

THE HUDDERSFIELD AND DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

THE MYTHOLMBRIDGE CORN MILL PROJECT

INTERIM REPORT

April 2015 to April 2017

BACKGROUND

In March 2015, the owner of Mytholmbridge Farm contacted the Society to report a slight ridge parallel to New Mill Dyke passing through his lower field. Having already found a remnant of a mill stone in his field wall, he wondered if the ridge was a leat (goit).

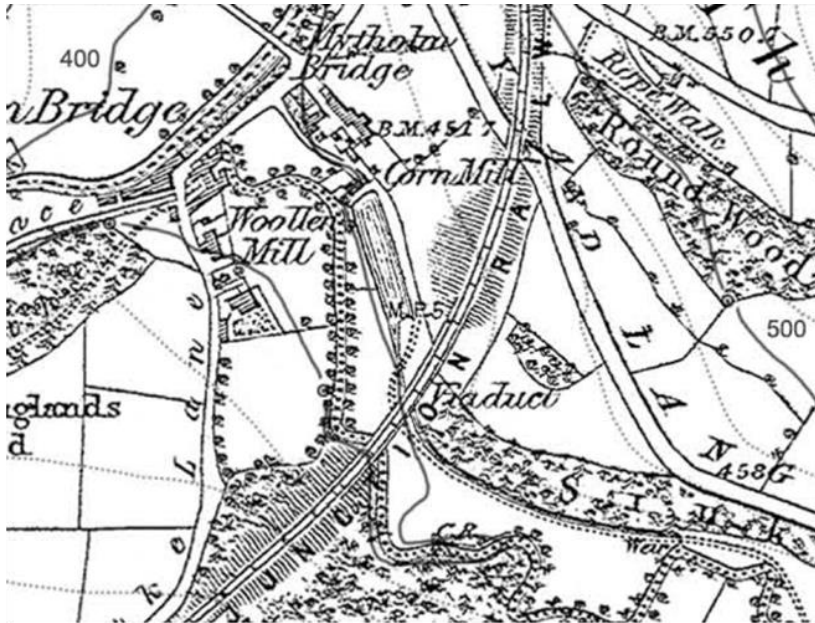
Subsequent research revealed evidence for a corn mill, which by 1890 had become no longer visible. An early indication of its existence is provided by Thomas Jeffery's map, "The County of York survey'd, 1772", which shows two mill symbols, at the confluence of New Mill Dyke with the River Holme.



THOMAS JEFFERYS MAP, 1772

In addition, an arbitration award in 1796 concerning the water supply to textile mills at Mytholmbridge, contained a sketch map showed a possible tail race separately entering the River Holme from the vicinity of Mytholmbridge Farm. The 1805 enclosure map for the Township of Thurstland distinctly shows a mill, mill pond and mill race on the eastern side of New Mill Dyke close to the farm.

These are also shown on the 1836 map for Wooldale, and on the O.S. 1854 6" map, surveyed in 1848, where it is labelled as a corn mill. This same map shows the mill race extending upstream to a weir on New Mill Dike, and passing under the railway viaduct which carried the original LYR line to Holmfirth. The mill and its associated features are not shown on later OS maps.



MYTHOLMBRIDGE 1854 OS MAP

Further evidence for the corn mill's existence is provided in an Inland Revenue Register compiled on behalf of the Storthes Hall estate in 1863. This lists the annual rent paid by the tenant miller, Mary Knutton. She also appears in the 1861 Census, as does her successor Thomas Knutton in 1871 and 1881, where they are described as being both a miller and a farmer. The probate for Mary's will proved in 1868, records that "I give and bequeath all my tenant right and beneficial interest in the homestead farm and mill situate at Mytholmbridge aforesaid which I now occupy under Charles Horsfall Bill Esquire unto my Great Nephew Thomas Knutton."

Earlier evidence for this mill is less conclusive. The remnant which has now been excavated appears to date from the 18thC, but it may lie on or near an older structure alluded to in a grant by King Henry VIII to John Storthes, dated 1st March 1540, following the dissolution of Roche Abbey (Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 16:1540-1541). The antiquarian H.J. Morehouse in his 'The History and Topography of The Parish of Kirkburton', printed in 1861, mentions Mytham Bridge as the site of "an ancient corn mill... (and) in connection with it, also, was a fulling mill, where the lord of the manor appears to have required clothiers within the manor, freehold and tenants to full or mill their cloth: this unusual custom existed in 1540 (at least)."

