

ROCK HOUSE, CROMFORD

SUMMARY

Rock House was the home of Sir Richard Arkwright from 1776 until his death in 1792. It is given a date of "circa 1780" in the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest but the present house is, essentially, a refashioning of 1867. A house was in existence before Arkwright moved to Cromford and a house on this site may have been in existence before 1749.

The first house for which there is any documentary reference was lived in by William Milnes, who having come into ownership of the Manor of Cromford, in part through marriage and in part purchase, set himself up there in what is described as a mansion house. It was this mansion house that Peter Nightingale of Lea, Richard Arkwright's financial backer, secured for the use of Arkwright as his Cromford home, as part of a larger land deal.

As depicted in two late 18th century watercolours, and as interpreted on the basis of surviving fabric, Arkwright's Rock House was a very eccentric design. Although 'double pile' i.e. two rooms deep, it was not roofed in the manner normal for that time, with two parallel pitched roofs and a valley gutter between, but with a single very large pitched roof spanning 37'-0". Even more unconventionally for the 18th century it had an asymmetrical façade.

An engraving by John Boydell, published in 1749, suggests that the house may have had earlier origins. It shows a building in the right location and at the right kind of level, i.e. at the right elevation. It is not a clear depiction but seems to represent a double pile building, with parallel roofs, i.e. the conventional arrangement for a building two rooms deep, and with chimneys at each gable end. The tops of trees obscure its base, but it could be three storeys in height. This might be a 17th century, or even earlier house or one of two or more dates which, if it had in some way helped determine the form of Arkwright's house, would perhaps explain its asymmetrical facade. It does not however provide an explanation for why, if this hypothesis is correct, the roof got remodelled as a single span in the second half of the 18th century.

The external appearance of the Rock House of today has been subject to a number of significant changes since the 18th century, the greatest being the replacement of the single pitched roof with a quadrangular roof behind a raised parapet. The extent to which the external walls were rebuilt or refaced is unknown, but the surface nature of the masonry does not suggest over 200 years of weathering. The windows to the house were clearly replaced during the 19th century. In addition, a

porch, vestibule and small conservatory was added to the south elevation and a billiard room to the north. These changes have resulted in Rock House having more the appearance of a Victorian building than a Georgian one.

The conversion of the house into six flats in the 1930s resulted in the loss of internal coherence as a single dwelling, nevertheless the conversion largely respected the internal layout of the house as it was in the 19th century, and possibly before, and its various rooms remain largely intact, although in some cases subdivided. Evidence of an earlier house can best be divined in its cellars, which have lain unaltered for the last hundred years or so, but from visual evidence it would seem unlikely they are older than c 1770. The only datable parts of the fabric which could conceivably have come from the house in the 1749 engraving are architraves with egg and dart mouldings and an oak ovolo section door frame, all now in Flat 2.

The former service wing, added some time before 1835, is converted into three flats. This range remains largely unaltered externally, although some windows in the south elevation have been deepened.

Several secondary buildings are likely to date from the 18th century, and some possibly from the time of Richard Arkwright the first, namely; stables, carriage house, boat house and a gazebo type building which commands views over the rooftops and yard of Cromford Mill.

Today Rock House lies hidden behind tree growth and hemmed in by modern houses in its grounds, but in the late 18th century it stood out prominently, partly because it sat within extensive grounds atop the high rock from which it got its name¹ and partly because of its single span roof, which gave it great height.

A large area of pastureland around it to the south, east and north provided a park-like setting. This setting was gradually eroded, first with the construction of the Cromford Canal, then with the construction of a valley bottom road connecting Cromford with Belper, and in 1840 or thereabouts with the building of two substantial houses for the tenant of the mills and the minister of the village church.²

Following Sir Richard's death Rock House became the home of successive elder sons, prior to them inheriting the role of squire and moving into Willersley Castle. Enlargement would seem to be necessary to accommodate Peter Arkwright's many children and large retinue of staff and it was probably during his occupancy (1805-1843) that the existing double pile service range was added, but at some point or

¹ The earliest references to Arkwright's residence is "at The Rock"

² Alison House and The Old Vicarage of circa 1840, reached via Intake Lane. Personal communication by Doreen Buxton.

points in the 19th century, and probably principally at the time of the date on its cast iron rainwater hopper heads (1867), the old mansion house underwent 'modernisation'. The changes include the provision of plate glass sash windows, the addition of a porch/vestibule/conservatory to the front entrance and the addition of a billiards room to the north. The date for the latter is probably 1885, the date carved into a tablet over its garden entrance.

Rock House remained in the ownership of the Arkwright family until some time between 1924 and 1927, when the whole Willersley Estate was sold. The house lost status following the sale and in the 1930s was converted to flats. The service buildings were converted to dwellings and in the 1960s several houses were built in its grounds.

Despite these changes the house and its associated buildings, as an ensemble, is of considerable significance within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site because of the pivotal importance of Richard Arkwright. It was during the 21 years that Arkwright was in Cromford that he created the new factory system and of those 16 were spent at Rock House.

DOCUMENTARY REFERENCES

1748/9 William Milnes of Aldercar marries Mary, eldest daughter of Adam Soresby of Chesterfield.

1760³ Mary Milnes inherits half the manor of Cromford from her brother. Her sister Helen inherits the other half.

1765 William Milnes purchases half of the manor of Cromford from his sister in law Helen, thereby securing ownership of the entire manor.

1768 William Milnes is resident in Cromford, almost certainly at Rock House.⁴

1771 William Milnes is made High Sheriff. On 1 Aug 1771 Arkwright and his partners take out a 21 year lease on land at Cromford.

27 Sept 1775 Article of agreement between Robert Nall⁵, William and Mary Milnes and Richard Arkwright whereby Nall agrees that "in consideration of £20,000 paid

³ The will dated 1758 was proved in 1760.

⁴ 23 May 1768 Thomas Oldham, a tenant farmer of Aldercar, set off to pay £80 rent to William Milnes at Cromford. "What the Papers Said. Derbyshire in Nottingham Newspapers 1714-1776" Ed Roger Flindall. Flindall records William Milnes of Aldecar, Heanor in 1762, so his move to Cromford was between 1762 and 1768.

⁵ Nall was a trustee of William and Mary Milnes. William Milnes had obtained the Manor of Cromford via his wife who had inherited it jointly with her sister. Milnes had bought the other half of the manor in 1765.

to W and M Milnes, by 5th April next, W and M Milnes would convey the manor of Cromford to R Arkwright.”⁶ Before the transaction could be completed Peter Nightingale took over the purchase and became owner of the manor.

1776 An agreement between Peter Nightingale and Richard Arkwright makes provision for Nightingale to lease to Arkwright “All that Capital Messuage or Mansion House with gardens and appurtenances and therewith enjoyed in Cromford now in occupation of William Milnes with a piece or parcel of land called the Lawn and one other piece called the Paddock”. The agreement included a requirement that certain areas of land (the Lawn, the Rye Croft, the Barn Croft⁷) were not to be ploughed or tilled. The plots in question fill the sweep of land visible from Rock House looking down the valley eastwards and up the side of the valley southwards, the objective being presumably to ensure the preservation of pasture which provided a park like setting.

An undated map, which goes with the 1771 lease papers, shows Milnes’ orchard and garden bounding what is described as “Turnpike Road” i.e. Mill Road, with “The Garden” encompassing the road frontage of what is now Cromford Meadows and “The Orchard” encompassing the frontage of what became the canal wharf⁸

1778 Richard Arkwright gives a ball “at his own House to the neighbouring Ladies and Gentlemen, at which the company was very numerous and brilliant”⁹

C 1779 Margaret Arkwright “separates” from Richard Arkwright and “lives on her own means”¹⁰, but still at Rock House it would seem.

1782 Richard Arkwright purchases the manor of Willersley from Thomas Hallet Hodges.¹¹

1784-5 Archibald Buchan resided with Richard Arkwright for 18 months at Rock House studying the Arkwright process before returning to Deanston in Perthshire to build, with his older brother John, an ‘Arkwright’ mill. He described sitting on the

⁶ Quoted in 1776 article of agreement between Richard Arkwright and Peter Nightingale. Arkwright papers held at Willersley Castle. The payment was made in 1776.

⁷ The 1841 Tithe Award map identifies plots of land with these names. The Lawn is shown as being bounded to the north by the canal but of course this was not in existence in 1776 and it seems likely that it originally extended to the River Derwent. The Ryecroft and Barn Croft lie to the south, on the other side of the line eventually followed by the Derby Road, which, like the canal, did not exist in 1776. Such an extensive area of ‘parkland’ must have given Rock House a fair degree of status.

⁸ Arkwright papers formerly held at Wilersley Castle, now in the Derbyshire Record Office.

⁹ FITTON.

¹⁰ FITTON quotes Guest. *Compendious History*.

¹¹ CRAVEN claims Nightingale sold the newly built Rock House to Thomas Hallett Hodges and that Arkwright bought it from Hodges in 1782, but provides no evidence for this. The misunderstanding probably stems from the fact that Edwin Lascelles sold the Willersley Estate to Edmund Hodgkinson in 1778. Hodgkinson sold it to Thomas Hallet Hodges in the same year and Hodges sold it to Arkwright in 1782.

other side of the fire to RA for weeks on end without RA uttering a syllable, the great man being totally preoccupied by his own thoughts.¹²

1786 Arkwright knighted and begins building Willersley Castle.

1787 Sir Richard Arkwright made High Sheriff for Derbyshire.

1789 Arkwright purchases the Manor of Cromford.

18 April 1789 Arkwright negotiates changes to the design of the Cromford Canal
"He was always against the Canal running so near the House...he will be satisfied if we can carry it near the Bridge & as close the Derwent as possible he wants the Green---& will not be so closed hemmed in if he can help it..."¹³

30 April 1789 A letter from Captain Gell to Philip Gell states "This morning we have been with Sir Richd and Mr Milnes who resides with him..."¹⁴

1 May 1789 Arkwright "talks of pleasure Boats and entertaining my Company in the Water & talked of having inserted in the (Parliamentary) Act his Boat—an open Canal where every Man an Englishman may have a Boat that pleases..."¹⁵

18 May 1790 Arkwright negotiates "for upward of two hours... for the Sale of part of...(his) Garden and Lawn &c."¹⁶

8 August 1791 Willersley Castle damaged by fire.

29 July 1792 Arkwright makes his will at Rock House.

3 August 1792 Arkwright dies at Rock House.

1792 Lady Arkwright moves to Wirksworth and Richard Arkwright II and family move into Rock House.

¹² FITTON & WADSWORTH. The Strutts and the Arkwrights.

