

The Millers House circa 1880 - 1947

A general description of the house has been given in the previous report.

The north wall, gables and internal walls were of similar construction. A roughly built foundation of 1 to 3 courses of flagstone supported walls of hand made brick consistent with a late 18th or early 19th century date. The south wall was built to a higher standard. A single row of flagstones formed a foundation for a wall consisting regularly coursed fine grained sandstone blocks squared on their outer faces. It is thought that this wall may have been built entirely of stone. This would have provided a much more attractive appearance than the brick walls of the rest of the building and indicates that this was the originally the front wall of the house. It faces towards the gravel path which leads from Rochdale road to the East and passes the South side of the house, the mill and continues through the gardens to the hall. This side of the house would have been clearly visible to people passing by. Then as now more attention was paid to the front of buildings than to the other elevations.

Throughout the building the floor surfaces had been removed but fragments of stone paving were found in the demolition debris suggesting that the floors were stone paved. The paving could be reused and was often removed when the building was demolished.

The archaeology shows that there was a major refurbishment of the house in the late 19th century and it seems very likely that this occurred around 1880 following the closure of the mill and prior to gardeners taking up residence. These alterations included the construction of a brick built extension against the South wall, the construction of a drain below the living room floor, the rebuilding of the chimney stack in the living room and re-roofing the house in slate.

Living Room

This was a large room measuring about 4.5 x 4.5 metres (14 feet 9 inches x 14 feet 9 inches). Although the entrance could not be identified from the archaeology Marian was able to tell us

that it was to the right when entering the house through the north doorway. There was a fireplace against the lobby wall. The chimney stack is however at a slight angle. This is a consequence of the stone foundation protruding at this point preventing it from being built flush with the wall.

An interesting feature of the room is an underfloor drain installed during the refurbishment. The site and surrounding areas quickly became waterlogged after heavy rain. The drain which was constructed of stone and brick had been inserted through the earlier floor and was presumably intended to keep the room dry. It is unlikely that it was effective in the long term since the inside of the drain appears to have quickly silted up.



Living room fireplace, internal wall and drain

Best Room

During this period houses with sufficient space often had a "best room". It contained the households best furnishings and was not intended for day to day use but reserved for entertaining guests and special occasions.

The room was almost identical in size to the living room. The fireplace was placed centrally against the South wall but could only be partially accessed due to a large tree which has subsequently grown above it.

Unlike the living room there does not seem to have had an underfloor drain.

Lobby

Situated between the living room and best room the lobby was 2.7 metres wide (about 8 feet 10 inches). A doorway in the North wall was identified. It therefore seemed likely that there would have been a doorway in the south wall and although we were unable to identify this in the archaeology Marian was able to confirm that this doorway had existed.

It is very likely that the lobby contained the staircase to the upper floor. It was probably constructed from timber and has left no evidence in the archaeology.

Kitchen Extension (Pantry)

The extension, constructed during the late 19th century refurbishment, was described by Marian as the “pantry”. This was a large room and would have been the kitchen area where food was stored and cooked and where pots and pans were washed, clothes laundered and probably where the family bathed. The room may also have acted as a dining room.

Well into the 20th century the kitchen was the most frequently used room in the house during the day.

The entrance to the kitchen could not be determined from the archaeology but it seems likely that it could be accessed from the best room and there may also have been a second door to the outside. There was no fire place but it is likely that there was a kitchen range. These were very popular in the 19th and early 20th centuries at all levels in society. They provided both heating for the room and cooking facilities in the form of an oven and hob. The kitchen range was functional but also often decorative and the focal point of the kitchen. Manufactured from cast iron and sometimes with brass fittings they were usually carefully maintained.

The iron work was black leaded and the brass polished.



Kitchen Range

Workers House

This is a self-contained two storey dwelling attached to the eastern end of the Millers House. At 2.7 metres wide and 4.5 metres in length it would have been a very cramped space and probably only intended as temporary accommodation when extra help was needed during busy periods at the mill.

The entrance to the workers house was in the east gable with a fireplace positioned on the internal wall opposite the door. We found no evidence of cooking facilities nor of a stairway to the upper floor. A drain constructed during the refurbishment terminates outside the North-West corner of the workers house and probably took waste water from a sink inside the building. This drain had later gone out of use to be replaced by a drain from the North-East corner.

In 1861 John Tweedy, a bailiff, is recorded as living in the workers house together with his wife and 26 year old son. These are the only known occupants of the workers house.



The workers house with the entrance in the foreground and fireplace on the internal wall opposite in 2017

Lean-To

Maps from the 19th century show a small structure attached to the east gable of the house. This is known to have been a lean-to constructed of wood. A fragment of the brick floor was exposed in 2015

Photographic Evidence

In the previous update we identified a photograph as being of the millers house. Further confirmation came from a large tree which is present in the photograph and still stands today. A drawing made from the photograph is shown below overlaid onto an image taken in 2017 from about the same place. The tree from the original photograph is outlined in red and it can be seen that it branches in an almost identical manner. The tree slightly to the right of the house also seems to be shown on the original image.



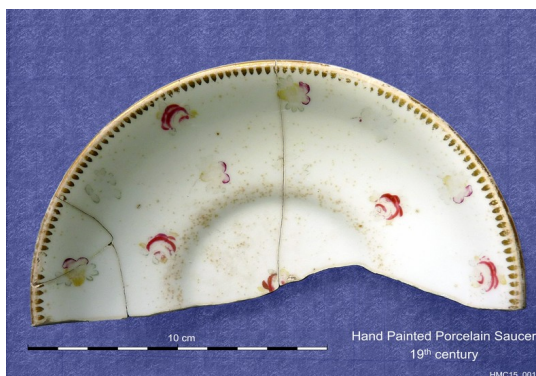
Photograph of Millers House circa 1880



Drawing from the original photograph overlaid on a 2017 image. The tree from the original photograph is outlined in red.

Due to the angle of the photograph the excavated remains of the building are not visible but the position of the walls, doorways, and chimney stacks to reflect those visible in the photograph.

Small Finds



Porcelain saucer with over-glaze hand painted floral decoration and gilded edging. 19th century. Porcelain was relatively expensive but households often had a best tea set for entertaining visitors.



Brown stoneware. Rim sherd from a bowl. Very common of 19th and early 20th century sites. Usually for use in the kitchen.



Remains of dry cell batteries. With the exception of one example the outer case and electrolyte has disintegrated with time leaving only the carbon electrode.

The small light bulb probably comes from a torch powered by similar batteries .



Transfer printed dish. Popular during the 19th and 20th centuries they relatively inexpensive. One of the most popular was the "Willow Pattern" which is still produced today.

Only blue was available until the second half of the 19th century when other colours such as crimson and green became available.

We have not confined our excavation solely to the building and have extended it to investigate the surrounding area particularly on the north side where there were some major alterations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The results of this will be reported in the next update.