

cotton, wool and flax. First the fibres are opened in a Crighton machine, then follow in succession carding, spinning and weaving. All these operations, unless carefully controlled, produce considerable amounts of fine thistledown dust, which is wasted far and wide throughout the factory premises and even into neighbouring buildings, including adjacent offices. Water, or even wetting agents, so useful in the control of dust, are of no value because asbestos is practically unwettable.

The cloth is used for the manufacture of fire-protective clothing: suits, helmets and gloves, and safety curtains. It is sewn into covers which, when filled with crude fibre, form mattresses or pads for the insulation of heating boilers, tanks and pipes. In the form of tape, it is very easy of application for the protection of domestic pipes against either frost or heat loss. Bonded with bitumen it is moulded into slabs for use as panelling, or cut and shaped into brake-linings, gaskets and other forms of packing for machines. In the manufacture of cement roofing-tiles, flat or corrugated sheeting, rain-pipes and other building materials, asbestos is introduced into the "mix" as a binder. During World War II, small quantities were incorporated into the cotton-wool filters of gas-masks.

Waste asbestos boarding is often crushed and used as a filler in paint manufacture. The importance of this reference is that very frequently the workmen in these processes do not know the danger, which is aggravated by an almost entire lack of safety precautions.

The main centres of asbestos textile manufacture in Great Britain are at Rochdale, Leeds, Clockheaton, Barking and Glasgow.

History of asbestosis

In 1906, Montague Murray reported the case of an asbestos-worker, who had died in the Charing Cross Hospital in 1900 of "typical fibroid phthisis". The man, a card-room worker aged 34 years, had stated that 10 of his work-mates had died at about the age of 30 years. Sporadic cases continued to be recorded, and finally in 1928 Seiler reported on a case, which seemed definitely to establish the relationship between the inhalation of asbestos dust and disabling and fatal pulmonary fibrosis.

Therefore the Home Office instituted an official inquiry into the asbestos manufacturing industries throughout Great Britain, and the report by Merewether and Price remains the authoritative account of the disease (See Merewether, 1930.) The occupational origin was proved, and accordingly asbestosis was recognized as a compensatable disease under the Workmen's Compensation (Silicosis and Asbestosis) Act of 1930. In addition all workmen employed in certain scheduled occupations were required to pass an initial examination, and thereafter, at yearly intervals—since extended to 2 years—to submit to periodical medical examination. Any workman found at such examination to be suffering from asbestosis was immediately suspended permanently from all further work in the processes