

Middle Row: Part of a Georgian Industrial Settlement in Cark in Cartmel, Cumbria Les Gilpin

The Georgian rows of High Row and Low Row which sit alongside 'Cark Beck' (river Eea) in the hamlet of Cark are the visible evidence of Cark as former industrial settlement. With the building of the Cark Cotton Mill, also known as the Big Mill, housing was needed to accommodate the estimated 400 men, women and children who were employed there¹.

Low Row and High Row have survived but another two rows in Mill Yard, now Mill Close, were demolished within the author's memory, in the early 1960s. The fifth and most intriguing row, known as Middle Row, however, was demolished between 1897 and 1901, being recorded in the background of a photograph by Messrs. Francis Frith when their photographer captured it in the background of a photograph taken in 1897². Today only the floor platform and section of wall remain of Middle Row.

Various original documents were examined. These included deeds relating to the Cotton mill (1785-1816)³, the accounts winding up the estate of James Stockdale II in 1823⁴, a cottage rental account book from the 1880s⁵ as well as large-scale ordnance survey maps and the censuses of 1841 to 1901 for Lower Holker, I have tried to examine these cottages, their owners and occupants.

Between the summer of 1783⁶ and May 1785⁷ James Stockdale of Cark House, merchant, bought out his partners in the Cark Forge and acquired land around the site on which he built a substantial Cotton Mill for a new set of partners from Manchester

¹ Birmingham Central Library, Boulton & Watt collection, Box 4/15/112 Letter from Fletcher Stockdale to Boulton & Watt, July 1786.

² Francis Frith neg no. 40512, date from Francis Frith web site

³ Cumbria Archives, Barrow BDX 83 T1-48 Cark Mill Deeds

⁴ Cumbria Archives, Barrow BDX 9 /1/10 – 11 Stockdale Estate papers

⁵ Cumbria Archives, Barrow BDHJ 426/1/6 Cottage Rent Book

⁶ BDX/83 T10-11

⁷ BDX/83 T14

and Lancaster⁸. As part of this mill, probably by May 1785, some 32 cottages were built⁹. These are most likely to be:

Mill Yard two rows, each of five cottages, two storey
Low Row fifteen cottages, two storey
High Row six cottages, three storey
plus one other 'east of the mill'¹⁰.

31 identified cottages from that time are shown on the 1891 25inch Ordnance Survey map¹¹. I have been unable to identify the location of the 32nd cottage. It was either behind the eastern row in Mill Yard where a number of buildings remained as sheds until demolition in the 1960s or where the later Cooperative store building stands. One other option is the room above the archway leading into the Mill Yard, although this could equally have been the counting house.

Other leases and documents regarding the ownership of the cotton mill only repeat the phrase 'several dwelling houses or cottages lately built'. Aspin mentions a 1795 insurance policy describing the mill, including a block of 16 cottages¹². When the ownership of the Satterthwaite family shares were being acquired by Benjamin Satterthwaite of Lancaster in 1815, fifty cottages are mentioned¹³. That suggests a further two unknown dwellings beside the unidentified cottage in the original group of 32, unless 50 was a generalisation. Mill House and occasionally another house are always mentioned separately. Examination of the 1891 OS map only marks what appear to be 16 back to back dwellings at Middle Row. When James Stockdale II died in 1823 the accounts calculating his estate for probate mention 37 cottages partly owned with some cousins and primarily with Benjamin Satterthwaite¹⁴. I am assuming that the lawyers in 1815 had been given a rough number of cottages rather than anything accurate. The definite number of cottages evidenced is thus 37 in High, Low and Middle rows and the 10 in Mill Yard which had been sold to Edward Hall with the old Cotton mill in 1816. The one cottage east of the mill remains a mystery

⁸ BDX/83 T14 The original partners were Joseph Ryder of Manchester, Joseph Thackeray of Manchester, Thomas Satterthwaite of Lancaster, James Stockdale I of Cark, each with 2/9 share and each contributing to the 1/9 share of the fifth partner, their engineer and manager, Edward Hardy of Cark, formerly of Mossley.

⁹ BDX/83 T28-29 referencing BDX/83 T16-17

¹⁰ Aspin, C, 'The Water Spinners, Helmshore 2003, page 356 quoting Sun Life Insurance policy of 1795

¹¹ OS Lancashire Sheet XVII.6, surveyed 1889, published 1891

¹² Aspin op cit

¹³ BDX/83 T42

¹⁴ Stockdale Estate papers op cit

and may have ceased to be a dwelling by 1815, but suggests that the two other mystery cottages didn't possibly exist.

The cotton mill was mothballed in 1807 or 1808. This follows the death of James Stockdale I, the bankruptcy of fellow-partner Joseph Thackeray and generally due to the difficulty in importing cotton and selling cotton twist during the Napoleonic Wars¹⁵.

