The Industrial Revolution 1760–1830

The transportation of convicts began during the time known as the Industrial Revolution. Before this time there were no big factories. Many people lived and worked on farms and made the things they used in small workshops. They spent a lot of time spinning and weaving.

During the years 1760–1830, the first steam engine and railway appeared, and other machines were invented that could do the work of many people. Spinning and weaving were now done by machines in factories, and machines also did a lot of the work on farms. At the same time, land which had been owned by the villagers was taken over by large landowners. Many people became unemployed.

These changes began in England, and then spread to Europe and America. They made a great difference to where and how people worked and lived.

In 1830, the first public railway was opened. It ran from Liverpool to Manchester. Soon railways connected all the big cities. These railways needed iron for rails, engines and bridges. The iron-making process was improved and iron was used even to build ships.

Factories

The kind of spinning wheel used in the home could spin only one thread.

In 1764, James Hargreaves invented the spinning jenny which could spin many threads at once. Other improvements in clothmaking followed, and soon big factories were built where all the spinning and weaving was done by machines.

These machines ran all day and never grew tired. They were mainly watched over by women and children. At the time no-one thought there was anything wrong with children working in a factory.