¹³ FITTON. Letter from Captain Gell to his brother Philip Gell of Hopton.

¹⁴ FITTON speculates this might be a member of the Milnes family who held the Manor of Cromford. Was there an agreement for the family to retain some kind of use of Rock House?

¹⁵ FITTON Ditto. In fact the following was included in the Act: XCI. And be it further enacted, That it shall be lawful for the Owners and Occupiers of any Lands adjoining to the said Canal and Collateral Cut to use any Pleasure Boat or Boats upon the said intended Canal and Collateral Cut (not passing through any Lock, unless they shall first pay Tonnage equal to a Boat or Vessel carrying Ten Tons, or obtain the Consent of the said Cromford Canal Company) without any Interruption from the said Cromford Canal Company, and without paying any Rate for the same, so as the same be not made use of for carrying any Goods, or other Things, and so as the same shall not obstruct or prejudice the Navigation of the said intended Canal and Collateral Cut, or the Towing Paths on the Sides thereof.

¹⁶ FITTON Arkwright family papers

1796 Rock House vacated by Richard Arkwright II for Willersley Castle.

1805 Peter Arkwright, the fourth of eleven children of Richard Arkwright II, marries his cousin Mary Anne Hurt and (when?) moves into Rock House where they stay until the death of Richard II in 1843.

1817 Act of Parliament to create a turnpike road from Cromford to Belper. This required the giving up of some of the Rock House grounds.

1818 Rock House is described by a traveller searching for the picturesque as "...A conspicuous object; it is neat but not elegant, and no doubt comfortable within, although it's exterior is tasteless."¹⁷

1835 The western service range is shown on Sanderson's map published in 1835.

1841 The census lists Peter and Mary Arkwright with 6 of their children and 13 live-in servants.

1843 Upon the death of Richard Arkwright II, and Peter Arkwright's consequent move to Willersley Castle, Peter's sister Frances moves into Rock House with her companion Ann Wildey and eight servants.

1846 James Charles Arkwright is living at Rock House.¹⁸

1857 Rock House described as 'the seat of the misses Hurt'.¹⁹ They are still there in 1860 but leave sometime before the end of 1860.²⁰

1861 Rock House is unoccupied on the night of the 1861 census.

1866 Peter Arkwright dies at the age of 82. His widow Mary Anne (nee Hurt) remains at Willersley until her death in 1872. An undated Cromford Church Rate book²¹ lists Peter Arkwright's property as in the hands of his executors. It may have been compiled late in 1866 or in 1867. The comment on the entry for the property, not named but most likely to be Rock House, is 'Void', suggesting that the rate is not payable because the house is empty.

1867 This date is cast on iron hopper heads to the parapet roof gutter outlets of Rock House. The Matlock Bath Advertiser of 13 April 1867 reports how a youth fell

¹⁷ Picturesque Excursions from Derby to Matlock Bath by H Moore. 1818.

¹⁸ Bagshaw's Directory

¹⁹ White's Directory

²⁰ Harrison, Harrod and Co Directory

²¹ DRO D3287/50/1

three storeys off scaffolding at Rock House where “extensive alterations are being made.”

1871 Frederic Arkwright (born 1806 at Rock House and Peter’s eldest son) is by this time living at Rock House. With him is his wife, two of his three children and 11 live-in servants.²² He had married Susan Sabrina Burney in 1845 and set up home at Field House, Sponden, which he purchased in 1850 and lived in until 1866²³.

1872 Frederic Arkwright was able to move to Willersley Castle after the death of his mother that year.

1873 Rock House advertised in Derby Mercury (Sept 24) to be let, furnished.

1874 Frederic Charles Arkwright, the heir of his father Frederic, inherits at the age of 21, on the death of his father in December (his mother had already died in October the same year) and vacates Rock House for Willersley Castle, which had become available following the death of his grandmother in 1872.

1878 Rock House advertised in Derby Mercury (Oct 9) to be let furnished “from Christmas next”

1881 Capt. Charles Francis Walker is living at Rock House²⁴ with sons Edgar and Philip. No wife is recorded in the census return for that year.²⁵

1885 Date above the entrance porch to the billiard room, which had been added to the house against the north wall of the room described in the 1924 sale papers as the dining room.

1887-1900 Capt. Edwyn Walker JP is living at Rock House.²⁶

1904 Henry Frederick Crompton Cavendish JP is living at Rock House.²⁷

1908 George Ashton JP is living at Rock House.²⁸

1916 Major Francis Cecil Albert Hurt is living at Rock House.²⁹

²² 18971 Census

²³ CRAVEN and STANLEY, The Derbyshire Country House. Vol II. “Field House was set in a 13 acre park”

²⁴ Kelly’s Directory

²⁵ 1881 Census

²⁶ Kelly’s and Bulmer’s Directories

²⁷ Kelly’s Directory

²⁸ Kelly’s Directory (printing of surname incomplete)

²⁹ Kelly’s Directory

1922 and 1925 Evelyn Harvey is living at Rock House.³⁰

1924-1927 Rock House is sold, by Richard Alleyne Arkwright, as part of the sale of the Willersley Estate. The "Misses Harvey" are described as tenants in the 1924 sale catalogue. The sale catalogue describes the house and its outbuildings as they were at that time;

ROCK HOUSE: Freehold Residential Property 9.141 acres.

Ground floor; vestibule with tiled floor, hall, dining room 33'-0" x 20'-0", smoke room 17'-6" x 18'-0", billiard room 25'-0" x 20'-0" lighted by three windows, cloak room with lavatory basin (h & c) and WC. The Domestic Offices are conveniently arranged and include; pantry with two sinks (h & c) and fitted safe, butler's bedroom with safe, two larders, housekeeper's room, kitchen with range, scullery with sink, (h & c) and furnace for heating water for baths, servants' hall, boot hole and two wine houses. Outside WC, boot and knife room with room over.

First floor; approached by principal and secondary staircases are; drawing room 33'-0" x 20'-0" fitted with carved marble mantel, seven bedrooms, the principal of which measure; 18'-0" x 18'-0", 21'-0" x 15'-6", 21'-0" x 18'-0", 22'-0" x 18'-0", dressing room, two bath rooms each fitted with bath (h & c), housemaid's pantry.

Second floor; five guest bedrooms, dressing room, bathroom with bath (h & c) and lavatory basin, five maid's bedrooms, WC and housemaid's closet. In the wing are two laundry-maid's bedrooms.

OUTBUILDINGS: LAUNDRY with two coppers³¹, having mangling and ironing rooms over, coal and coke store. GARAGE for three cars with covered washing place, ditto for two, saddle room. STABLE for four, and loose box with loft over. Range of four piggeries.

1936 A post card of 1936 gives the address of the recipient as Flat 1 Rock House. It would appear therefore that the subdivision of the property into flats was carried out sometime between 1924 and 1936.

1955 A resident of flat 6 between 1955 and 1959, Mr Steve Huson, recalls the name of the then owner as being Swain Estates and the managing agents being Bagshaw's of Ashbourne.³² Bernard Swain was a self-made man. He lived at Ridgewood, on the Derby Road, and became Master of the High Peak Hunt. He purchased Rock House after it had been converted to flats.

Circa 1934 Rock House converted into flats.³³

³⁰ Kelly's Directory

³¹ A copper is being used as a flower tub in the yard of The Mews.

³² Bagshaws however have a record that in 1957 they acted for a Mr J S Hardy in managing the flatted property. Communication by 'Jean' of Bagshaws to the author. 5 Nov 2008.

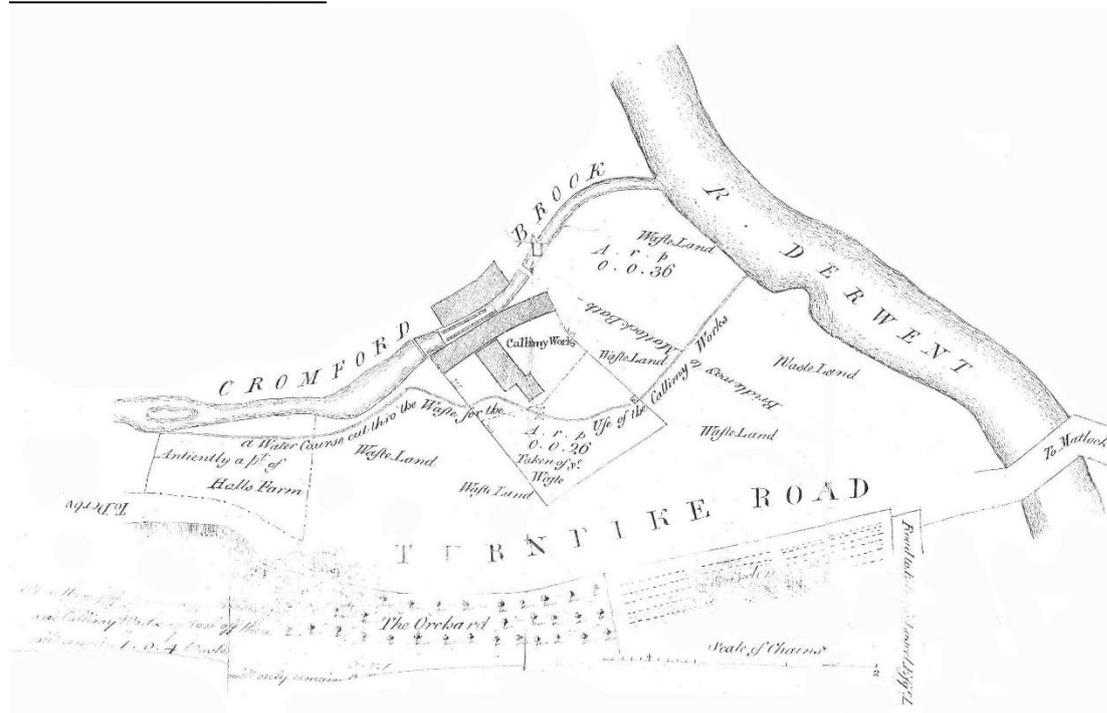
³³ Testimony given to Doreen Buxton in July 2005 by a former resident whose family moved into Flat 8 in June 1940 ... "Family's understanding was that it had been turned into flats about six years earlier by Mr Hardy

1966-1970 Rock House, The Mews and The Coach House were owned by Major and Mrs Thomas Kay. The property was bought from Mr Bernard Swain³⁴ in January 1966. Major Kay sold the property to Dr A K Bose in November 1970.

