
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annual increase. There was relative decline too for the West Indies which supplied just under a fifth (17%) though the average annual contribution still rose from 586.8 bags in 1794-1803 to 675.9 in 1803-1817. By contrast supplies from the southern states of America were increasing in volume and importance, constituting around 14% of the Strutt’s supplies during this period. Small amounts, totalling around 7% of supplies were also sourced from the Indian sub-continent, mainly from Bengal in the east and Surat in the west.

Figure 4: The origins of raw cotton supplies of the Strutt family mills in Derbyshire, 1804-1817 (based on cotton bag data from Fitton and Wadsworth, The Strutt's, 1858)

The raw cotton source maps reveal the growing importance of Brazil as a source area. The Strutts seem to have been early, substantive British users of Brazilian cotton, perhaps taking advantage of more favourable trading terms between Britain and Portugal in the wake of the French Revolution. Supplies from the Pernambuco region were most prominent in 1794-1803 (31% of total and an annual average of 778 bags). However, only very limited work has been carried out on cotton production in Pernambuco and it is better known as a sugar producing region. Furthermore, the weight based data suggests that the bag based analysis exaggerates the importance of Pernambuco as a source area, though it is confirmed as the most important supply zone for the Strutts at this time. Maranhão, another region with a coastline to the northeast of Pernambuco, was the most important Brazilian supply area in 1804-1817 (26% of overall total and an annual average of 1036.7 bags). It had been transformed into a ‘cash crop economy’ dominated by rice and cotton from 1755 when the

Portuguese established the Companhia Geral do Grão-Pará e Maranhão, a move which ‘made a large-scale Atlantic slave trade to Maranhão feasible for the first time’. It became Brazil’s leading cotton region, with exports growing rapidly from 1770-1800. Demand for cotton stimulated ratcheting up of slave trade in the north east of Brazil; indeed one contemporary is reported to have observed ‘white cotton turned Maranhão black’. Overall figures from Eltis show evidence of growth in arrivals of enslaved Africans in north east Brazil during the time of the Strutt cotton accounts, with 210,800 brought to the region in 1776-1800 and 214,800 in 1801-1825, after which time numbers declined rapidly. An early source reports that in 1819 66.6% of the population of Maranhão state were enslaved and mostly located upon cotton plantations.

The highest peaks in the importation of enslaved Africans to Maranhão occurred in the early 1800s, with further peaks in the late 1810s/early 1820s and late 1780s/early 1790s. Most of those shipped to its main port, São Luís, in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries came from the North Atlantic region of Senegambia, on the Upper Guinea coast, principally due to the patterns of wind and ocean currents, using ships based mainly in Lisbon before 1815. The pattern changed in the 1820s and 1830s, influenced by British suppression of the slave trade in the North Atlantic, with more Africans shipped from Angola by Brazilian-based merchants. Other areas of Brazil were mainly served by areas of Africa in the South Atlantic, particularly Angola, with ships based in Brazil. The numbers of slaves in Maranhão declined from about 133,332 in 1819 to 97,132 in 1823. The Brazilian declaration of independence from Portugal in 1822 and its aftermath likely curtailed supplies of cotton severely in the 1820s when there is evidence of the Strutts buying cotton from the southern states of America, the Indian subcontinent and Egypt.

The bag data implies the proportion of the overall raw cotton supply from the West Indies fell from 23% to 17% between the two time periods (although the weight data analysed suggests the bag data considerably understimates the West Indian contribution in the 1790s). Not all islands were involved (though 10 were) and some were more important than others. Very little cotton was sourced from Jamaica for example – just 35 bags in 1793/4 or 0.82% of overall supply by weight in 1793-98 – with a significant amount found to be lower grade ‘yellow cotton’. Supplies from both Barbados and the small island of Carriacou (just 8,000 acres in size) were much more important. Carriacou had a reputation for good quality, long staple cotton and larger amounts (12% of overall bag supplies) were sourced from the island by the Strutts in 1794-1803. D. B. Ryden reports it had a ‘short-lived cotton boom’ from 1776 to the early nineteenth century, a period when ‘large-capital investors’ developed substantial cotton enterprises worked by slave gangs. Thereafter, it declined due to
competition from North America and a renewed interest in sugar after the British naval victory at Trafalgar enhanced island security. It certainly declined considerably as a supply area for the Strutts in 1804-1817. Barbados instead was the most important West Indian source in 1804-1817, accounting for 15% of overall bag supplies. It was therefore a more important source of raw cotton for the Strutts during this period than India and the southern states of America.

