

Asset Ref No.	HB/10/07/004 & IHR 04181:000:00 Herdmans Flax Spinning Mills	
Heritage Type	Built	
	<i>Post-Medieval Flax Spinning Mill Site</i>	
Location	OS 6-inch map sheet	
	Townland	
	Parish	
	LCA	Foyle Valley
	ITM Coordinates	234425, 393365; 234301, 393396; 234368, 393345; 234363, 393419; 234416, 393299
	NG Coordinates	
Protection Status	Listed Grade B+	
Condition		
Ownership (if known)	Commercial	
Site Description	<p>Built 1880 - 1899.</p> <p>Herdmans mill is a large disused flax spinning factory complex originally based around a converted pre 1832 corn mill, but largely rebuilt and much extended from 1853 onwards. The complex is situated on the W bank of the Mourne River, with the village of Sion (which grew up in the wake of the mill), further to the W. To the immediate S is a new modern mill dating from c.1988. [For the purposes of this description, the complex has been split into different sections, each with its own reference. Thus the 'main mill' is 'A', the 'old mill' 'B', the buildings to the north 'C' and the admin. block 'D'. Within each of these references are further divisions with the original portion of the main mill 'A.1', the two storey extension to the south west 'A.2' etc. Further sub-divisions have been added were necessary.]</p> <p>THE ENTRANCE GATEWAY</p> <p>The main entrance lies roughly to the SW corner of the site and is sandwiched between the large 'main mill' grouping (to the NW) and the admin. block (to the SE). It consists of a high sandstone wall with a large elliptical arched carriage entrance with timber sheeted double doors. The wall is topped with a cornice and blocking course with springing course to the arch and the date '1835' inscribed on the keystone voussoirs. This gateway appears to be all that remains of the original mill of the 1830s. To the immediate left (NW), of the gateway (between the gateway and the main mill grouping) there is a small porter's office with a flat roof and yellow brick facade, a facade which, to the SW, is curved and has a small window with modern frame and a brass name plate.</p> <p>A. THE 'MAIN MILL' GROUPING</p> <p>At the heart of the complex, to the NW of the gateway, is a very large five floor mill (the 'main mill'). This was erected in 1853-55 to designs by William Lynn, and is in light sandstone with a hipped roof. To its S corner is a five storey Italianate tower. To the SW of the tower is a large part two, part single storey section in yellow brick which was added between 1884 and c.1907. To the SE of the tower is a four storey gabled extension, also in yellow brick, dating from 1907. To the NW is a double gabled single storey block, mainly in red brick, which spans the former mill race and probably dates from c.1900. To the SW is a large four storey gabled section of 1907 mainly in yellow brick, which with its austere classical appearance and thick buttresses, has a Post War Eastern Bloc Constructivist feel.</p> <p>A.1 The original portion of the main mill is four storeys high with an attic floor and topped</p>	

