

WOOKEY HOLE PAPERMILL

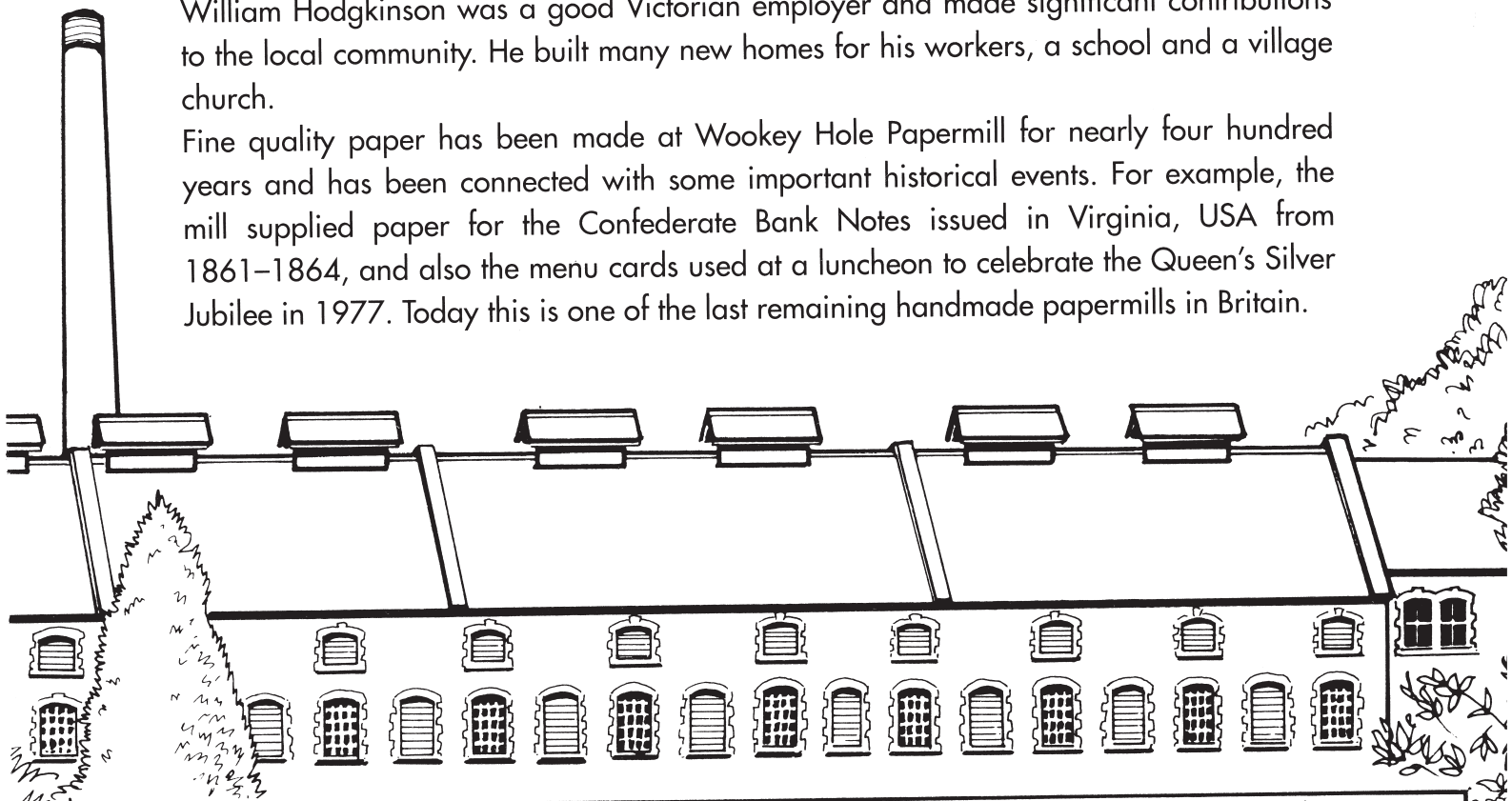
There has been a papermill at Wookey Hole since the beginning of the 17th century. The site was ideal for papermaking with excellent natural advantages: a plentiful supply of clean water from the River Axe, for power and mixing with the pulp, and unpolluted country air for drying. The nearby city of Bristol provided a regular supply of the cotton rags that were the raw material for papermaking at that time. It was also a major seaport which allowed the paper to be exported all over the world.

In 1848 William Sampson Hodgkinson, a London stationer, bought Wookey Hole Papermill and with his sons built up much of what exists today. By 1900 the mill was one of the largest of its kind employing nearly 200 men, women and boys.

This considerable expansion came at a time when the industry was moving towards machine made papers and many traditional papermills were closing down. Hodgkinson, however, believed that there would always be a demand for fine quality, specialist papers such as watermarked bank notes, share certificates and legal documents. His beliefs were proved correct and the Papermill survived and prospered in spite of fierce competition from the machine-based papermills.

William Hodgkinson was a good Victorian employer and made significant contributions to the local community. He built many new homes for his workers, a school and a village church.

Fine quality paper has been made at Wookey Hole Papermill for nearly four hundred years and has been connected with some important historical events. For example, the mill supplied paper for the Confederate Bank Notes issued in Virginia, USA from 1861–1864, and also the menu cards used at a luncheon to celebrate the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977. Today this is one of the last remaining handmade papermills in Britain.



Questions

1. Wookey Hole was an ideal site for the early papermaking industry. List its advantages.
2. Who was responsible for the success of the Papermill in the 19th century?
3. At a time when Wookey Hole Papermill was expanding, why were many other handmade papermills closing down?
4. How did the Papermill survive the fierce competition from machine-based mills?
5. Describe the contributions that William Hodgkinson made to the local community.
6. What is the connection between paper made at Wookey Hole and Her Majesty the Queen?