The sale of the Cotton Mill, with the ten Mill Yard cottages, finally occurred in 1816, when it was acquired by Edward Hall, corn miller of Allithwaite¹⁶. The remainder of the cottages were retained with ownership shared by Benjamin Satterthwaite (two thirds) and the heirs of James Stockdale I (one third). The heirs at that time were James Stockdale II (9/36 of total share) and children of his sister Ellen Harrison, wife of William, surgeon of Ulverston (3/36 share). At James II's death in 1823 the Harrison shareholders were Henry Benning (husband of Anne Stockdale Harrison) of Gainford, Co. Durham, James Stockdale Harrison, and Stephen Ross (husband of Charlotte Harrison) of Lancaster. At some point before 1880 J S Harrison had acquired Satterthwaite's 2/3 share of the cottages but had passed away by 1881¹⁷. His heir was Rev. Dr Henry Ross of Mauritius and Lancaster. Ross in turn, by 1881 had acquired his Benning cousin's share. James Stockdale III had been left with 1/4 ownership and responsibility for the rents. On his death and by 1881 this share was in the hands of his sister Anne and on her passing, to their younger sister Ellen Gray Rigge and her husband Captain Charles Gray Rigge RN of Wood Broughton. In 1890 ownership was between the distant cousins Dr Ross (3/4) and Ellen Gray Rigge (1/4)¹⁸. Rents appear to have always been collected by the Stockdales, who also arranged any maintenance and shared out the profits.

Compared to the other rows, Middle Row is little known, only appearing in the background of photos and demolished long before present memory. They could have been back-to-back cottages, as suggested by the Ordnance Survey map. However it appears the half were accessed from the yard south of the row and the northern half from the adjacent lane. To the author this, with the lane access being at first floor level, suggests they were possibly apartments. There is no suggestion of a ginnel or entrance between the cottages to allow the upper side access to their privies, at the southern edge of the yard without having to walk around the block. Today the windows and doors of the upper cottages can be found under the ivy of the boundary

¹⁵ BDHJ/4/1/1/6 Fire insurance policy of 1808 taken out by James Stockdale II with children of his sister Ellen Harrison (his co-heirs). The policy states that it will be void if the mill is used.

¹⁶ BDX/83 T47-48. Hall had to enter into a bond with both Satterthwaite and Stockdale as part of the sale.

¹⁷ Cottage Rent Book, op cit

¹⁸ Cottage Rent Book, op cit

wall opposite High Row. The Frith photograph¹⁹ shows boxes of unknown purpose (too large to be window boxes) against the Windows of the upper storey on the south side. The census returns suggest these to be 3 room cottages, although through the 1880s it appears some tenants rented pairs of cottages²⁰.

The 1891 census shows only three families in occupation of 8 dwellings in Middle Row. This suggests that the owners or the enumerator had ceased classing the remainder as habitable. No dwellings are shown as Middle Row, neither occupied or unoccupied, in the 1901 census, suggesting demolition had occurred

When James Stockdale II died in 1823 various accounts of the debtors to the estate were documented²¹. These mention the income from the cottages retained by Satterthwaite and the Stockdales in 1816. The income from the cottages is shown as in the main 1 shilling per week, much of which hadn't been paid for up to six years.

The rent account book for 1881 – 91 shows not only the owners of the cottages and the income due to them, but also the amounts paid by the various tenants. It gives the rents at 1/- (Low and Middle Row) 1/6d (5 houses on High Row) and 2/- (one house on High Row) per week. Where a tenant occupied the dwellings in Middle Row rented out as a pair, he paid 2/-, the same as the largest High Row cottage²². The books and censuses also show that usually no more than 23 of the 37 cottages were occupied at any time.

The census returns for 1861, 1881 and 1891 all identify the Middle Row cottages and, where relevant, their occupants. However it is not possible to match any particular Middle Row cottage to a particular occupant. The problem is in identifying the order in which the enumerator called at each dwelling. Did he go from house to house in strict order or did he call on whoever answered their doors? With Middle Row did he walk along the lane between it and High Row first and then walk around to the lower cottages? The problem is even harder with the 1841 and 1851 census returns as few individual dwellings are identifiable, only the pubs and big houses are individually named. Thus trying to match occupants as potentially living in the same cottage between 1851 and 1861 only identified three possible occupants of Middle Row and one in High Row. Even in the later returns of 1871, 1881, and 1891, people appear to have moved between neighbouring cottages.

What both the census returns and the rent account book do strongly suggest is that generally High Row was fully occupied. Otherwise, there were usually vacancies in the other cottages in Middle and Low rows. On average only 21 of the 37 cottages

¹⁹ Francis Frith neg no. 40512 op cit

²⁰ Cottage Rent Book, op cit

²¹ Stockdale Estate papers, op cit

²² Cottage Rent Book, op cit

were occupied. In the 1871 census, 14 Middle Row cottages are occupied. By the 1881 census, only five are occupied, ten are unoccupied and one not mentioned (perhaps the one rented with its adjacent cottage) In the 1891 census three are occupied, five unoccupied and eight not mentioned. Low Row usually appears to have some vacant cottages and in 1871 appears to be totally empty. Perhaps they were all under renovation or some disaster such as a fire had occurred along the row. Further research in the Ulverston, Barrow or Lancaster newspapers may provide some evidence. What is for certain is that Middle Row was seen as satisfactory accommodation for most of its existence.

Given that over supply for around eighty years, the author suggests that it took Mrs Gray Rigge and Dr Ross to finally agree to demolish the Middle Row. Older local residents may recall who owned the remaining cottages of Low, High Row and Mill Yard in the 20th century before they were acquired by their occupants.

In conclusion it can be seen that this intriguing row of cotton mill workers cottages had a useful life through the nineteenth century. People were willing to live in them despite there being what to modern eyes might appear to be more desirable cottages vacant in Low Row. After 1891 the remaining occupants had either passed away or moved from the village, allowing their owners to demolish what must have been the meanest dwellings in the village.