

LUDDITE JACK

Born in seventeen ninety five in a little back to back
To parents Tom and Mary a son who they called Jack.
They had a cottage industry and in their topmost room
Worked through the daylight hours upon an old hand loom.

Jack was a bright and willing lad and learned the weaver's trade
But soon a revolution would scupper plans he'd made.
At the turning of the century it soon became quite clear
Throughout the valleys and the towns mills started to appear.

Now all the handloom weavers found their livelihoods at stake
So they decided to unite, their protests then to make.
But all of these mill owners were rich and powerful men
And they would do whate'er they could to pacify them then.

The gentry were not happy, they too would make a stand,
As they needed all the men folk to work upon the land.
Farmhands and dry stone wallers that was a certain fact
For Parliament had just passed The Land Enclosure Act.

The year was now Eighteen twelve, young Jack was seventeen,
Unrest had spread throughout the land like folk had never seen.
Jack found a raging passion was boiling up inside
When he heard about the Luddites who came from far and wide.

Far away in Nottingham lived a man they called Ned Ludd
Recruiting his "Luddite Army" in every town he could.
His leaders came to Huddersfield and held a meeting there
Where Jack took up the Luddite oath and on his life did swear.

'Twas on that night Jack met Ben Walker a hail and hearty fellow
Who was also the best friend of "Luddite King" George Mellor.
They gathered round the table to discuss their next attack
Which this time would involve our young friend Luddite Jack.

They decided they would make their move one January night
It may not be plain sailing and they might have to fight
For some mills were closely guarded by soldiers and the law
They must be well prepared and their plan must have no flaw.

Young Jack was so excited that he could play his part
Within the revolution which was so close to his heart.
When thinking 'bout his mum and dad it fired up his strong will
For he did not want them working in a "hell hole" called a mill.

They burned a mill just outside Leeds and shredded cloth in Rawdon
To Foster's Mill at Horbury the Luddite band strode on
Smashing the machinery which "Old Enoch" helped to make
And the looms that all lay shattered "Old Enoch" helped them break.

"Old Enoch" was the hammer named after Enoch Taylor,
One of the Luddite victims, the Marsden machine maker.
So flushed by their successes and the fear that they had brought
They raised their sights much higher as victory now they sought.

William Horsfall was their target and Cartwright's of Cleckheaton
They planned to take these men on and they would not be beaten.
Horsfall and Cartwright had both vowed to use these new machines
And crush this Luddite army by whatever means.

William Horsfall's Mill in Marsden was heavily fortified
And infantry and cavalry patrolled on every side.
Horsfall made his feelings felt about this Luddite band
Though Cartwright was a quieter but no less determined man.

George Mellor's Luddite Army in recent months had grown
And Young Jack became a leader with a legion of his own.
So far it had been easy for no-one put up a fight
But things would be so different upon this very night.

On April the eleventh with about a hundred strong
They marched on over Hartshead Moor, this fiery Luddite throng.
At half past midnight on that night they were all in place
Opening up their fire when Cartwright showed his face.

For twenty minutes battle raged with shots that pierced the night
Five lads wounded, two shot dead, in this short and bloody fight
As reinforcements never came Mellor called off the attack
And rounded up his gallant men along with Luddite Jack.

Horsfall was their biggest threat, he was after Luddite blood.
He'd made it clear that he would do anything he could
To rid the county of the Luddites, that was his major goal,
But Mellor then warned Horsfall – pride comes before a fall.

On Tuesday April 28th Mellor devised a plan to try
To ambush Horsfall at Crosland Moor as to Marsden he passed by.
Walker, Smith, Thorpe and Jack, in position laid in wait,
Then Mellor gave a whistle that signalled Horsfall's fate.

Two pistol shots rang loud and clear and from his horse he fell.
Hit in his stomach and his leg, let out a piercing yell.
The four of them fled from the woods, their pistols they did hide,
But now there was a twist of fate as William Horsfall died.

This was the first time murder had reared it's ugly head
And someone was due to pay for shooting Horsfall dead.
The law moved into action to flush the killers out.
The Luddites now were on the run of that there was no doubt.

Two thousand pounds was the reward placed on George Mellor's head
And it didn't really matter if he was alive or dead.
The rumours started spreading, though they didn't make much sense,
That Ben Walker had shopped Mellor when he turned King's Evidence.

All of these accusations Ben strongly had denied
And young Jack believed his friend and stood right by his side.
These pals had been through thick and thin fighting for their cause
For there was a special bond between the Luddite boys.

Jack went to see his mum and dad to say his last good-bye
When he said that he may hang, his mum began to cry
He said he'd hold his head up high, as the gallows beckoned him,
And hope his devoted parents would be so proud of him.

The Luddites were all rounded up and carted off to York
And Mellor, Walker and young Jack all promised not to talk,
They vowed to stick together through their final hours
As they had always done before through sunshine and through showers.

January 2nd in the year Eighteen Thirteen
Was the Luddites trial, York Castle was the scene.
Seventeen young men were hanged and seven were transported
And the ending of the Luddites was that day reported.

George Mellor and young Luddite Jack were hanged upon that day
But their best friend Ben Walker was allowed to walk away
They didn't have much evidence to charge him with the crime
And he would die a vagabond in just a few years time.

Now two hundred years have passed and all the mills have gone
But memories of the Luddites they still linger on
They were fighting for the poor, as side by side they stood,
To try stop this oppression they believed would bring no good.

Solid worsted's given way to denim jeans and shorts
Few are wearing worsted suits, it's just these cheap imports,
Which succeeded where the Luddites failed in closing all the mills
And brought clean air back to our towns and blue skies o'er our hills.