with a slated double pile hipped roof. The facade is mainly in light brown sandstone (which was quarried at Douglas a few miles to the S). The long SW facade has a row of tall segmental headed windows, with timber frames, to the first second and third floors, with the ground floor obscured by the single storey c.1884 addition (A.2.2- see below). Corbelled eaves course to this facade. To the right (S) side of this facade is a projecting five storey Italianate stair tower. This is in matching sandstone with a corbelled eaves course supporting a hipped slated roof topped with a small belfry (with similar roof). To the SW face of the tower there are two segmental headed windows (similar to main facade of mill) to the second and third floors, two taller semicircular headed windows to the top floor and two louvered roundels beneath. Just below eaves level there is a decorative string course, with a springing course to the top level windows. The SE face of the tower largely repeats this arrangement. To the NW the tower is only exposed at top level, where there is a single semicircular headed window, as previous faces. The NE exposed face has a small extension in yellow brick (c.1880-1900) The NE facade of the original portion of the main mill has rows of windows to each floor, as SW, but with the ground floor largely obscured by later single storey additions (including A.4- see below). To the left of centre there rises a narrow tower-like projecting bay in yellow brick (probably added in the 1880s or c.1907). This has windows to its SW face, as main facade (except for some roundels to its uppermost level), rises slightly above the main eaves and has a corbelled eaves course and what appears to be a flat roof. To the far right on the main NE facade there is a much narrower projecting bay which is in sandstone and appears to be original. It has small slit openings to its NE face. The Short NW facade of the original mill building has witnessed much alteration and is now largely obscured by subsequent additions. The ground and first floor levels are now completely covered by a large gabled building (A.5- see below) which appears to be mainly rendered but is itself largely obscured by various [?later] projections, all mid 20th century looking and with a purely functional appearance. The upper floors of the NW facade (of A.1) are dominated by a large, flat roofed bay in yellow brick, which may have been added c.1900-07. This bay has two tall segmental headed windows (as SW and NE facades of original building) to the second and third floors on its NW face and a single similar window to both floors on the short SW and SE faces. There is an untidy looking modern metal fire escape to the SE face also. The exposed section of the original NW facade to the right of the bay, has a single window to both second and third floors, much the same as the bay. A.2 Attached to the SW of the original 'main mill' is a large two and single storey grouping, mainly in yellow brick, which appears to have been built in stages between c.1884-1907, (apparently) for the purpose of line preparing and to house machine repair shops. To the SE end of the grouping is a large two storey, hipped roof block (A.2.1) dating from 1888. This building is relatively plain with the yellow brick facade broken up with several string courses in sandstone, including a cornice like course between ground and first floor level and an eaves course which incorporates a layer of brick arranged in saw tooth formation. To the SE and SW facades of this block are a row of large flat arch windows to each floor. Those to the first floor on both facades (and the exposed first floor section of the NW facade) are recessed and have pilaster like brick piers between. To the right, the SE facade is abutted by the small porter's office (see above) whose curving yellow brick facade links to the main entrance gateway. The NE facade is now completely obscured by a two storey flat roofed extension, also in yellow brick (which links to section A.3- see below). The NW facade is only exposed at first floor level and has a row of windows as SW and SE facades. To the NW block A.2.1 is attached to a large single storey section (A.2.2) which abuts the original main mill to the NE and another two storey section to the NW (block A.2.3). Its SW facade is in yellow brick and sandstone and closely resembles the first floor arrangement of block A.2.1, having a row of recessed large flat arch windows with pilaster-like brick piers between. The windows to the right hand half of the facade are smaller than those to the left half, and the brick has a slightly lighter appearance- all of which could suggest that this block was built in two stages. The roof of this single storey section is largely made up of a

series of northlights, though some sections of the roof to the far NW are hipped (which might also suggest that this building was indeed built in stages). To the NW the A.2 grouping culminates in another two storey block. This block closely resembles block A.2.1 to the SE, having a hipped slated roof and a largely identical facade and window arrangement, but may have been built some years later (perhaps c.1907). To the NW a gateway (which spans to an outbuilding further to the NW- C.1) abuts the block. Several ground floor windows to this facade have been boarded over. The NE facade is completely different than the others, having a more distinctly Edwardian feel, being constructed in red brick and double gabled. It sports many large segmental headed windows to both floors, along with several timber sheathed doorways and a large upper level loading doorway. The SE facade is of course abutted by the single storey block A.2.2. but its upper storey arrangement is much as the SW and NW, except that to the far right is a doorway which is reached by an external timber staircase (presently in bad repair). A.3 To the SE end of the original section of the main mill building (A.1) is a large four storey (plus attic) gabled extension which was added in 1907 (A.3). This extension is in yellow brick to the SW and SE (gable end), and (mainly) in red brick to the NE. The SE gable has an imposing, classical, somewhat 1950s Eastern Bloc appearance. There is a row of tall segmental headed windows to each floor, much as those to the original main mill. Between these windows are three prominent buttresses which rise to second floor level. The gable tympanum sits above a dentilled eaves course. It has three windows to its centre (much as before only of varying size) set into a recessed panel. There are flanking outer recesses. The SW facade repeats much of the detailing to the gable, but the buttresses have even greater prominence and rise to third floor level. At first floor level of this facade is abutted by the flat roofed linking corridor from block A.2.1 (see above). The NE facade is mainly in red brick, but largely matches the detailing to the SW in terms of windows and buttresses. At ground floor level this facade is abutted by a large single storey addition (block A.4- see below) and, to the far left, is a square plan, tower-like projection. This projection is in yellow brick and has single windows to most levels on its NE and SE faces. The projection rises a floor above eaves level and has a flat roof with dentilled eaves cornice and blocking course. A metal chute (?or duct) stretches from the SE face of the projection to a building to the SE (block D.2.2- see below). A.4 Block A.4 is attached to the NE side of the original mill building (A.1) and its 1907 extension (A.3). It is single storey and in brick and spans over the former mill race. It may have been built in two phases for to the NW end it is gabled and to the SE, double gabled. The long NE facade and the NW gable are relatively plain painted brick affairs, with a row of small windows (and a door) to the NE. The SE (double gabled) facade is slightly more interesting with mildly decorative gable parapets and arch headed windows, but the gable to the left is almost completely obscured by a lean-to extension in yellow brick which may have been added in c.1910. A.5 Sandwiched between blocks A.2.3, A.2.2 and the original section of the main mill (A.1) is a somewhat untidy looking collection of extensions with a purely functional appearance. The larger extension lies to the SE (A.5.1) and is two storey. It has a part gabled, part hipped roof covered in asbestos slates. Its SE, SW and NW facades are only visible at first floor level. All are cement rendered. There are several louvered openings to the NW and a large flat arch window (with frame much as other sections) to the SW. Further to the NW of this block is a much smaller single storey building (A.5.2) with a corrugated iron part gabled, part flat roof. This building is only visible from the NW where its facade is cement rendered. To the immediate SW of this building is a very tall octagonal tapering chimney stack, in yellow-ish cream brick, now much discoloured. This was added to the site in 1877. The chimney stack has a slight tilt (to W) at its uppermost level. To the NW of the original section of the main mill (A.1) is the largest building of the A.5 grouping (A.5.3), a two storey gabled block, with a corrugated asbestos roof and render to the exposed sections of its facades. To the SE it is abutted by block A.5.2 (see above) and assorted duct paraphernalia and to the NW and NE

