



Lenton Firs on University Park Campus, built for hosier Thomas Wright Watson and subsequently occupied by lace manufacturer Thomas Adams. MS 940/16.

Introduction

Using photographs, marketing materials and business records from the University of Nottingham's lace and hosiery archive collections, this exhibition explores surviving evidence of the textile trade which was once a major feature of the East Midlands. Other collections reveal the struggle for workers' rights, from the targeted campaign of machine breaking by the Luddites of the East Midlands, to the development of unions.

The items on display represent aspects of the growth and decline of the companies as they battled to survive changing fashions and competition from cheap imports. The archives tend to contain ledgers, correspondence and product brochures, but few examples of garments or fabrics.

Architecture is one of the more visible remnants of the textile trade; the grand warehouse buildings of the Lace Market stand as a reminder of the lace industry. People are probably less aware that the region was once an important centre for hosiery manufacture, but evidence exists in the grand houses built for successful master hosiers (with many examples on University Park alone), and the distinctive wide windows still to be seen in the former homes of frameworkers.

Archival survivals are fragmentary. The records of many companies are lost forever, victims of mergers, takeovers and bankruptcies. Even less survives of the manufacturing base itself.

The business archive collections at the University are supplemented by the research papers of academics, records of organisations such as the Wholesale Textile Association (WTA), and Nottingham Chamber of Commerce (MS 185).

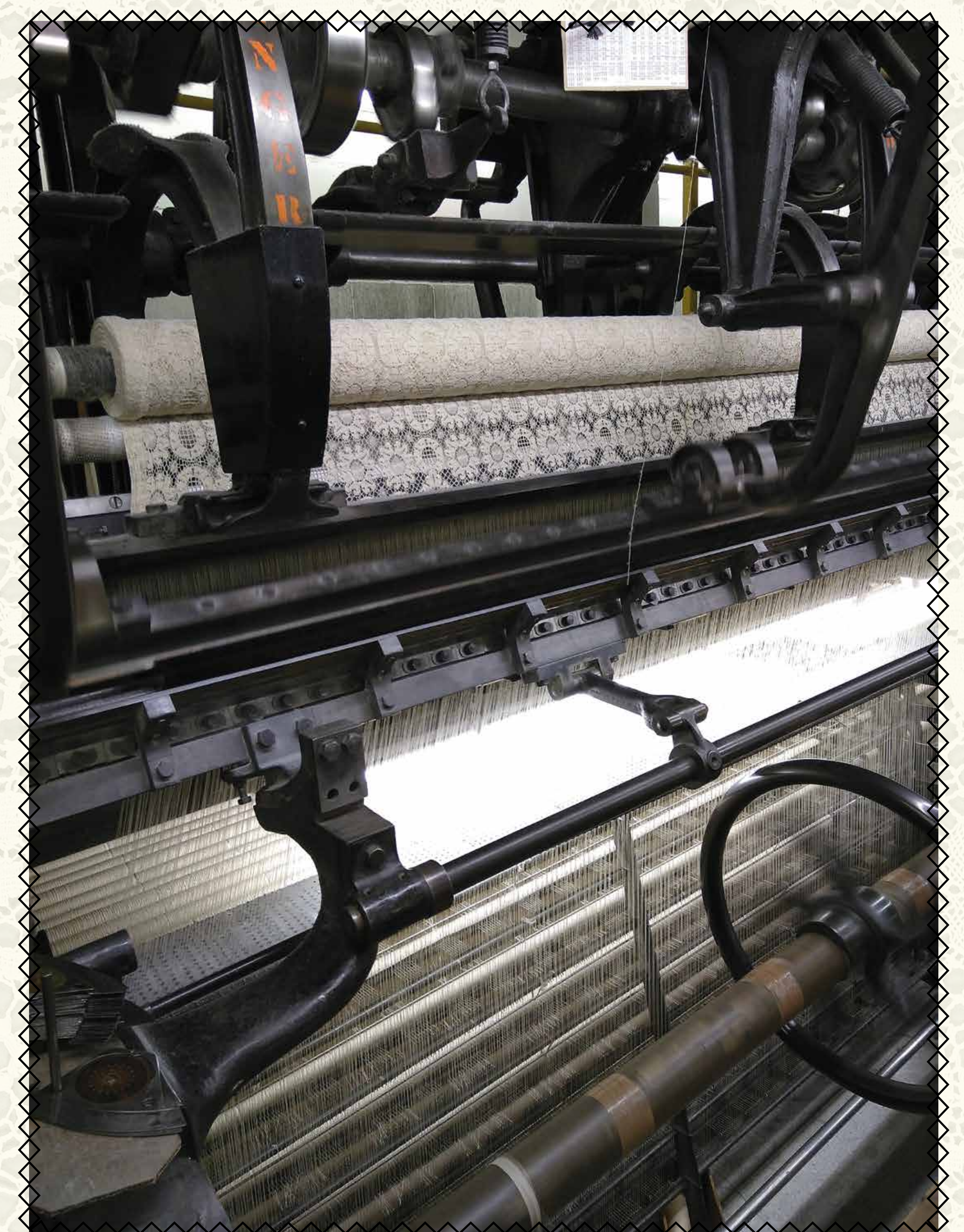
This exhibition has been curated by staff from Manuscripts and Special Collections.



"Well dressed underneath"



Framework knitters' houses on Hucknall Road, Carrington, Nottingham, c.1959-1961 by David M Smith. MS 627/1/1/16.



The Cluny Lace Company Ltd is the only firm in the country still producing Levers lace.



Examples of business ledgers too large to fit in the exhibition cases.



The archive collections are accessible in the public reading rooms at the University's King's Meadow Campus.



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