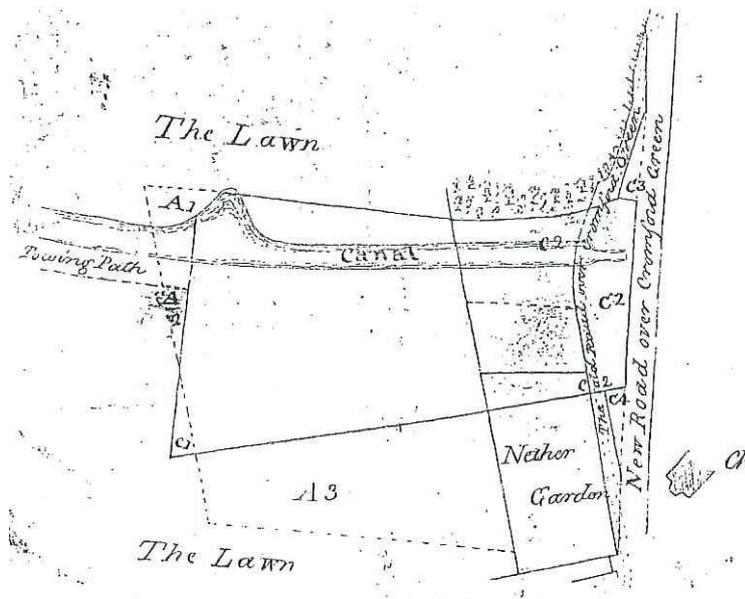
of Freeman Hardy and Willis, of the shoe chain, for his son. He lived in the lodge, looked after the place and lived on the rental income. He signed himself J D Stronach-Hardy.”

³⁴ Personal communication by Mrs Kay. 2 Jan 2009.

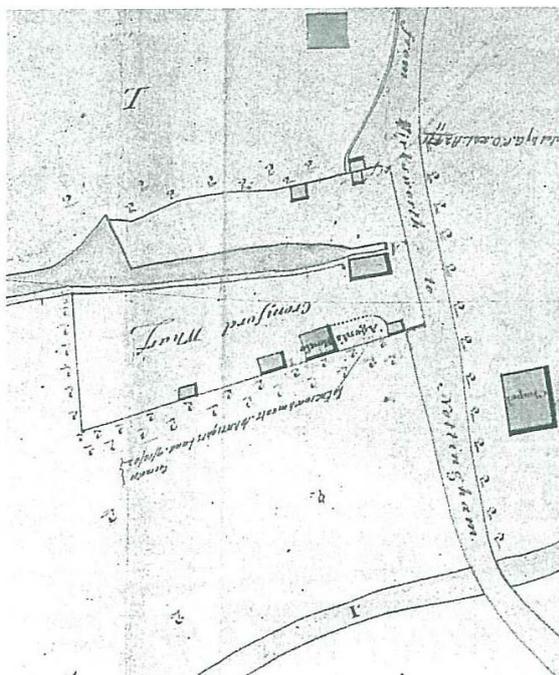
MAP REFERENCES



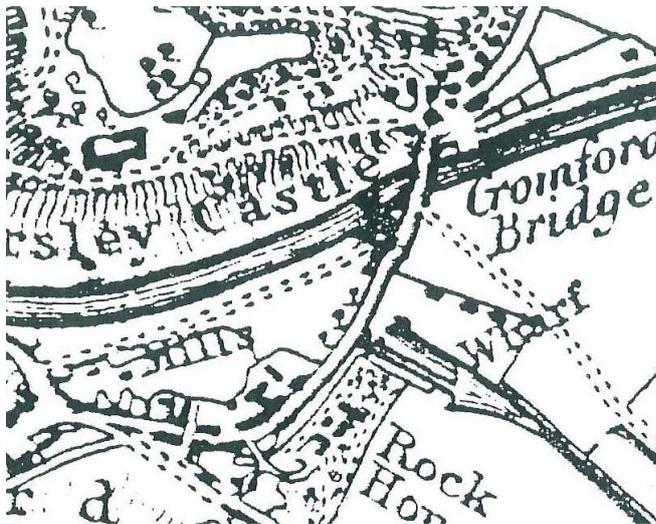
The earliest plan covering any part of the site is an undated plan of 'Callamy Works' in Mill Road (the turnpike road) archived alongside a memorandum dated July 11th 1771. The 'Cromford Brook' runs south-north. The plan shows, east of the road, 'The Orchard', tucked under the rock on which Rock House sits. This was the orchard from which William Milnes required some (presumably newly planted) nut trees to be dug up for replanting when he left Rock House. North of The Orchard, also bounding the road, is shown 'Garden'. This is bounded to the north by 'Road to Edward Lascelles Esq.' this gave access to parcels of land in the ownership of the Lord of the Manor of Willersley.



An undated plan of Cromford Canal of circa 1790 shows the proposed canal wharf being laid out within what is shown as 'The Lawn' and 'Nether Garden' of Rock House. The plan also shows a proposal for the adjacent public highway to be straightened where it passes this area.



An 1811 survey of the canal wharf by Wilks shows Rock House nearly square in plan. Park type tree symbols are dotted about on Cromford Meadows and densely grouped trees shown along the northern and eastern outer margins of the walled canal wharf yard.



1835 Sanderson's 'Twenty Miles round Mansfield' shows a T shaped block, representing presumably Rock House and 'The Mews'. This suggests that the house had, by then, been extended by the addition of the service wing. The small separate blocks shown south-west of it are presumably 'Ridge House' and the 'The Coach-House'. An approach drive from Mill Lane leads up to the former. Dotted lines along the eastern boundary of the gardens probably indicate a carriage drive off Derby Road.

Rock House is clearly named as such on the 1835 map. The first recorded use of the name Rock House seems to have been in a notice in the Derby Mercury of August 1788 "Sir Richard Arkwright, at the Rock House, Cromford." Prior to that his home was referred to as "at the Rock".

1841 The Cromford Tithe Award Map shows a similar arrangement. with the top part of the T clearly being the house (plot 595). The footprint is largely similar to the footprint of the house today, but without the northern wing. A block near the entrance of the carriage drive presumably indicates the Lodge House. The large plot of land to the east (plot 609) and south of Cromford Meadows, is depicted in a way that suggests it was laid out as a park.

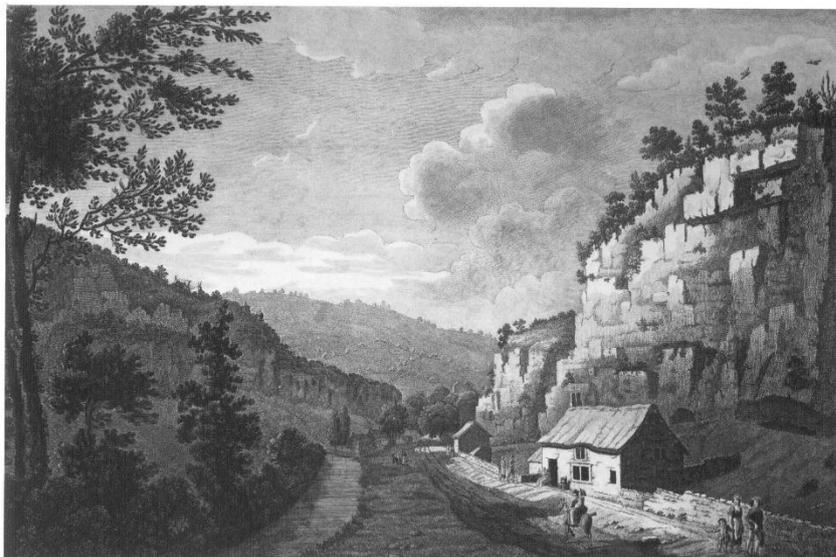
1880 The First Edition OS, surveyed in 1876/78, shows Rock House with its porch/vestibule/conservatory but still without the two-storey extension to the north. A carriage drive is shown leading to the house from the Lodge, off the Derby Road (A6).

The Second Edition OS, surveyed in 1896/98, shows the two-storey extension to the north.

1924 The annotated OS map (which edition?) which accompanied the sale papers for the Willersley Estate shows the two-storey extension to the north side of the house. A kitchen garden is shown on the opposite (south) side of Derby Road, "opposite the Entrance Gates".

OTHER VISUAL REFERENCES

An engraving 'A View in Crumford near Matlock Bath, in Derby Shire' by John Boydell published in 1749 has as its vantage point what is now the northern edge of the Market Place. It looks along what became Mill Road and shows in the distance on a rocky promontory a double pile building, the base of which is obscured by the tops of trees, but it could be three-storey in height.



One gable end seems to be surmounted by a chimney stack. The angle the house is shown as having relative to its setting would make it impossible for it to be Rock House, but Boydell was a poor and inaccurate draftsman and may have wanted to give the left hand side of the house highlights for purely compositional reasons.



An undated watercolour of c.1785-1790 shows, from the vantage point of the yard in front of the Greyhound Inn, a large house with a single, broad spanned gabled roof.³⁵ It is in the right position for Rock House. The house is shown having five windows in its western elevation with eccentric spacing³⁶, namely four regularly spaced and the easternmost fifth one set further apart. Only the top floor and part of the floor below is visible over the roof of the six storey First Mill, but even taking into account the elevation of the rock on which it sits, the house shown is likely to be three storey in height.

Although clearly a relatively large dwelling its appearance is not obviously that of a 'gentry house'. It is conceivable that the shadow line at the eaves represents the underside of a projecting stone cornice and another less marked shadow line, parallel with the far verge of the roof, may indicate the roof had coped gables. If this is the case they would have most probably terminated in the Derbyshire vernacular 'kneeler' detail. The contrast between the colour of the (gable top) chimney stacks and the walls suggests the artist may have been depicting brick stacks. The gable end has no three-storey double pile building against it, as today's stone house has. Within the gable end is a small attic window, centrally placed immediately under the chimney stack. A dark shape below it may represent a slightly larger window to the floor below, but it is too indistinct to be sure and a second floor window in such a position is not characteristic of the period. The house shown must have been two rooms deep. The presence of only two chimney stacks, one at each gable end, suggests each floor is likely to have had only four heated rooms on each floor. The location of the eastern chimney stack does not accord with the arrangement of stacks in the Rock House of today.

³⁵ The roof span would seem to be 37'-0", if it coincided with the depth of the 18th century cellars and today's house above them. This is an unusually large span for a single pitched roof.

³⁶ The spacing is similar to that of the five bays of today's house.