Only small amounts of raw cotton were sourced by the Strutts from the southern states of America from 1798 onwards but they were reasonably early to US southern cotton market. The main types they imported were bowed (41.7%) and Sea Island (13.5%), with upland of lesser importance (9.9%). The main geographical source areas appear to have been Georgia to where over half the bags (50.2%) were referenced and the New Orleans hinterland, the origin of over a fifth (22.7%). American growers first grew long-staple cotton sourced from the Bahamas on islands off the Georgia coast in 1786 (thus the name, Sea Island cotton). Cultivation spread into coastal areas of South Carolina and Georgia and exports rose from 10,000 pounds in 1790 to 6.4 million in 1800. The invention by Whitney in 1793 of the cotton gin (which allowed more effective cleaning of cotton seeds from the fibre) increased the profitability of American cotton production and ratcheted up the demand for enslaved workers there.

While the vast majority of raw cotton was sourced via London and Liverpool based brokers, there is evidence of more limited acquisition of raw cotton from merchant agents in the Americas. One of these was the Charleston based merchant, Thomas Ogier. A series of letters and other documents from Ogier in the early nineteenth century suggest he was selling hosiery for the Strutts and using the proceeds to supply them with raw cotton from around 1804 to 1809. When questions were raised over the quality of some supplies sent in 1806, Ogier’s explanation as to why he could not trace particular bags highlights the complexity of his supply routes:

‘for that kind of cotton is brought from the Country in Wagons in small quantities, and is put promiscuously into the stores of those who buy from the Countrymen, and they when they sell again to the Merchants do not know who each particular bag comes from; I bought last year from different people’.

This trade with Ogier was impacted by the growing tension between Britain and America from 1807 after the former sought to impede neutral countries from trading with Napoleonic France and the latter retaliated with its own 1807 Embargo Act. In September 1808, Ogier reported his purchase of ‘bowen Cotton of the first quality at fourteen Cents lb’ at the Strutts request and his intention to ‘Ship your Cotton by the first Vessell I can obtain freight by, for Liverpool’ once the embargo was halted. However, the embargo continued into 1809 when Ogier reported a partial lifting allowing the shipping of cotton to England ‘by the circuitous routes of Florida, St Bartholomews & Gottenburg’ yet only at ‘great expense’ leaving him not feeling justified to ship ‘without your order’. These problems, losses on hosiery sent in 1807 and the ensuing Anglo American War in 1812 may have stopped trade in this way via Ogier.

Only very small amounts of raw cotton (3589 lbs or 6.5% of their purchases) were sourced by the Strutts from the Indian subcontinent from 1804 up to 1817. Supplies came mainly from the Bengal area in the east (4.3%), with the remainder sourced from Surat in the west (2.3%), both important cotton textile areas in their own right. This cotton was of lower value as several Strutt accounts show. This opinion was reiterated in contemporary published work, with one source describing Surat as ‘a fine, but exceedingly short fibre, in general dirty containing leaf and sand ... The lowest price cotton in the market, and used in the manufacture of low coarse goods’ and Bengal as ‘much like Surat, but still shorter staple, in general cleaner, and much about the same value’.

The Strutts accessed raw cotton supplies via both London and Liverpool, with London being more important in the 1794-1803 period. A 1799 account with Nicholas Waterhouse, their Liverpool agent, shows that the Strutts dealt with Liverpool merchants who were well-known slave traders, including the Boltons, Earles and Tarletons who also owned slave-worked plantations. Thomas Tarleton (1753-1820) alone supplied nearly a quarter (24% of bags) of the cotton sourced by the Strutts via Waterhouse in 1799.

