

## HERITAGE TRAIL



## WALES COTTAGE

William and Martha Wale were engaged in the Framework Knitting business from this cottage on Elder Lane. They lived here with their children Mary, Annie and John. Manufacture of knitwear was once one of the most important industries in Leicestershire from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.



Click [here](#) for further information on the Framework Knitting Industry.



In 1589 William Lee a Clergyman living in Woodborough invented the stocking frame. After a patent was refused by Elizabeth I, Lee took his invention to France in 1608 where he died penniless in 1622. In 1811 there were tens of thousands of knitting frames in small workshops throughout the East Midlands. At this time larger powered machines capable of making multiple garments at a time, suited to factory production were developed and undercut the Framework Knitters. This resulted in a secret protest movement called the Luddites, their mythical leader was Captain Ludd. They

protested against the poor conditions faced by the workers, destroying the new knitting frames at night. Riots ensued which were savagely put down by the authorities, raising the militia. John Mynors Bulstrode of Worthington was a captain in the Leicestershire Yeomanry cavalry militia used in this area. In 1843 over 25,000 framework knitters signed a petition to Parliament complaining about wages, unemployment, new machinery, frame rents and imports of knitted goods. A Royal Commission interviewed workers, visiting Osgathorpe. Most Frames were rented on a weekly basis from a Hosier, who supplied the yarn, while the rent continued to rise, the yarn was supplied for a few day's work. The industry continued to decline. The census statements for Wales cottage demonstrates how William and Martha's occupations changed to adapt to this:-

- 1851 census: William Wale aged 35 occupation *Stocking makers, cotton and thread*, his wife Martha was a *stocking seamer* finishing the garment with their children Mary(8) and Anne (6). The description of their trade suggests that they were buying and selling thread and owned the knitting frames.
- 1861 census: he has further diversified describing his occupation as *Family Hosier and Designer*, employing four men and is now engaged in retail. Mary (now 18) is described as a framework knitter and John (now 11) as a scholar.
- 1871 census: his occupation is *Druggist and Licensed Pharmaceuticals* but still there is a *stocking seamer* and *Framework Knitter* living at the property. There is no further record of their daughter Mary or son John who'd become a School Master.
- 1881 census: William (now 65) is described as a *Chemist* known as Dr Wale. At the time doctors were only affordable by the rich, and William would have supplied an affordable alternative.

William and Martha Wale, daughter Annie (who died aged 14), daughter Mary's husband William Stinson (who died aged 28) and Martha's mother Hannah Wright, are all buried in Griffydham graveyard. Click [here](#) to find out more about the family.