From a similar but slightly different viewpoint William Day's watercolour of 1789 shows Rock House above the roof of the second mill. As with the Greyhound yard view the house is shown as having a wide gable end, with an attic window centrally placed under the gable top chimney stack. The roof pitch is steeper. An overhanging detail at eaves level suggests either projecting kneelers or a projecting eaves cornice or perhaps both. Day's watercolour shows the building known today as The Mews, with its bell-cote/cupola clearly delineated. The relative heights of the two buildings make it clear that Rock House is three storeys. It is possible that the building to the far right in the detail is the building which became the Derby Road Lodge.

Joseph Wright's painting 'Cromford Mill by Night', corroborates the shape and massing of Rock House depicted in the previously mentioned watercolours, but provides no extra detail.

An undated watercolour of Cromford Mill by Zacariah Boreman, who was active in Derbyshire from 1783 onwards, also corroborates the shape and massing of Rock House, but is relatively small and relatively schematic. Whilst the inclusion of Rock House as part of the Cromford Mill scene, used to decorate china in the late 18th century, provides no extra detailed information about the building, its inclusion in the composition may indicate a level of contemporary interest in the 'seat' of Richard Arkwright.



THE BUILDINGS TODAY



ROCK HOUSE Listed grade 2

The house as we see it today has the appearance of a Victorian structure. The big question is “to what extent is it a modification of the house depicted in the 18th century”.

There is no doubt that the house, as it appears in the two late 18th century paintings (see pages 12 & 13), would have been a very odd design for an 18th century mansion-house. Its large single span roof gives it the appearance of a vernacular building rather than a polite one. The rules of 18th century design are further broken by it having asymmetrically arranged windows. This asymmetry is still evident in the present house and is accentuated by the proximity of the severely symmetrical former mews, at right angles to it. While symmetry was no longer a cardinal rule by 1867, when there is documented reference to major building works, its present form is to a large extent determined by the layout of its cellars, which are clearly older than 1867. However, one would have to push the cellars back to the 17th century for asymmetry to not be a commanding rule prior to Milnes’ time, but they are not as old as that.

The degree of weathering which the tooled external face of the gritstone masonry exhibits does not suggest exposure to the elements since the 18th century. The ashlar walls, and the proportions of the window openings within them, are in fact consistent with a date of 1867. They might even be consistent with a date 40 years earlier, but it is difficult to believe they could be consistent with the second half of

the 18th century. It may be significant that the vertical furrow tooling of the east wall and the chimney stacks is quite different to the herringbone tooling of the remainder of the exterior, but the degree of weathering between the masonry of the two tooling types is not marked.

The degree of weathering of the stone plinth course does seem to exhibit a greater degree of weathering than that of the masonry which sits upon it and this may therefore be an indication of re-facing or rebuilding of the walling above. The relatively modest thickness of the walls suggest that re-facing would have posed a considerable technical challenge and would inevitably have led to the loss of the 'through stones' which all traditional stone walls need to tie the outer skin of masonry to the inner skin. The complete rebuilding of the external walls would have required the three external walls³⁷ to be dealt with in separate stages and with the timber floors being temporarily supported while the work was underway. The prior removal of the roof would have lessened the loading on the walls, but there is no doubt that the total rebuilding of the three external walls would have been a major exercise. Nevertheless, this is perhaps the most likely of the two options.

It would seem certain that whichever option is the case the projecting columnar feature, which runs the full height of the building, at the junction of the house and the service wing, dates from the time of the rebuilding of the external walls. The most likely explanation of its function is that it is a flue to a (now sealed off) subterranean boiler chamber³⁸. Why it was positioned in a very prominent location, i.e. the front wall of the house, is another mystery. Certainly, it performs a useful architectural function as a termination to the house facade, against which the projecting service range abuts, but why does the service range project forward of the house? Its rear wall is set, differentially, slightly back from the rear face of the house. Was the service wing rebuilt when the house walls were rebuilt? Or perhaps the former junction with the service range was considered so clumsy that the introduction of such a columnar feature was considered to be an improvement. This would perhaps explain why such functional 'back stairs' arrangement was given unusual prominence.

The cornice to the roof parapet bears similarity to the cornice of the Coach House and was perhaps based upon it.

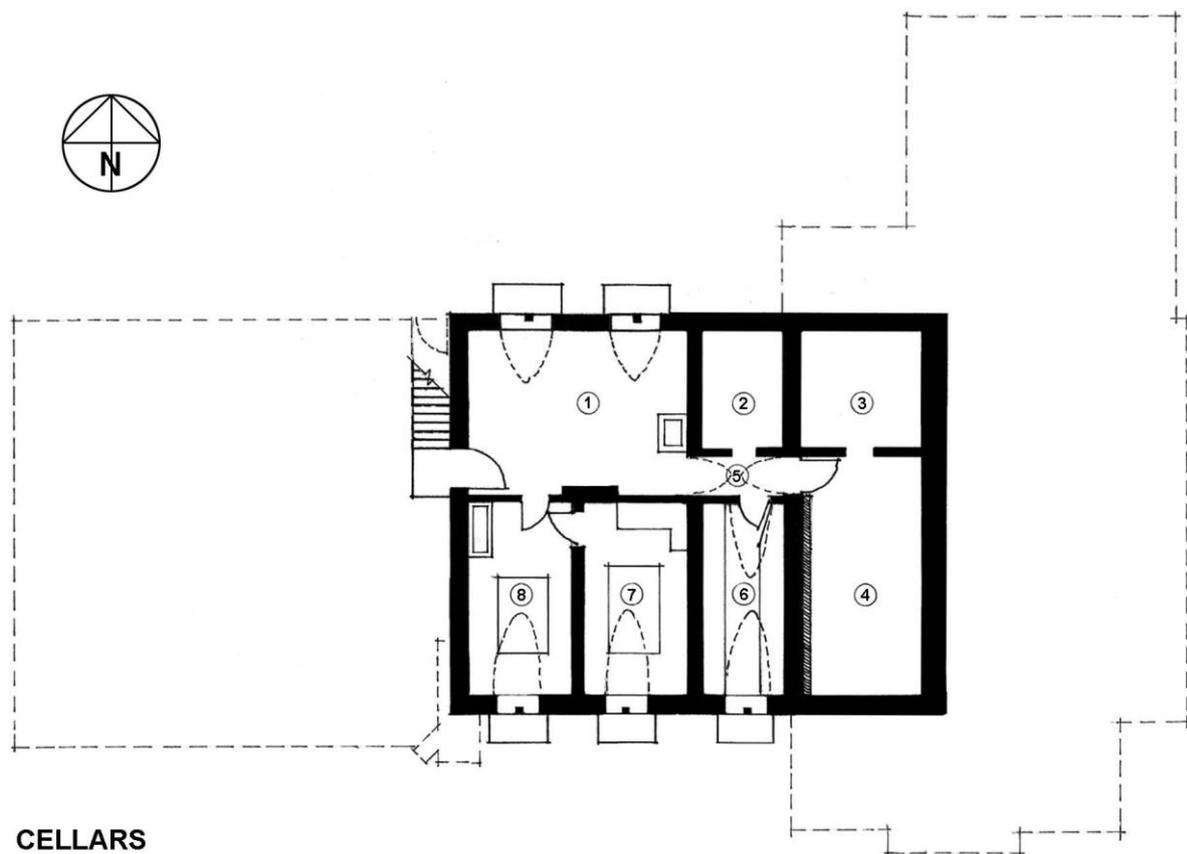
The internal joinery of the house seems to be of four dates and certainly indicates that any rebuilding was probably not total. The former 'Smoke Room/Study has architraves to its window reveals and fireplace which are of a pattern of c1740 date, but are probably reused here. A simple oak doorframe to the doorway connecting the hall to the service range corridor, has an ovolo profile, and could be of a similar

³⁷ One has to assume that the wall against which the service range is built would have remained.

³⁸ The most likely location is off the very short vaulted passage at the foot of the stairs which lead down to the cellars.

date. This probably does survive in its original location. Most of the doors and architraves are of a c1780 pattern. The staircase has spindles with a lotus bud motif, which would suggest a date of c1830. There is also a mantle shelf in the room off the former 'Smoke Room/Study with a reeded face which also speaks of the 1830s. The 'two over two' sash windows with their large panes of plate glass are all consistent with the 1867 date on the cast iron hopper heads.

CELLARS



CELLARS

The cellars are approached by an external doorway in the north wall, at the junction of the house and the service range. A flight of steps leads down to an impressive complex, the ground plan³⁹ of which defines the location and at least part extent of a house older than 1867.

The current access would seem not to be the original arrangement. The steps are either modern or much altered. They are located under the service wing but appear not to belong to it. Also, there is evidence of a flight of steps having run down from

³⁹ The plans given here are not accurate surveys, nor are they strictly to scale. They are based on plans attached to the (modern) deeds . This set of plans do not include the cellars level.

south to north within the space the present steps occupy. The cellars may originally have been entered from a blocked doorway at the north end of the west wall of cellar 1, rather than via the doorway at the south end, as happens now. Either way access here required the service stairs leading to the cellar to have been in a service wing pre-dating the present one.

The cellar complex is 'roofed' with eight brick barrel vaults of various sizes. It is lit by five windows⁴⁰, two to the north wall and three to the south, which gain light via grilled light wells⁴¹.



The windows coincide with the three westernmost bays of the present house. They are each made up of rectangular leaded quarries either side of stone mullions and are given distinction by having over them lunettes glazed with single sheets of early glass. These lunette heads echo the lunette windows of Masson Mill built in 1783. The windows could however date from anytime between 1770 and 1800, or even as late as the 1820s. It is likely that the lunette lights were originally 'meshed' rather than glazed, allowing permanent ventilation. Half height iron casement windows, on one side of the mullion, allowed further ventilation.

Cellar 1 is a large space lit by two windows and has a fireplace. There are two filled arched openings in the west wall, which together with the entrance doorway gives a symmetrical composition. A similar arrangement of three openings, all with segmental heads occurs in the kitchen of Pickford's House Derby of 1771 but there the central opening is wide enough (5'-1") to contain a small range. At Rock House the central (now blocked) opening is only 3'-4. One possibility is that it may have

⁴⁰ Perhaps originally there would have been six. See note on cellar 2.

⁴¹ The iron grilles appear to be cast rather than wrought. Tom Swailes, an authority on historic ironworking, believes they could have been cast as early as 1770.

been for a copper/boiler. The drainage channels cut into the stone flagged floor suggest the space may have been a laundry. This would explain the need for a separate fireplace, for when the copper/boiler was not in use. Against the east wall is a stone trough, perhaps originally below a piped water supply?