by a large L shaped, single storey, doubled gabled building, in red brick and render (A.5.4).

B 'THE OLD MILL'

To the NE of the main mill building (A) lies an additional grouping of buildings (B). This grouping sits on a small 'island', bounded to the NE by the Mourne River and to the NW, the SW and the SE by the culverted mill race. The middle three storey section (B.1), known locally as the 'Old Mill' sits, on the site of a pre 1832 corn mill which itself was converted to a flax mill in 1835 and subsequently replaced by the present section in 1867, with a storey apparently added in 1879. Merging with this to the NW is the two storey turbine section which was built c.1900 (B.2). To the NE of B.2 is a single storey section with a Belfast Truss roof (B.6). To the SE, B.1 merges with a two storey section (B.3) which was built in c.1900. To the SW of B3 is a single storey block (B5) with a Belfast Truss roof which is constructed directly over the culverted tail race. Between B.1 and the river is a single storey building with a series of north lights which probably dates from the early part of the 20th century. B.1. To the centre of the grouping is block B.1 which appears to have been built in 1867 (replacing a pre 1832 converted corn mill), with a storey added in 1879. This is a double pile three storey block. To either side of the SW face, on each floor are door openings. No doubt both groupings were originally loading bay doors. The grouping to the far right still retains its external lifting beam while the group to the left have been converted to fire escape doors and now open onto the fire escape stair. At each of the three levels are fourteen evenly spaced windows. Each windows is tall and rectangular and has a timber frame with six fixed panes. At first floor the 5th, 6th, 10th and 14th windows (from left) have what appear to be ventilation extract hoods projecting through the upper part of the frame. The NE face also has regularly spaced windows to each of the three floors. It is difficult to get a clear view of this face but it appears that there are 18 windows to each floor. The upper windows have a number of ventilation hoods added. This face has a substantial under building due to the slope of the site (i.e the river bank). The SE face of block B.1 is mainly obscured by block B.3. A small portion is visible to the left side and this has a single segmental arched headed window to the first and second floor. The roof is finished in Bangor Blue slates and has two long adjoining pitched roofs with a central valley gutter and hips to each end. The eaves is hidden behind a parapet wall which is finished with decorative projecting brick corbelling. Walls are finished in plain unpainted render.

B.2 THE TURBINE SECTION

The NW gable of B2 has four windows to both ground and first floors. The windows throughout the block are identical. Each is tall and has a segmental brick arch head. Window frames are timber and generally have six fixed panes. The SW face has a projecting porch to far left. The porch has a central door with a two pane fanlight with a matching segmental arch head. This head rises slightly higher than the windows. To either side of the door is a window as before. The porch is flat roofed and has a stepped coping which is supported on a brick saw tooth course. To the right of the porch are thirteen windows as before. Windows 9 and 10 (from left) are amalgamated to form a double door opening. Windows 3, 5 and 7 are partly obscured by large timber sluice gates which control the flow of water into the turbine section. To first floor are 16 evenly spaced windows, as before. The NE facade could only be viewed from a distance. It appeared to have regular windows to first as before, but was constructed in red brick. The block is constructed on ground which slopes down to the river with the result that the NE face has a substantial area of under building. The SE face of B2 is much obscured by the NW face of block B1 rising on the small exposed section is a very light weight fire escape stair. (formed from bolted together angle irons). The walls rest on a chamfered stone string course which rests on a prick plinth. The roof wall head has decorative brick corbels which support a projecting stone