As Carriacou was such an important source area in this period, it is likely that Tarleton drew on supplies from his own cotton plantation there. His 509 acre Mount Pleasant plantation had produced 55,000lb of cotton in 1776 but by 1790 this figure had risen to 77,000lb, making it the second largest cotton producer in Carriacou. At this time it was worked by 227 enslaved Africans. When slavery was abolished in the British colonies in the 1830s, Tarleton’s family received compensation of £6526 for 256 enslaved people in May 1836. Mt. Pleasant is now the largest village on the central eastern side of Carriacou.

**The Strutts – cotton products**

The Strutts are reported to have sold most of their yarn in the period from the 1790s to the 1830s via six key areas of Britain: Derbyshire, Tewkesbury, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, London and Manchester. A case study of Nottingham reveals that leading hosiers of the town (including Heard & Hurst, Hine & Mundella and Morley & Co) were key customers. As the Strutts were hosiers themselves it is unsurprising these links were strongest. Lesser in importance but still significant was business with prominent Nottingham lace
manufacturers (such as R & T Frost & Co and the Hayne brothers). These companies supplied local, national and international markets, including the Americas, with their goods.\(^65\) The wider context is that about two-thirds of British cotton cloth production was exported by the end of the eighteenth century, with markets in Africa and the Americas the most important. This figure rose to about 94 percent by the middle of the nineteenth century.\(^66\) There is also evidence that the Struts supplied a limited volume of hosiery goods directly to overseas customers in Europe and the Americas. The sales in the Americas included dealings with agents in New York, Charleston and Rio de Janeiro.\(^67\) This process did not run smoothly, however. Ogier reported the Struts' goods were thought to be too expensive in Charleston markets in the early 1800s (1807?). Winter & Co, the Struts agents in Rio de Janeiro at around the same time, questioned the appropriateness of the hosiery goods the Struts were attempting to market, namely their flagship ribbed hose:

'how unfortunate it was for the Sale of your Consignment, its being almost entirely rib'd Hose, which are scarce at all worn here ... On the other side we have stated a List of such Kinds of Hosiery as are suitable for this Place and for the River Plate, which in several respects differ essentially'.\(^68\)

**The Struts – attitudes to slavery**

Although it is clear that the Struts used raw cotton supplies produced by enslaved Africans in the Americas there is evidence they were also supporters of abolition of both the slave trade and slavery itself. A panel in the Belper North Mill Trust Museum refers to the Struts supporting a 1792 petition to parliament for the abolition of the slave trade, while Fitton and Wadsworth (1958) report that the family 'rejoiced at the abolition of the Slave Trade'.\(^69\) Unlike Richard Arkwright or Walter Evans, there is no evidence they invested in the Sierra Leone Company. While it is possible that the Struts' abolitionist sympathies may have affected their 1806 decision to transfer all their Liverpool cotton business to the abolitionist agent Samuel Hope, there is no evidence of any material change from that time in raw cotton sources away from those based on the use of enslaved African labour. Like most other abolitionist merchants, Hope, does not appear to have discriminated against trading in products derived from slave-based labour regimes.\(^70\) However, Jedediah's sons William and Joseph were both radical thinkers and members of the radical Derby Political Society. William was a supporter of Henry 'Redhead' Yorke (1771-1813), the mixed-race radical, member of the Derby Political Society, delegate in 1792 to the French National Convention and a member of the London Corresponding Society.\(^71\) Similarly, female members of the family also had radical sympathies. Jedediah's daughter, Elizabeth Evans (1758-1836, née Strutt), was a friend of the Republican poet Coleridge and wanted to employ him as a tutor.\(^72\) Later

when the abolition of slavery in the British Caribbean colonies was being promoted, Edward Strutt (1801-1880), MP for Derby 1830-1848, was described as an advocate for 'the abolition of colonial slavery provided the circumstances were right'.\(^73\) He was likely the 'Mr Strutt' from Derby who presented petitions for the abolition of slavery to the House of Commons in March 1831 and July 1832.\(^74\) However, we have found little direct archival information to date on the Struts' attitudes to slavery.