Leading off eastwards from cellar 1 is a vaulted corridor (cellar 5) which gives access to a small windowless cellar (cellar 2) which is, uniquely, without a vaulted 'roof' and floored in brick (the remainder of the cellars are flagged). It is without a window but this may have been removed when the entrance porch to the billiards room was built above. The iron pintles fixed into the outer face of the oak doorframe of cellar 2 suggest the hanging of a gate or gates rather than a door.

The corridor then leads to a larger transverse vaulted space (cellars 3 & 4). This is subdivided with a small cellar (cellar 3) to the north, which has brick dividers and stone shelves; presumably for the storage of wine and beer. Cellar 4 holds remnants of a central heating system, probably of early 20th century date. It is not apparent why the western wall supporting the vaulted roof of this space has been strengthened by the addition of an extra skin of stonework. The brick vault has been cut away for 9" or so at its south end, for some unknown reason, revealing the underside of the paving flags of the hall above.

The corridor gives access to cellar 6 which has a window and low bench type thralls along each long side. The misalignment of the vaulting in cellar 6 indicates a less than expert builder.

Cellar 1 provides access to cellars 7 and 8, each of which has a window and a table made of impressively large single flags of fissile sandstone. The largest, in cellar 7, is 7'-7" x 5'-0"⁴². Cellar 7 also has stone shelving and cellar 8 a salting trough or thrall. The salting trough would most likely have been used for soaking meat in brine before being hung to dry, with cellar 7 being where the 'drier end' of meat processing and preparation was done.

The survival of the cellars of an earlier house is of the greatest historic importance.

Study of the heads of the cellar windows reveals that they are an integral part of the stone plinth, thereby making the plinth part of the earlier house.

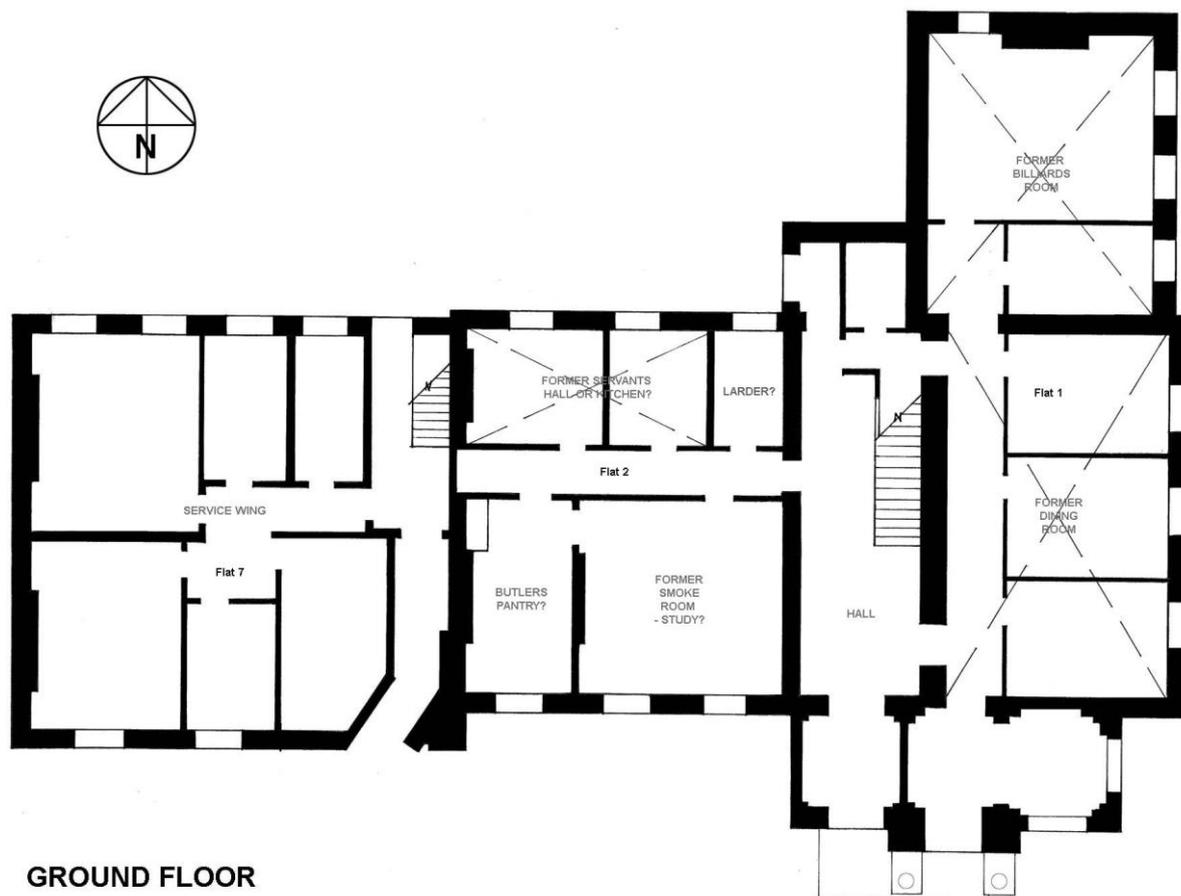
⁴² Ian Thomas, Director of the National Stone Centre, believes the table tops to be of 'Wingfield Flags', the nearest source for which would be South Wingfield. He knows of no larger sandstone slabs in Derbyshire. They would presumably have been expensive to procure.



Whilst the external walls above the plinth seem to be less weathered⁴³, and therefore provoke speculation as to possible rebuilding, there is close correlation between the ground plan of the cellars and the ground plan of the present house. For example, the present hall and main staircase sit immediately over, and onto, the transverse barrel vault of cellars 3 & 4.

⁴³ The finish to the stonework of the house (excluding the billiard room and vestibule/conservatory extensions) is of two types of tooling; on the north and south it is herringbone tooling, with boasted margins, but without margins to the window arises, and on the east it is vertically furrowed, with wide boasted margins, to vertical edges only. The chimney stacks also have vertical furrow tooling.

GROUND FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

The Hall

The hall has a cornice which could date from any time between 1750 and 1800. The way it 'hangs in the air' at the northern end, where the staircase ascends beyond it, suggests either an incompetent builder/designer or a later modification. It would only look right if it had a wall below it. The staircase, against the east wall, is reasonably grand but seems a muddle of architectural motifs. Its spindles of painted mahogany incorporate a lotus motif suggesting a date of 1820-1830. The wreathed handrail could however be earlier, as could the newel posts. The inclusion of plain stick balusters is odd. The moulded string has a crude resemblance to that at Calke Abbey, which dates from 1703. The whole thing is likely to be an assemblage of parts of differing dates.

The doorway, just inside the front door, on the east side led to the dining room. This doorway reveals the considerable thickness of the wall. The presence of a soot box in the eastern end wall of cellar 4, indicates the presence of flues within this wall and suggests it may have supported the eastern gable end wall of the house shown in the 18th century paintings, but it would be extremely unusual for an entrance hall and staircase in an 18th century mansion house to be located in an end bay. Also, this hypothesis would leave the house with no single large room. There is also the

fact that the most detailed 18th century painting of the house shows it having five bays with the windows in the easternmost bay being spaced slightly apart from those in the other four bays, as is the case with the house today. The only conclusion that makes sense is that this wall did not originally contain flues, but when the roof was remodelled the gable end stack was moved inwards to its present position, thereby enabling the new parapet and cornice to continue around the eastern façade. This also allowed the eastern wall of the largest room to be given three windows rather than only two, either side of a fireplace.⁴⁴

Dining Room (flat 1)

This space is now divided into three bedrooms with a corridor connecting them. The dining room would have had a good aspect, facing south and east, with excellent views over picturesque countryside, and fairly grand in scale (33'-0" x 20'-0") Although no fireplace is mentioned in the 1924 sale papers it would have had one and it must have been centrally located in the western wall (now part of a corridor).

Billiard Room (flat 1)

There is a date of 1885 over the garden entrance to the cloak room/lobby to this (25'-0" x 20'-0") extension.

Smoke room/Study? (flat 2)

The room, which is currently the lounge to flat 2, was previously entered off the hall by a (now blocked) doorway, immediately opposite the entrance door to the dining room. The window architrave, fireplace and present (inserted) doorway all have egg and dart mouldings, in the style of the 1740s. These are almost certainly reused elements from an earlier house, perhaps the house shown in the 1749 engraving by John Boydell. The window joinery is otherwise consistent with a date of 1867.

Servants Hall/ Kitchen? (flat 2)

The two rooms along the north outer wall of flat 2, which are currently used as bedroom and kitchen, may, together with the corridor which connects them, at one time have been the servant's hall or even the kitchen. This space is immediately above cellar 1. If it were at one time the kitchen the range would have been in the western wall. The bedroom against this wall has a late 19th century fireplace in it. An alternative location for the kitchen would be in the service range, reached via the now blocked doorway at the end of the present corridor. The kitchen was certainly located in the service range at the time of the sale of 1924.

⁴⁴ This hypothesis still leaves the problem that the main (south) façade of Rock House could not have been symmetrical, which was very unusual for the eighteenth century and completely at odds with the severely symmetrical façade of The Mews, which was (almost certainly subsequently) built to flank it.

Butler's Pantry? (flat 2)

The room currently the main bedroom of flat 2 may have been a butler's pantry/ housekeeper's room opening off a servant's hall or kitchen. It has a simple fireplace incorporating a mantle shelf with a reeded edge characteristic of the period 1810-1830 but more importantly an iron safe cupboard which was probably the silver safe.