string course. Above this is a small brick parapet. To the right side of the roof is a small, flat roofed, brick room set at second floor level. The NW and SE elevations both are built mainly adjacent to the tail race with the result that the door to the turbine section is therefore entered via a short bridge. B.3 To the SE is block B.3 which is two storey and is rectangular in plan but has a small three storey addition to the NW corner. The SW face of the main block has a row of arch headed windows to ground and first floor (a clear view of this face is not possible due to the position of block B5). The SE face has six similar windows to the first floor. The ground floor appears to also have had six windows but the four to the right are now obscured from view by a large corrugated iron sheeted enclosure which has a number of large extract ducts. Only a very distant view of the NE face can be gained and it appears to have rows of regularly spaced windows to first floor, as before. The ground floor is obscured by a single storey building (B.4). The addition on the NW corner has semicircular arched recessed door opening to the left and a recessed segmental arch headed window to the right. To the first floor is a small stair window to the left with a larger window to the right. At second floor is a small roundel window to the left with a small rectangular one to the right. The SW face of the projection is finished in smooth unpainted render. The remainder of this block is in red brick and the two storey building has a decorative corbelled coping parapet of the flat roof B.4 Attached to the NW of block B.3 is block B.4 which is a single storey brick building with a north light roof. The NE facade faces the river and has a series of evenly spaced windows along its length. B.5 Block B.5 is a single storey block set at an acute angle to the main block. The block is timber framed and finished with rough cast. It has a Belfast Truss roof. The SE gable has two widely spaced high level windows while that to the NW has two similar windows with a wide timber sheeted door to the centre. The long walls are both blank. This building is supported on cast iron stilts and is located directly above the tail race. B.6 Block B.6 is located in the NE corner between blocks B.4 and B.2. Like B.4 it is timber framed, supported on cast iron stilts and is located directly above the tail race. The Belfast Truss roof is beginning to collapse (in spectacular fashion).

C GROUPING TO NW (STONE OUTBUILDING, OLD RECREATION HALL, OLD POWER HOUSE ETC.)

The NW of the former mill complex is taken up with a disparate collection of buildings, mainly (but not wholly) dating from the 20th century. With a few notable exceptions this collection is largely plain and functional looking, with mainly buildings much altered in recent times. The area around this grouping is strewn with sections of machinery, timber palettes, and certain buildings (primarily C.2 and the C.3 grouping) are in poor order C.1 To the immediate NW of block A.2.3 is a relatively small scale two storey former outbuilding, which may date from c.1870. The facade of the block is in sneaked fieldstone with cream and yellow brick dressings to the openings and as quoins. The roof is hipped and slated and has a tall yellow brick chimney stack to the SE. To the long NE facade there are a series of window and door openings to both floors. The windows are generally relatively small to the first floor and have security bars over (with some boarded). To the far left on the ground floor is a small single storey lean-to, in yellow brick and render, with various window openings to the left of this, with a variety of frames. A modern metal staircase to the right leads to a first floor doorway. The SW facade has a series of small windows to the first floor, as first floor NE facade. To the ground floor there are a series of small vent-like openings, with a relatively large window to the right and a doorway. There is a single tiny window (boarded) to the ground floor on the short NW facade and a larger window to the ground floor on the short SE facade. A gateway stretches between this facade and the NW facade of A.2.3. Just to the NE of this gateway is a weigh bridge. C.2 To the NE of the above outbuilding is a large, two storey gabled warehouse section, which has a plain functional appearance with a rough cast facade, modern window and doorway openings and a gabled

roof covered in corrugated asbestos and corrugated iron. The SW half of this section was originally built as a recreation hall for mill workers and dates from 1882, but it now looks wholly modern. There is a curious single storey flat roofed glazed extension to the left on the SE facade of this building. C.3 To the SE of C.2 is a large and untidy conglomeration of single story sheds and warehouses of varying size and shape and in a general state of neglect. All appear to be 20th century, though the dates of construction could well be widely spaced. The group consists mainly of a large modern looking gabled warehouse to the SW, whose facade is mainly metal clad, a long brick building to the NE of this, with a corrugated metal curved (Belfast truss) roof, with some similar (but much smaller) buildings to the N and E.

C.4- THE OLD POWER HOUSE

To the E of the C.3 conglomeration is a split level hipped roof power (turbine) house, built in 1919. This sits on the river bank, to the north of the spillway channel of the old mill race. Its SW and SE facades are in yellow brick with sandstone quoins, eaves course and a springing course. To the SW facade are three large elliptical headed windows with metal frames and a semicircular headed doorway with timber sheeted door and large fanlight. To the SE facade (which is set on the squint) there is a window as SW. The NE facade could only be seen from a distance (from the other side of the river in fact) and appears to be in red brick (though most of it was obscured by trees). The NW facade could not be seen clearly either, but appears to be obscured by a [?later] lean-to like section (which appears to be mainly in painted brick), which in turn is linked to one of the curved (Belfast Truss) roof sheds belonging to the C.3 grouping. The hipped roof of the former power house is slated and has a bank of rooflights. The cast iron rain water hoppers bear the date '1919'. The keystones to the window and door openings appear to be in concrete. C.5 To the far SW side of the 'C' grouping there is a large shed with a curved (Belfast Truss) roof and whitewashed rubble and brick facade. To the NW of this is an L shaped outbuilding which appears to be of similar construction (though the writers could not get an overall view of it). Were these buildings once part of a small gas works?