**Conclusions**

This small, mainly qualitative study of Derwent Valley cotton mill owners, and the Struts in particular, does not pretend to resolve the debate over whether Atlantic slavery was a key prompt to the British Industrial Revolution. A much more extensive study of British cotton manufacturers and slavery is needed to complement the recent globally focused work of G. Riello and Sven Beckert. Instead the chapter provides evidence of the deep connections between the Atlantic slave economy and the growth of cotton spinning in the Derwent Valley. The Struts' increasing supply of raw cotton was drawn principally from slave-based production systems in the Americas in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and other Derwent Valley cotton mill owners appear to have used similar sources. This reflects a wider pattern of raw cotton supply geography and growth in Britain at this time. The rising demand for raw cotton supplies to feed the more efficient mechanical spinning systems located in the Derwent Valley contributed to expansion of both the slave trade and plantation development in the Americas, the latter most notably in the American South, the former through increases in the transportation of enslaved Africans to Brazil and the Caribbean. There is also evidence that markets in the Atlantic world were important to the Derwent Valley mill families, though additional work is needed to follow these supply chains further. Finally it is clear that the Derwent Valley Mill owners were securely woven into the Atlantic slave economy even if their personal values, informed in many instances by strongly held Christian beliefs, led them to condemn both the slave trade and, perhaps more tentatively, the institution of slavery. Their business links instead position them as *de facto* supporters of the Atlantic slave economy. There is little evidence of concerted attempts by the mill owners to source free labour cotton, although this might have been part of the motivation for investment in the Sierra Leone project by Richard Arkwright senior and Walter Evans. There also seems to have been little concern about sourcing cotton from those involved in slave trading; the Struts dealt with both slave traders and merchants opposed to the slave trade. Instead regularity of supply, quality and price were the priorities. Yet in their personal, civic and political lives, the families actively critiqued enslavement
and supported attempts to abolish the transatlantic slave trade and the institution of slavery itself.

Tracing the global connections of the Derbyshire cotton industry is not easy. There are often missing or only fragmentary records and scattered archives and piecing together product supply chains in particular is time consuming. There is also a danger that the impacts of neglect rather than engagement may be overlooked, such as the negative impacts of the burgeoning British cotton industry for traditional areas of textile production in the Indian sub-continent. Yet it remains important to attempt to trace these global cotton connections and make them more public in heritage venues such as the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. Without a global perspective understanding of such sites is diminished, partial and in danger of alienating the global publics a World Heritage Site seeks to engage.

References
1 This publication was produced as part of the Global Cotton Connections: East Meets West in the Derbyshire Peak District, UK, project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (Grant Ref: AH/L013312/1) in 2014-15. It involved collaboration between the universities of Nottingham, Sheffield and Leicester and with the Sheffield Hindu Samaj heritage group and the Nottingham Slave Trade Legacies group facilitated by Bright Ideas Nottingham. Further details on the project are available at: https://globalcottonconnections.wordpress.com/
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67 Fitton and Wadsworth, The Struts (1958); Miscellaneous: Business letters from agents and customers to Messrs Strutt (DRO D6948/17/1).
68 Letter from Samuel Winter & Co, Rio de Janeiro, to Messrs Strutt, 8 April 1809 (DRO D6948/17/1).
69 Belper North Mill Trust Museum panel, observed April 2015; Fitton and Wadsworth, The Struts (1958) 189. Documents supporting both claims have not yet been identified although family correspondence in the DRO for the relevant years has been checked.
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72 Fitton and Wadsworth, The Stratts (1958) 173-175; Lindsay, ‘Early Industrial Community’ (1960) 280.


74 Hansard, HC Deb 02 March 1831 vol 2 c.1152; Hansard, HC Deb 27 July 1832 vol 14 c.824.