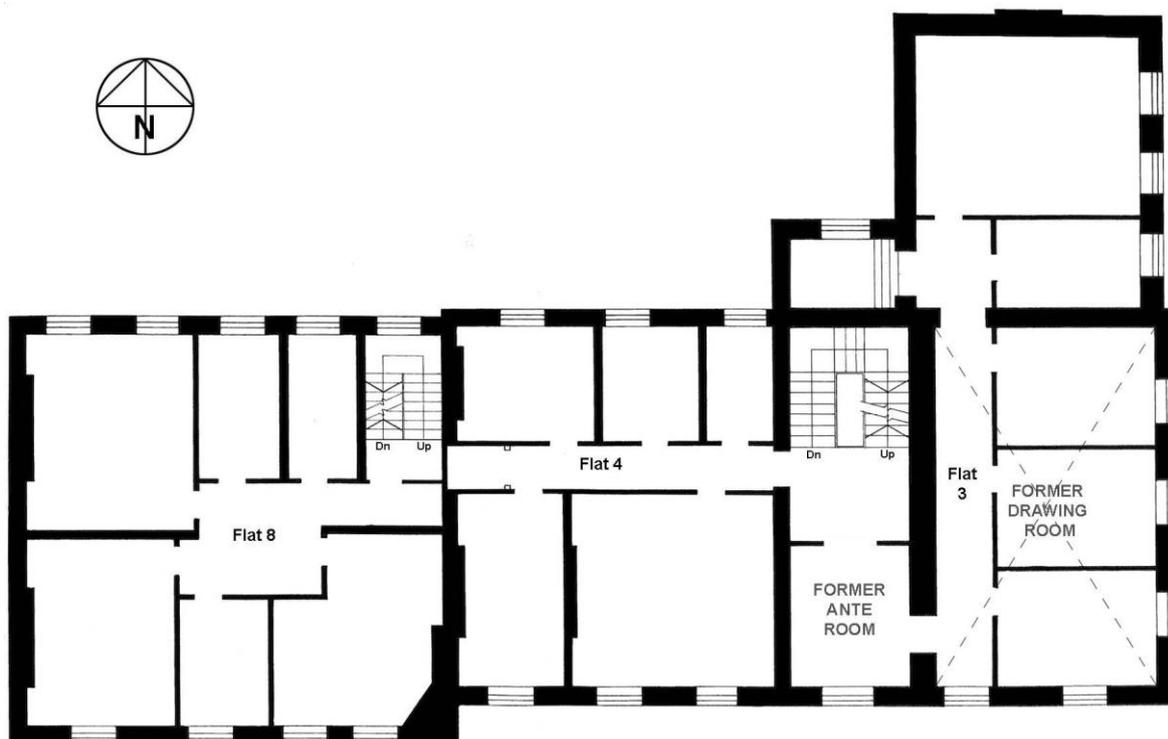
Larder (flat 2)

The room used as a bathroom for flat 2 may have been a larder. It faces north.

Service route to the hall (flat 2)

The entrance doorway to this part of the house from the hall incorporates, on the inner side, an ovolo moulded oak frame, which could date from the 1740s. It also retains early hinges.

FIRST FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

The dog leg staircase leading from the hall to the first floor has, within its rear (north) wall a wide but shallow arched recess the function of which is not clear. The landing at the head of the staircase has been reduced in size with the construction of a storage cupboard (not shown on the plan) but above its flat roof may be seen

the architrave of a wide doorway (now blocked off) which led to the ante-room of the drawing room.

Ante-room (flat 3)

The doorway off the landing was wide enough to have held double doors. The small ante-room (now a bedroom) led into the drawing room.

Drawing room (flat 3)

This space is now subdivided into three bedrooms and a connecting corridor but the bedrooms coincide with the three bays of the drawing room ceiling and the elaborate 19th century cornice which runs around each of the three bays survive, interrupted only by the wall of the inserted corridor. The carved marble mantel mentioned in the 1924 sale papers has gone but would have been located where the present flat entrance off the landing has been cut through. The architrave of the door from the ante-room is mirrored by a recess on the other side of where the fireplace would have been, to provide a symmetrical composition. The drawing room was on a reasonably grand scale (33'-0" x 20'-0") and had particularly fine views to the south and east over picturesque countryside.

Bedroom and dressing room? (flat 3)

The present lounge and kitchen of flat 3 situated above the former billiards room. were presumably a bedroom and dressing room. It is curious however that they could only have been accessed via the drawing room.

SECOND FLOOR

The landing at the head of the staircase has been screened off with a glazed screen to provide an entrance lobby to flat 5. Before this the rooms on the east side of the stairs were presumably entered through the wide opening, with an elliptical arched head and panelled reveals, which survives within flat 5.

Bedrooms and dressing rooms. (flat 5)

The bedroom on the south front has a very elaborate white marble fireplace which appears to be of late 19th century date and not designed for a bedroom.

Flat 8 is said to have (or to have had) a window in the north wall inscribed with initials or signature of a member of the Arkwright family⁴⁵

ROOF

The attics are approached via a ceiling hatch in a lowered ceiling in flat 6. This leads to a small inserted dog leg stair which gives access to the attics and to the door leading to the valley gutter. The four sides of the quadrangular roof are made

⁴⁵ Information from Mr Peter Hume.

up of queen post trusses, with purlins and rafters. All is in pine. The trusses are reinforced with iron brackets.



The construction methods and materials are consistent with a date of 1867. The floor is lime ash. There is no evidence of the survival of tie beams from the original roof. The roof is partly covered with Westmorland slates and partly with Welsh slates.

ROCKSIDE COTTAGE. Curtilage listed grade 2

This is (or was originally) a very small building, detached from the house, perched on the edge of the eminence on which Rock House sits. It was enlarged in 1984 to make a small dwelling. The original building is intriguing. It seems probable that it dates from the time of Richard Arkwright I, and that the upper room was used as an office, with the imposing Venetian window providing a vantage point to observe activity at the mill below.

It is, in all probability, the structure described in the 1924 sale papers as being 'outside the domestic offices'... "boot and knife room with room over".

This photograph of 1982 shows the building before it was extended.



It may be seen that the joinery of the Venetian window is deeply set back at the rear face of the stone reveals. The position of the joinery at the back face of the stone window dressings is unusual and appears particularly strange here because of the small scale of the building within which the rather grand window sits. The result is that the openings are given deep shadows and appear almost as if they are unglazed. Was this perhaps a deliberate intention, giving the structure the look of a decorative garden gazebo perhaps?

The shaped window stones are set within gritstone ashlar walling, sitting on uncoursed limestone rubble walling, which comes right off the cliff face. Below the Venetian window there is a smaller sash window, set into the limestone rubble wall. This is a modern (20th century) insertion. The building is now largely obscured from sight, from Mill Road, as a result of tree and scrub growth, but at the time it was constructed the rockface would probably have been bare of vegetation and the view through the Venetian window would have been unobscured, providing a panorama of the whole of the mill yard and encompassing the entrance point to the yard off Mill Road, opposite the Mill Manager's house.



The fanlight and side opening casements of the Venetian window are probably the original joinery. The sash window beneath the fanlight appears to be an alteration. The larger glass pane sizes and the slightly thinner glazing bar profile suggest a 19th century date, although the absence of 'horns' indicates it is probably dates from the first half of the century.

It is not clear what the design of the original window would have been. The upper sash in Venetian window generally incorporates the semi-circular head rather than have it as a separate fanlight. Perhaps the upper part of the sash was detached when the present sash window was installed?



The fireplace within the upper room is Victorian. The fireplace for the lower room was presumably lost when the building was extended in the 1980s. No other historic details survive within the building.

Access to the upper room is gained via an external stone staircase, supported on brick walls.



The pitched roof is asymmetrical, having a longer slope on the house side. The eaves of the short slope, i.e. the Mill Road side, sits uncomfortably low down, onto the top of the Venetian window. Was this slope originally hidden behind a parapet, the top of which was level with the top of the flank parapet walls. There are chimney flues within both of these two flank parapets, suggesting the existence of at least two fireplaces.

The entrance door to the lower room was originally immediately under the door to the upper room. This is now bricked up. The lower room was originally lit by a window where the entrance door has been re-located.



The low yard wall between Rockside Cottage and Ridge House is in fact a truncated remnant of a 7'-0" or so high wall which completely enclosed the space behind it until the wall was lowered in about 1980. There was also until the 1980s another high wall spanning between Rock House and the cliff face, closing off the yard from the garden beyond.

THE MEWS. Curtilage listed grade 2

This is an important 18th century service building, presumably originally built as stables. It was enlarged and at least in part converted to new uses in the 19th century and further converted to a dwelling in the 1960s. Attached to it is another, modern, dwelling 'Stable Grange', screened from the front of Rock House by virtue of being behind the western flank wall of The Mews. This new dwelling sits on the site of a 19th century service building, which also included stabling, but more of that later. ⁴⁶

The Mews is shown in a Zachariah Boreman watercolour of 1786 and a William Day watercolour of 1789, and so may confidently be dated to the time of Richard Arkwright I or before. It is clearly the product of an architect or designer, i.e. not just a mason, and its architectural style would suggest a date of 1760-1770.

⁴⁶ The small watercolour, produced by Boreman as a visual reference for the decoration of a china plate, shows the Mews, but curiously does not show Rock House, or at least not in any recognisable form. There does however seem to be some kind of building away from it to the north, so it may simply be a very inaccurate representation.



It is a symmetrical Palladian composition and in its original form rather severe in character. The east façade is now punctured by a door and five windows and the southern flank screen wall punctured by a further four windows, but a photograph in the sale catalogue of 1924 reveals that the whole façade was originally completely blank. It may be seen therefore that The Mews was carefully designed to provide an august setting for Rock House and to screen the service courtyard from view.

The tall flank screen walls are set back slightly from the central pedimented building and these have, half-way along them, a further small set back, with the outer lengths being slightly curved in plan. The deep coping to the screen walls is continued as a band course across the Mews building and a second band course runs across the whole composition at a lower level.

Further architectural enrichment is provided by a carved clock dial within the pedimented gable. The clock dial retains its decorative single hand. Capping the



whole ensemble, above the graduated Westmorland slate roof, is a decorative bell-cote or cupola, itself topped with a gilded wind vane.

The design of the openwork joinery of the four sides of the cupola has a feel almost of Chinoisery. Within the cupola hangs a bell, presumably the same bell that summoned servants at Arkwright's command. The bell was connected to the clock mechanism and would have rung the hours.

The designer of The Mews is unknown, but one possible candidate is Thomas Gardner of Uttoxeter (1737-1804) who was working for the Arkwrights between 1792 and 1795 at Willersley Castle, following the fire of 1791⁴⁷. It is not known

⁴⁷ FITTON quotes Gardner's accounts for work carried out in 1794/5 which includes; "Making a design for the Lodge and Gateway to d., and a set of Clear Drawings for the New Stables; & Plans, Elevations, & Sections of the Stables for the workmen

whether Gardner did any work in Cromford for the Arkwrights, or indeed for Milnes, before this date but Gardner's mews at Doveridge Hall (1777) has a roundel in its pedimented central two storey block.

The Mews may have been entirely detached from the 18th century Rock House (the archway through the eastern screen wall is clearly inserted) but it seems extremely likely that the corner of the 18th century Rock House was not far from the terminus of the screen wall (and indeed the old cellars to the house have their south-west corner at this point) and that the house faced south onto a formal 'courtyard' defined by the facades of the two buildings.