D THE ADMINISTRATION BLOCK

The administration block lies to the immediate SE of the main entrance. It is roughly L shaped with a large two storey, house-like office section to the SW and a further two storey portion to the E of this, which appears to have been originally an outbuilding, but which now mainly houses offices as well. D.1 The house-like office block is two storey with a slated hipped roof, and appears to date from 1881. The front (SW), NW and SE facades are in yellow brick, with the sandstone quoins and (two) courses to front. The rear is rendered. The front facade has 12 segmental headed windows to the ground floor, with the entrance to the left. The entrance has a panelled and glazed door and a plain segmental headed fanlight. The windows are of varying size and unevenly spaced. Most have sash frames. To the first floor are 13 semicircular headed windows with similar frames and are also unevenly spaced. The short NW facade has two small-ish flat arch windows to the ground floor and a partly glazed door. This facade has some decorative brick courses. The SE facade has a single window, with modern frame, set at an intermediate level to the right. This facade also has a modern concrete staircase which leads to a walkway which runs along the SE side of block D.2 (see below). The rear (NE) facade has two segmental headed doorways to the ground floor, along with three similar shaped windows. The doorways both have panelled doors and plain fanlights, with sash frames to the windows. There are five similar, unevenly spaced, windows to the first floor. Block D.1 has a tall yellow brick chimney stack to the NW end. D.2 Block D.2 appears to have been built as an outbuilding return for D.1. It is two storey, mainly gabled, and its facade is finished in a

	<p>mixture of rubble, red brick and render. To the NE end the building has a large warehouse section (also in rubble and brick) with a curved (Belfast truss) roof. This section may have been altered in the early 1900s. The SW portion of the block (D.2.1) is now converted to offices and is linked internally to block D.1. Both the SE and NW facades have witnessed much alteration in recent years because of the conversion to office use. The NW facade is in random fieldstone rubble with brick dressings to the openings. The ground floor openings (which include a large carriage arch and three windows) appear to be largely original with the exception of one of the windows. The openings to the first floor appear to be largely modern insertions. The SE facade is finished in render and has a row of high level modern windows and a doorway. The doorway is reached via modern concrete staircase and walkway (see above). This walkway continues along the length of this facade, giving access to warehouse section to the NE (block D.2.2). The warehouse section to the NE is also two storey. Its NW facade is of similar construction to the NW of block D.2.1, with the exception that most of its openings appear original (with the exception of a few windows to the right on the first floor). The N facade is set on the squint and is in rubble at ground floor level and brick to the first floor level (suggesting it has been altered). There are two boarded up window openings to the ground floor and two sash windows to the first floor. The curved roof is metal clad. To the SE block D.2.2. links to a conglomeration of warehouses and sheds, all much altered over the years and some in poor order. Among this conglomeration the most prominent buildings are three large warehouses. That to the NW dates from the early 1900s and has a curved roof with red brick and render facade. To its SE is a large lean-to section in render and metal cladding. To the SE of this are two smaller warehouses, both (apparently) gabled and with largely rendered facades. That to the NW dates from 1908, with the other from 1957. To the rear (NE) of these warehouses are a series of smaller sheds, mainly in rubble and brick and with curved roofs. These rear buildings are generally much altered and in poor order.</p> <p>E SUNDRY BUILDINGS ETC. AROUND THE OLD MILL SITE</p> <p>To the S of the original mill complex is the new mill (E.1) which was built c.1987-88. This is a single storey metal clad building, which, though possessing a large footprint is surprising unobtrusive- largely due to its low proportions. To the W of the original mill is a large area (E.2) with a bowling green and tennis court, with a small timber pavilion to the W of these. This whole area appears to have been laid out in the early 1900s. To the N is a cricket pitch, laid out c.1864, and football pitches of more recent vintage. Far to the S (on the Mourne River) is the weir which was originally constructed for the pre 1832 corn mill, but has been much modified in more recent years.</p>
<p>Landscape Context (setting)</p>	
<p>Site Appraisal</p>	<p>Large (mainly) disused flax spinning factory complex originally based around a converted pre 1832 corn mill, but largely rebuilt and much extended from 1853 onwards and now composed of a disparate collection of buildings mainly dating from the later 19th / early 20th century, in various states of originality. The complex can be divided into four main sections. The largest section is that known as the 'main mill', which is grouped around a large five floor sandstone building with Italianate stair tower, built in 1853-55 to designs by W.H. Lynn. A sprawling single and two storey yellow brick extension of c.1884-88+ sits to the SW side of this building, and an imposing yellow brick gable end block addition of 1907, with a Russian Constructivist look, sits to the SE. To the NW is an untidy conglomeration of (mainly) post c.1910 functional looking additions. To the NE of the main mill grouping is the 'old mill'. This grouping (as the name suggests) lies on the site of a pre 1832 corn mill. The main portion of the group is a largely plain, rendered, three storey, hipped roof, block which mainly dates from 1867, but with equally plain additions to the SE of c.1890-c.1900.</p>

