

Bringing the Page to Life

Raw materials used in Production

Cotton and Rags

The raw material needed for the production of paper is cellulose found in most plant fibres. Traditionally mills used cotton fibres from rags. Rags were often bought from a local rag merchant and then brought to the mill rag house. This area was staffed by women who picked out buttons and foreign objects before sending the rags to the beaterhouse where they were turned into pulp.



paper made at Kinleith and Galloways Mills. It was shipped to Granton and Leith Harbours in empty holds that had taken coal to North Africa and Spain. When the esparto arrived at the mill and was sorted and cleaned it was not uncommon for lizards, exotic spiders and snakes to be found among the bales of grass. After sorting, the grass was fed into the duster or willow to be cleaned and for esparto wax to be extracted. Esparto wax was a bi-product of esparto that some mills sold to be used in furniture and boot polish manufacture. After leaving the duster, the grass was boiled and ready to be pulped.

Esparto Grass

The mid 1800s saw a shift in the materials used to make paper. Many mills, particularly in Scotland, began to use esparto grass as a more economic alternative to rags. Esparto is a tough grass that grows wild in North Africa and Spain. It has a short fibre length which produces a paper of bulk that is quite popular in the manufacture of writing and book paper; esparto grass was a major ingredient in the

Woodpulp

After the Second World War esparto began to be phased out in favour of woodpulp. Woodpulp was imported from Scandinavian countries and arrived at the mills already boiled, bleached and cleaned for paper production.