The Mews contains some of the best surviving elements of Sir Richard Arkwright's Rock House estate. The decorative joinery of the bell cote, whilst having been slightly modified in modern times, has the look of being authentically 18th century. It is supported by original oak carpentry resting on the tie beam of a principle truss. The survival of the 18th century cupola superstructure as well as its supporting historic carpentry makes it particularly remarkable.



The roof timbers are oak. It is apparent from the existence, within the four purlins and the tie beam of the queen post truss, of mortice slots and peg holes designed to receive and fix tenoned elements of a timber frame, that these are reused timbers from a timber framed building of 17th century or earlier origin. The tie beam of the truss has an (internal) span of 24'-6".

The Day painting of 1789 shows the western (rear) face. The existing stone roundel may be made out in the apex of the gable. This accommodated a clock face for the

service yard. It perhaps had a painted face. The metal rod connecting it with the hand to the clock face on the front façade may be seen in the photo of the attic space⁴⁸.



Day shows three equally spaced windows on the first floor and second floors. The first floor openings survive and 'sit' on a continuous stone band course. The second floor windows are no longer visible on the exterior, because they have been blocked up with brickwork and rendered over but they may still be seen internally, and remarkably retain their original rectangular leaded lights and horizontal saddle bars.



The boarded floor to this (originally lit) attic space has within it, below the clock dial on the service yard side, a 'trimmed' opening which was presumably made to accommodate the weights for the clock, which must have hung in the room below.

The original arrangement of window and door openings on the ground floor is unclear, although the two present windows look as if they may be the original openings. If the use of the building was for stabling three questions arise; where

⁴⁸ The remains of the clock and the attached control mechanism for the striking of the bell were inspected on 21 June 2009 by tower clock expert Michael Applebee. His report records finding evidence of a 2-train (stable) turret clock movement, but without its original mechanism, except for one unusual dial with an unusual single hand and a rusty horizontal power transmission rod, approximately 15'-0" long from the back of the main dial via a heavily corroded universal joint to the site of the former clock works. The absence of gears behind the dial implies that the single hand is original (although highly unusual). In addition a simple bell crank system survives, leading to the bell cupola.

was a doorway wide enough to get horses in and out, how were the stalls ventilated and why has the floor level been raised? It is now approximately 18" above the level of the service yard. It is conceivable that the reason for this is that the original stable floor is encased within a new floor slab. It was normal for standings to be sloping to allow the drainage of urine to a gutter channel and the top of the slope could be over a foot higher than ground level. The 24'-6" width of the interior space would allow for four stalls. However it is unclear whether The Mews is the building described in the 1924 sale papers as "stable for four, and loose box with loft over." as this could conceivably refer to the building that was erected immediately to the south of the Mews, backing onto the screen wall.

Planning permission was given in October 1968 for conversion "of existing stable block to dwelling". It allowed for "part demolition of the stable block followed by re-building to the rear of the present façade." A condition was that the roof should be covered by either Rosemary (clay) tiles or grey slates. The latter are the local sandstone roofing slates which presumably were the original form of roof covering. This suggests that this permission may have related to the Mews (which has a Westmoreland slate roof) together with the building now known only from a photograph taken probably some time in the 1970s, which shows that building was roofed in stone slates⁴⁹. Its function is not known but its appearance suggests it may have been a coach house. In modern times presumably it may have become garaging.

⁴⁹ The couple in the photograph are Dr and Mrs Bose who bought Rock House in 1970.



Planning permission was given in January 1973 “to demolish old yard garages and erect two storey dwelling house behind existing stone screen walls”. This presumably refers to the modern house called Stable Grange.

The building in the photograph has the appearance of having been built in the 19th century. The need to construct a new service building is unknown. It may have coincided with the addition to the Mews, on the northern side, of the existing single storey extension, which has two large, tall, windows. Was the Mews given a new use at that time?



Beside Stable Grange lies the truncated remains of the tall screen wall seen in the photograph of the 19th century stables. A stone mounting block stands beside it.



RIDGE HOUSE. Curtilage listed grade 2



Like Rockside cottage, this building sits on the very edge of the rockface above Cromford Mill. A 1976 planning notice, with a plan identifying this building, allowing for the conversion of “coach house to dwelling”, reveals its former use. This may therefore be where Sir Richard Arkwright housed his long-distance coach and perhaps a lighter vehicle for local journeys.⁵⁰ The existence of inverted T shaped lintels to the original ground floor windows, like those that appear in some of the Mill buildings and in Market Place buildings, a building detail which probably came to Cromford from John Carr’s Buxton Crescent of 1785-90, suggests that the building may date from the late 1780s.



The ‘Travelling Chariot’ was a popular long-distance carriage at the end of the 18th century. This example is part of a display at the Stockwood Park Museum, Bedfordshire.

⁵⁰ A letter (DRO D 5991/3/1) written by Erasmus Darwin in October 1792 reveals that Richard Arkwright II offered ED the chaise of the recently deceased Sir Richard. The word chaise’ was used to describe a light two or four wheeled carriage, usually of a chair backed type, with a moveable hood.

Oral tradition has it that the building accommodated a brew house. A photograph taken in 1940 shows a substantial lean-to structure on its southern (the side shown in the photograph above) side. This photo also reveals that only the left hand window existed at that time. Although much altered the former coach house is clearly a very simple utilitarian building, in stark contrast to the building which retains the name Coach House to the south of it. The position of its back wall on the very edge of the cliff face of the rock outcrop suggests confirmation that it post-dated the Mews and had to be squeezed into the space opposite it. Despite its utilitarian character the building retains original sash windows in its east and north elevations and has retained its graduated Westmorland slated hipped roof.

PIGGERIES Curtilage listed grade 2

Connecting this former coach house (Ridge House) to the stables (the Mews) is a range of four piggeries, lying surprisingly close to the service range of the house. The back wall of the piggeries provides a screen wall to the yard between the coach house and the stables, part of which retains its original gritstone paving, as does the service yard between the Service Range and the Piggeries. Although in a bad state of repair the flush six panel door within the south wall of the Piggeries would seem to be the original. It retains original L shaped hinges, pintle hanging arrangements and latch.





All the piggery stall openings have been altered to accommodate windows and a door. The sills to the windows seem to be made from pigsty dividing screens, which have reeded edges. The monopitch roof is covered in Welsh slate.

THE COACH HOUSE. Listed grade 2

This is an imposing architectural composition with elaborate detailing. The coach house is given a date of circa 1780 in the statutory list and its architectural style certainly suggests a date of 1780-1790.



The elaborate detailing includes a deeply moulded stone eaves cornice and a belled hipped roof. The walling is dark red gritstone, finely tooled to produce an ashlar finish. The coach house originally had two arched openings, with key blocks,

symmetrically arranged at each end of the front façade. These former carriage door openings retain their iron door pintels. The arched openings are now infilled with stone. Between them is a domestic scale door with similar, but scaled down, detailing as to the large openings. Its fanlight seems to be the original. It is in fact the only joinery to have survived. The stone door jambs each have two pintles projecting from each face, one pair set at waist height. Might these have held a split 'stable' type door? The rear wall has a matching doorway, albeit without architectural dressings. This suggests there was a through passage. Ground levels around the building have been lowered. Presumably originally the front door would have had no step. The Coach House may be the building described in the 1924 sale papers as 'Garage for three cars with covered washing place, ditto for two, saddle room.' The 7'-1" wide openings must have been tight for carriages, and even for cars.

Sanderson's 1835 map shows a building at right angles to the Coach House and its north flank wall has a lintel in it with straight joints under it, to the ground, suggesting this could have been an internal doorway. Certainly, there were other (now lost) buildings associated with the Coach House.

Above the doorways, sitting on a band course are three, equal sized, semi-circular openings, which are matched in the rear wall. These would have lit the upper floor if glazed. Even if they had been shuttered they would have provided light when open or partly open. There are two modern chimney stacks. This suggests the building may originally have been unheated. The interior, following conversion to a house, provides no clues to its original appearance. The roof has king post trusses and all the roof timbers are oak.

The architectural sophistication of this building is interesting. It is out of sight of the house, but on the route of the carriage drive leading up from Mill Lane. Perhaps it was intended to be a garden feature.



It does not appear in Day's painting of 1789 but its architectural style and the use of oak for its roof certainly puts it more at the end of the 18th century than at the start of the 19th century. It is clearly designed by a different hand than that which designed the Mews, which has quite a different feel about it, and probably predates the Coach House. An important factor is the relative lavishness of the detailing of the masonry⁵¹. It is superior in architectural quality and craftsmanship than that of the stables to Willersley Castle, in which the mason/architect Thomas Gardner is believed to have played some part.⁵² Another factor is that the door openings (7'-0" wide and 10'-0" high-to the head of the arch) are of a scale that would not easily accommodate a carriage designed to travel long distances⁵³. Was it built to accommodate phaetons or gigs for local journeys? Perhaps it was not built for Milnes or Richard Arkwright I but for another generation of Arkwrights,

⁵¹ Its elaborate cornice was perhaps the model for the 19th century cornice on the house.

⁵² COLVIN Biographical Dictionary of British architects 1600-1840. Thomas Gardner works for Richard Arkwright at Willersley Castle c. 1792-5 including re-construction after fire of 1791 and design of stables and entrance gates .Account book belonging to Col P Arkwright.

⁵³ Fitton records that Arkwright had "set up his carriage" as early as 1776. He also states that he had his carriage drawn by four horses and at rapid speed. Fitton and Wadsworth quote The Manchester Mercury for March 27th 1787 describing the role of RA as High Sheriff of Derbyshire performing the office with ostentation, with his coach drawn by four greys being "very elegant and fashionable". A Britzschza Travelling Chariot of 1828 owned by the National Trust and kept at Shugbrough Hall in Staffordshire requires clearance of 6'-5". A 'convertible' travelling coach , i.e. for use in town or country, kept at Charlote Park, Warwick, requires clearance of 6'-1". Information kindly supplied by Mr Christopher Nicholson who advises that saddle rooms and harness rooms are generally on the ground floor and are generally heated.

perhaps for Peter Arkwright, who was resident at Rock House between 1805 and 1843 and had a large family?⁵⁴ If so it would be a very old fashioned design for such a date, perhaps determined by a mason using a pattern book?

There is one ironwork detail which can be roughly dated; a decorative corner bracket (originally for a lamp?). which has a decorative motif derived from the anthemion. This motif would fit an early 19th century date very well. However, the bracket could well have been added at a date after the construction of the building.