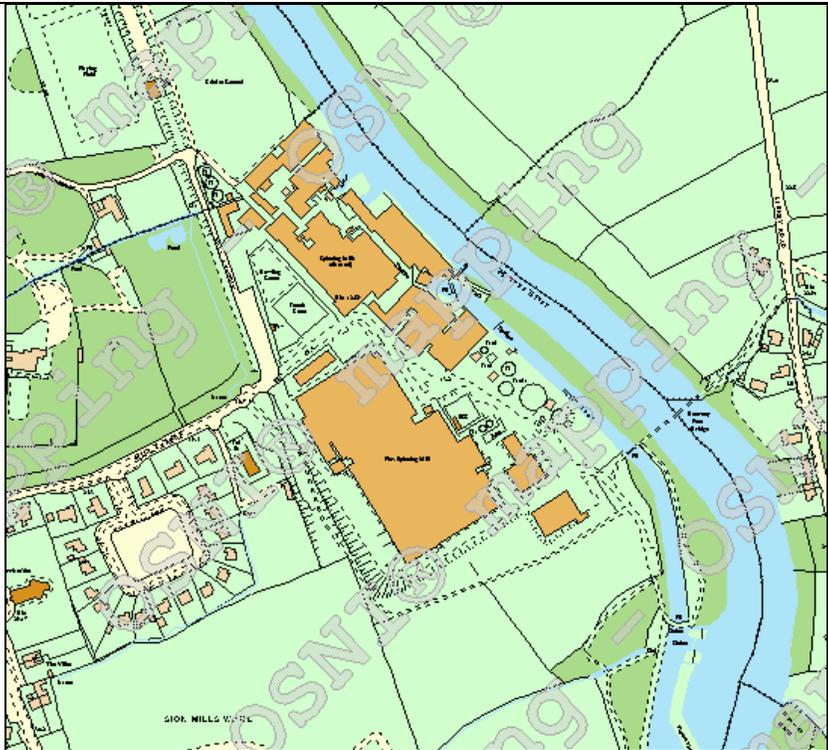
	<p>To the NW end is a large two storey, flat roofed, turbine section in yellow brick, added in 1900. To the NW is a collection of mainly post 1910 sheds and warehouses, much altered and modernised in recent decades and now largely plain and functional looking. To the E side of this group there is a split level, hipped roof, power house (built to supply electricity to the neighbouring village), with a yellow brick facade and large elliptical arched windows. To the SE is the administration block which consists of a two storey, house-like section with a yellow brick facade, arch headed windows and a hipped roof, with a (mainly) rubble-built return to the rear. The house-like section appears to have been built as a manager's residence in 1881, with the return no doubt acting as an outbuilding/stables. The return has been much altered in recent years due to conversion to an office. To the SE of this block is a substantial complex of large warehouses (mainly with Belfast Truss roofs) dating from the early 1900s onwards and much altered over the years. To the S of this is a large single storey modern mill, built c.1987-88. The complex sits amongst tranquil surroundings with the Mourne River to the immediate E and the still largely picturesque village of Sion (which grew up in the wake of the mill) to the W. It is possibly the most significant industrial heritage site in Northern Ireland and merits one of the higher listing grades.</p>
Sensitivity	
Associations	<p>Herdman's flax spinning mill at Sion was originally established in 1835 by two brothers from Belfast, James and John Herdman. Both had been in business in their home town since the 1820s owning the 'Winetavern Street Spinning Company' but wishing to expand, acquired a 500 year lease of land at Liggartown, 3 miles south of Strabane, from the Duke of Abercorn and adapted the old 'Seein Corn Mill' for spinning purposes. In this venture they were joined by Andrew and St. Clair Kelburn Mulholland (owners of the York Street Spinning and Weaving Company) and a Robert Lyons, but both these parties had been bought out by the Herdmans by 1849. At first 75 people were employed in the newly adapted mill, but spinning operations quickly expanded and by 1853 this had risen to 500 workers, most of them living in housing the Herdmans had built along and off the main road to the west of the mill. By 1866 roughly 900 were employed and by the 1870s over 1,000. By 1900 the village of 'Sion Mills', which had grown around the original mill workers houses of the 1840s, was well established, boasting a population of 2,000 by the mid 1920s. In the later 1980s the original mill complex, which had been much expanded from the 1850s onwards (see below) was abandoned and a new mill constructed to the south.</p> <p>THE MILL BUILDINGS</p> <p>One of the reasons the Herdman brothers were attracted to this site was the availability of a large volume of water throughout the year, from the Mourne River. Another may have been the existence of a large building which could easily be adapted to the spinning process. The original corn mill is shown on the OS map of 1832-33 and is noted in the contemporary valuation records as measuring 86½ft x 28½ x 32, with a further building at 54 x 24½ x 12½ and two water wheels. In 1845 one of the wheels appears to have been replaced. By the 1850s with the increase in production and employees a new much larger spinning mill (A.1), designed by W.H. Lynn, was erected just to the west of the existing buildings. Measuring roughly 165 x 55 the 'main mill' was built between 1853 and 1855 under the supervision of one John McCracken, with the sandstone quarried at near by Douglas. Brick was used for the vaulted ceilings and the stair contained within a five storey Italianate tower. Altogether the cost came to £15,500. The 1855-57 OS map shows the new building, along with an L shaped grouping to the south (where 'D' block now stands) and a U shaped building to the immediate south west, with the Londonderry and Enniskillen Railway line (completed 1854), just beyond this. At this stage there may have been a small gas works just to the north west of the complex [?C.5], but this is not certain. In 1867 the original corn mill building was rebuilt (B.1- still known as 'the old mill'), a new steam engine</p>