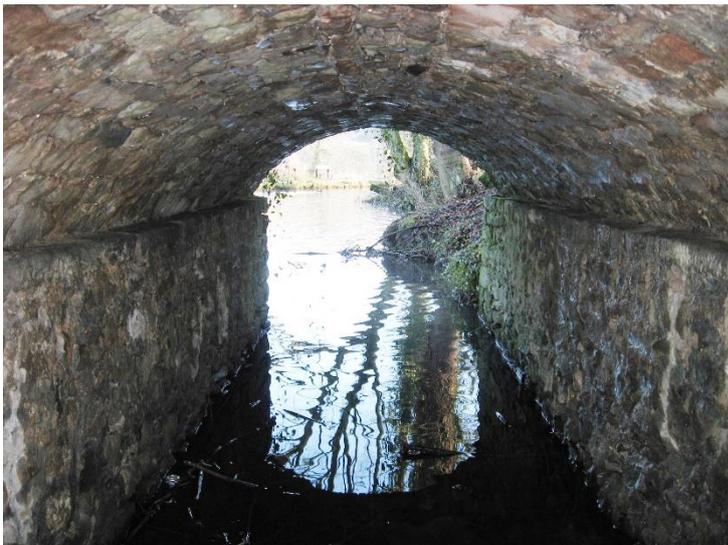


BOAT HOUSE Curtilage listed grade 2

The boathouse lies on the western bank of the 'canal winding hole' (a widening of a canal where narrow boats could be turned around) near the terminus of the Cromford Canal. It is cut into the steeply shelving bank, with stone walls and a stone barrel vaulted roof and is approached from Rock House grounds by a narrow flight of stone steps cut into the ground. It may be of Richard Arkwright I's time, i.e.

⁵⁴ Letters to Peter Arkwright from his sons at Eton include requests for transport home by a "chair"- an alternative term for a 'chaise'.

1790-1792, as he spoke enthusiastically of the possibility of having a pleasure boat, once he had finally agreed to sell part of his garden to facilitate the creation of the terminus wharf. The Cromford Canal Act of Parliament includes provision for owners of adjacent land to use pleasure boats on the canal (See footnote14) however the boathouse does not appear on a c.1790 plan of the Wharf.



The first known documented reference to it is in a minute of a meeting of the Cromford Canal Company Committee in November 1819, when it is referred to as "Mr Peter Arkwright's Boathouse."⁵⁵

LODGE HOUSE Unlisted?

This has been greatly extended but a simple 'two up two down' vernacular cottage is discernible as the earliest part. This cottage probably existed before the building of Rock House and was adapted to become a lodge only after the private road to

⁵⁵ Information provided by Hugh Potter, Achivist of the Friends of the Cromford Canal.

Belper (Derby Road/ A6) was created in 1818. It may be the building shown to the right of The Mews in Day's watercolour of 1789.



FISHING LODGE Listed grade 2

Although it stands within the historic curtilage of Rock House it is questionable whether The Fishing Lodge should, strictly speaking, be considered a building associated with Rock House.

A watercolour dated 1786 shows a cluster of vernacular farm buildings beside the river bridge at Cromford which includes a pyramidal roofed building.⁵⁶ . In 1796 this vernacular building was refashioned by Richard Arkwright II to function as a dwelling for his water bailiff. It must have been a considerable re-fashioning, requiring the insertion of a moulded eaves cornice as well as sash windows and a door, all with elegantly moulded surrounds. The door has inscribed over it "piscatoribus sacrum" , this being an allusion to the 17th century Fishing Temple in Beresford Dale, made famous by Izaak Walton, which also has a pyramidal stone slate roof crowned by a ball finial.

⁵⁶ Doreen Buxton.



At the same time Arkwright took down the remaining farm buildings, which incorporated the medieval bridge chapel⁵⁷, and revealed the surviving parts of the chapel as a romantic ruin.

This creation of a picturesque park for Willersley Castle no doubt relates much more to the remodelling of this former farm building than does any Rock House linked initiative.

⁵⁷ J. C. Cox. Notes on the Churches of Derbyshire. Vol II

THE GROUNDS

THE GARDENS

As first laid out, as an amenity for Rock House, the gardens seem to have extended into what is now called Cromford Meadows, or certainly into the part of the Meadows bounding Mill Road, as demonstrated by the undated plan of the Callamy Works. This plan also reveals the existence of an orchard, at the foot of the rock. The manner in which the orchard and garden are depicted, with uniformly spaced tree symbols and parallel dotted lines, suggests they may be being used as a nursery, perhaps for the bringing on of trees and shrubs for use elsewhere in the grounds of the house. This possibility is supported by the 1776 agreement between Milnes, Arkwright and others, which includes provision for "William Milnes and his heirs, assigns or servants to take up remove and carry away for his or their own use all the young forest trees or plants standing or growing in the Nursery Beds in the Garden, Orchard Filbert piece and Anthony Cotterill's garden in Cromford."

Correspondence regarding the creation of the Canal reveals Arkwright's attachment to "the Green" and his "lawns" in this area. It is unclear whether these comments relate to the gardens of Rock House or to parkland, but it seems likely that any 'lawn' to the east of Rock House which existed in Arkwright I's time swept round and down to the north away from the house, and connected up with the area now called Cromford Meadows. The creation of the Canal severely compromised this setting to the house, but by then Arkwright was planning a much grander home.

In 1789 it was agreed that Arkwright would be paid £50 compensation "for the injury done to his Garden" and a further £207 5s 10d for building "new Garden Walls" and removing soil from the old to the new garden.

The part of the gardens lying between the Coach House and the Lodge and along the boundary of Derby Road were extensively encroached upon by new housing development in the 1960s. What remains of the gardens, immediately around Rock House, is of essentially 19th century character.

Lawns surround the house on the east and north sides, at a lower level to the house below a gravel terrace. Four 19th century cast iron flower bowls command the top of the shelving grass bank which leads down to the eastern lawn. This lawn is shown in early 20th century OS maps as having an elaborately shaped east end. This has gone but mature yews and hollies, together with larch and other decorative coniferous trees survive to make a strong contribution to the character of the gardens. This is particularly true of the yews and other decorative trees just within the Derby boundary, as not only do they retain the 'great house' character of the setting of Rock House they also screen the 20th century development.

The former tennis court which lies south of the yew hedge which screens one of the 20th century houses was reputedly used as a skating rink during severe winters in the 19th century.

Some perimeter parts of the gardens, especially the steeply shelving land sloping down to the Canal, to the north of Rock House have lain largely unmanaged for some time. However, the step banks and rock faces which bound the Canal and Mill Road are enhanced and in fact given beauty by their 'natural' appearance, in particular in spring, when they are clothed with snowdrops, wild garlic and rock cress (*Arabis*).

BOUNDARY WALLS

Coursed gritstone walls line the lowest part of the carriage drive which leads up to the house from Mill Lane, but at the point of the five-bar gate the width of the drive narrows and the walling changes to dry-stone construction. From this point the carriage drive lies within a cut away channel, sunk below the surrounding sloping ground. The dry-stone walls are constructed of an unusual slabby gritstone, surmounted with shaped gritstone copings. The walled coach drive curves around to the north and extends uphill as far as the coach house. At the foot of the northern side of the drive lies a channel of limestone pitchings.

The carriage drive pre-dates the drive off Derby Road and it is possible that the dry stone walling section of the driveway dates from the time of Richard Arkwright I or before. The route taken by the coach drive may follow an old trackway --part of the route which crossed the Bonsal Brook by the bridge which became enveloped within Arkwright's mill-yard.

The coursed gritstone walls along the Derby Road/A6 boundary are likely to date from c.1818/19 when the road was created. Leading off Derby Road, opposite Intake Lane, a sunken footway known as Dark Lane curves down to the Rock House carriage drive. It is bounded by dry stone walling similar to that of the carriage drive. The entries to the footway, at both the Derby Road end and carriage drive end, have cannon bollards or stoops commanding them. Dark Lane was re-aligned and refashioned sometime between 1841 and 1876, when it was changed from a straight to a serpentine line, presumably to achieve a more gradual gradient, but also perhaps to give it a more picturesque character.

The 1924 Arkwright Estate sale papers reveal that the vegetable garden for Rock House was at that time on the other side of the Derby Road. This suggests that the southern boundary of Rock House grounds had been Intake Lane prior to the construction of the Derby Road. The stone boundary walls to Derby Road on the

Intake Lane side contain archaeological evidence of former openings and lost buildings.

The gritstone boundary wall which abuts the canal is likely to date from 1810-1820, when the southern feeder arm was added to the canal. A particularly interesting feature of the canal-side wall is the gateway, which provides access from the contracted Rock House garden onto this arm of the Cromford Canal.

The garden wall sweeps up to the decorative gateway, which has a pointed head, provided by two raking stones surmounted by decorative tufa coping stones. The (much overgrown) approach to this gate, from the house, lies along a path immediately behind the (partly collapsed) wall which gradually ascends from the Canal to the north-eastern corner of the formal gardens.

The Second Edition Ordinance Survey Map of 1898 clearly shows a footbridge spanning the feeder arm of the Canal, linking the gateway to Mill Road. When the footbridge was constructed is not known but it would have been after the second arm of the Canal was constructed in 1824. It survived until the 1920's and was described by a local as having wooden slats painted white and with one handrail.

Tradition has it that this was the route for the residents of Rock House to St Mary's Church.

THE LOST 'PARKLAND'

The 1776 agreement between Peter Nightingale and Richard Arkwright included a requirement that certain areas of land -- the Lawn, the Rye Croft, the Barn Croft-- were not to be ploughed or tilled. The 1841 Tithe Award map identifies plots of land with these names. The Lawn is shown as being bounded to the north by the canal but of course this was not in existence in 1776 and it seems likely that it originally extended to the River Derwent, i.e. the area now known as Cromford Meadows. Subsequent to the loss of the Cromford Meadows parkland, following creation of the canal, residents of Rock House had to make do with the land to the east of the gardens providing a park setting. Despite some encroachment, for the building of two houses, this remains recognisable as former parkland.

The Ryecroft and Barn Croft lie to the south, on the other side of the line eventually followed by the Derby Road, which, like the canal, did not exist in 1776. The creation of the Derby Road (the A6) led to the southern 'parkland' being detached from the house and its gardens.

Much of this southern 'parkland' was subsequently developed, some in the 1840s by the Arkwrights to provide two substantial houses, for the tenant of the mills and for the minister of the church.

Research for this paper has been undertaken by David Hool, Doreen Buxton and Barry Joyce, with assistance from Andrew Barber.

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