(powering the 'main mill') was installed at this time also. The tall mill chimney was built in 1877 at a cost of £600 and two years later a storey was added to the 'old mill'. A house for the manager was built in 1881 [presumably block D.1], with the recreation hall (now part of C.3) following in 1882. Much of the large single storey block fronting the complex (A.2.2) was added in 1884 and extended with the addition of a two storey section (A.2.1) in 1888 and a two storey machine repair shop to the north west (A.2.3), in possibly c.1900. The single storey building spanning the mill race (A.4) appears to have been built around this time also. Between 1900 and 1903 the turbine section (B.2) was added to the 'old mill' and 1200hp engines replaced the old 600hp water wheels. In 1907 the buttressed four storey gabled extension (A.3) was added to the south east of the 1850s 'main mill'. The post c.1910 expansion of the site appears to have been mainly centred around the north western and south eastern extremities, much of A.5, C.2 and D.3 in particular, with the power house (which supplied electricity to the village) added in 1919. The new mill to the south was built in the late 1980s. Sporting facilities for mill workers were provided by Herdmans, and these consist of a tennis court and bowling green to the west of the mill, and a cricket pitch and football pitches to the north. The bowling green and tennis court appear to have been laid out in the early 1900s, but cricket appears to have been played since c.1864. In 1969 this pitch witnessed a historic win for Ireland over the then invincible West Indies.

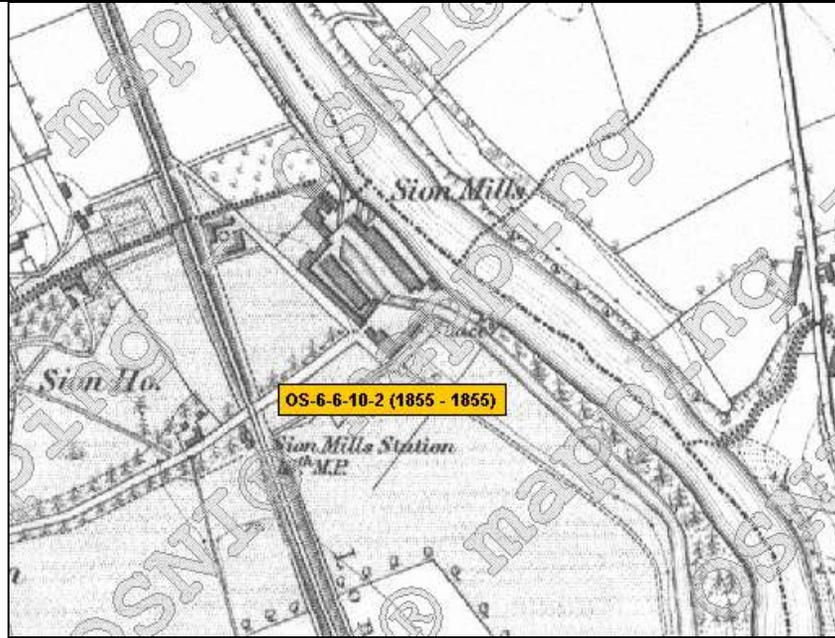
The name 'Sion' derives from the Gaelic word 'Sidhean', meaning a fairy hill. Incidentally another hill in this area, Meenashesk (to the east) is believed to be the 'purple headed mountain' referred to in Mrs Alexander's hymn 'All things bright and beautiful', which was written when she was living in this area in the 1850s. The 'river running by' is believed to be the Mourne.

Recommendations

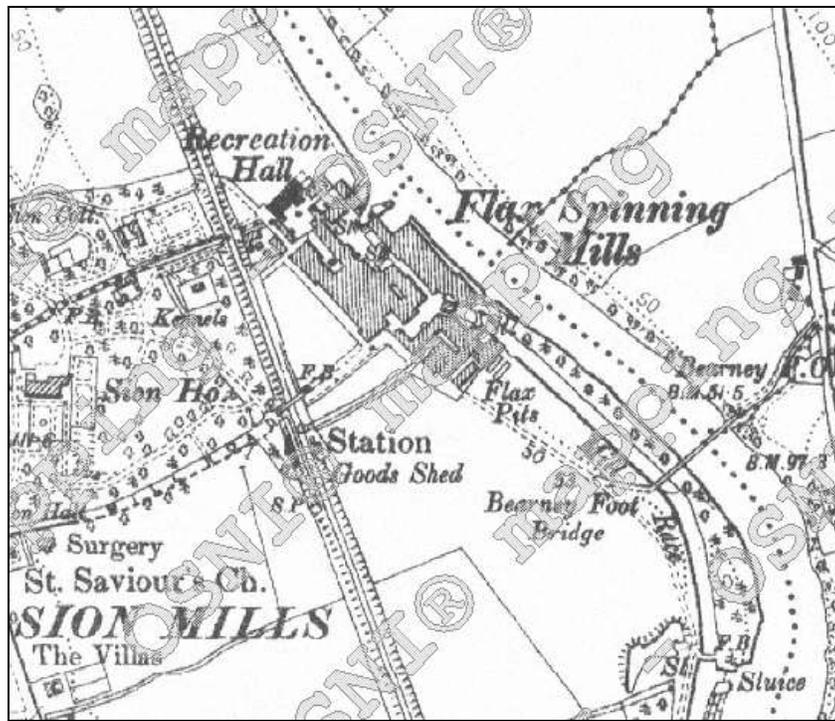
Mapping



Present-day mapping extract (www.osni.gov.uk)



2nd edition 6-inch OS map extract 1831 - 1904



3rd edition 6-inch OS map extract 1857-1932



Extract from NIEA SMR MapViewer of the site (Map ID Nos. 29-34)



Extract from NIEA SMR MapViewer of the site

References

<http://maps.ehsni.gov.uk/MapViewer/Default.aspx>

	<p>PRONI OS/1/6/10 OS map 1st ed., 1832-33, Co. Tyrone 10</p> <p>PRONI Valuation records, Urney, 1833</p> <p>PRONI T.1650 Photocopy of the 'Diary of Herdmans' yarn mill- giving an account of the running of the mill and the prices of materials. [This original of this diary is still in the possession of the mill and actually contains entries right up until the early 1900s. Some of the earliest extracts have been transcribed by Mrs. Celia Ferguson.]</p> <p>PRONI and Linen Hall Library 'Belfast and Province of Ulster Directory' Vols.1-21, 1852-1900, (Belfast, Henderson [1852-65], Belfast News-Letter [1865-])</p> <p>PRONI OS/6/6/10/3 OS map 2nd rev., 1855-57, Co. Tyrone 10</p> <p>PRONI VAL/12E/182/1-3 Annual revision town plans, Sion Mills, c.1866-1935</p> <p>PRONI OS/8/154 OS town plan of Sion Mills, c.1905-07 [This has been reprinted by Alan Godfrey Maps and is available in many bookshops.]</p> <p>PRONI D.1422 Places in Sion Mills, photographed by H.F. Cooper (commercial photographer, Strabane), c.1908-c.1961</p> <p>Herdmans Ltd. et al- Booklet containing the history of Sion Mills etc. (c.1925) [A copy of this small booklet is currently held at the mill- it appears to have been produced for both the work force and clients.]</p> <p>Fred Hammond Notes concerning the development of Herdmans Mill at Sion (?c.1990).</p>
Plates	
Additional Notes	