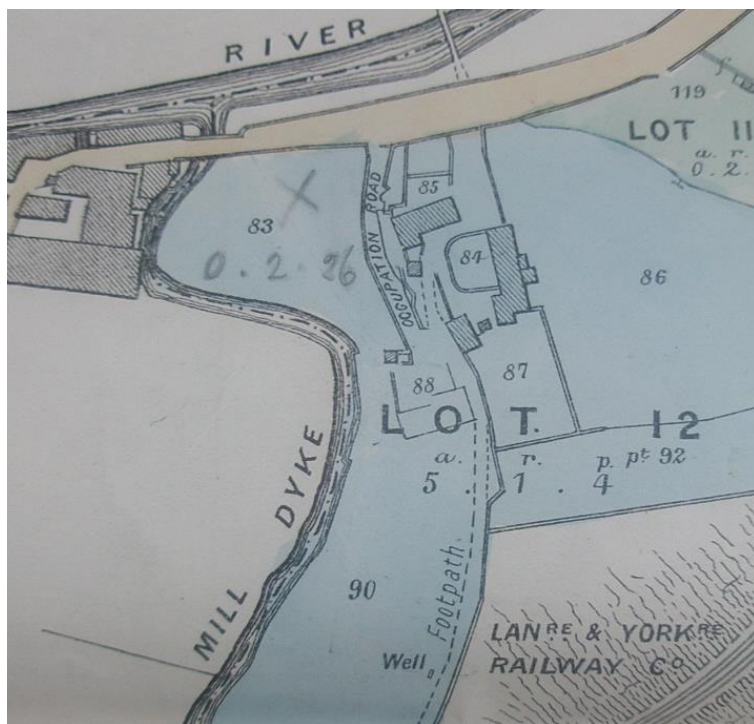
Morehouse also quotes from the letters patent dated 1st March 1540, granted by King Henry VIII, to John Storthes of Shittylington (Shillington), in which "all his manor of Thurstonland, with all his rights, membres and appurtenances, late to the Monastrie of Roche, and now dissolved, belonging etc.,.... and all other messuages, houses, byldyngs, mylnes, granges, londs, tents, meadowes, pastures, comens, waters.... fysshyngs, lyngs and hieth etc., to hold of the said sovereign, Lord the

king, his heirs and successors in cheff, by the suyte of the XX part of a knights fee, and yielding, therefore yerly 20s to the Kings Cort of Augmentacon of the revenues of his Crown."

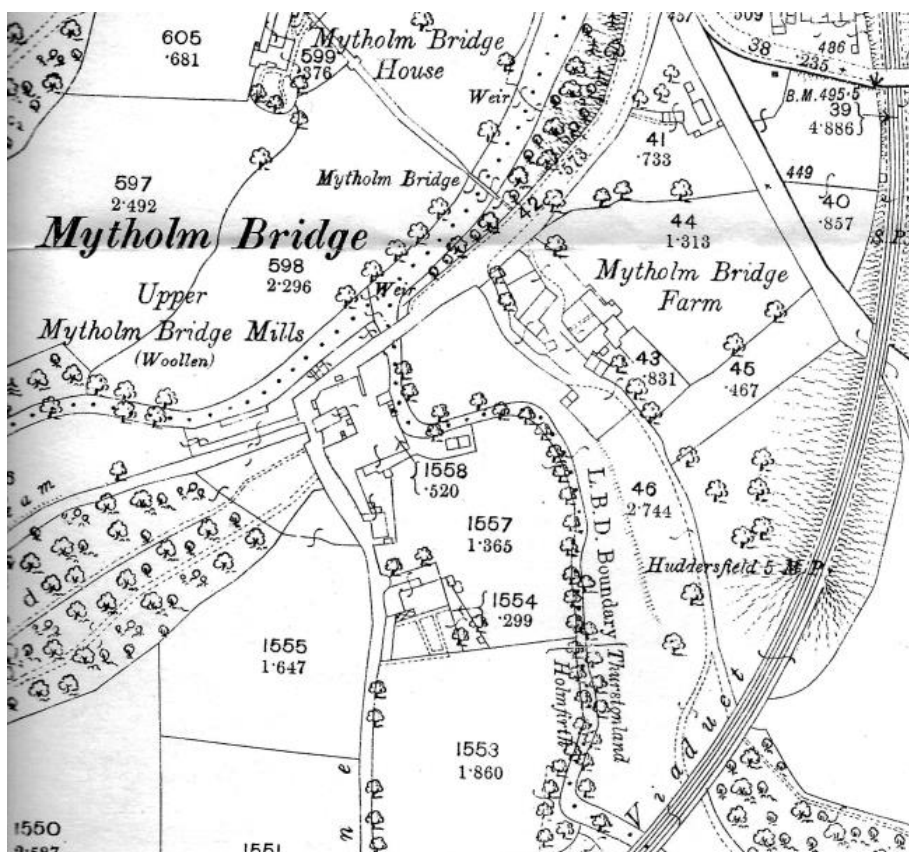
A further reference appears in an indenture the following year [1541], in which he [John Storthes] conveyed to John Walker of Thurstonland, clothier ... one messuage, 4 score acres of land, 16 acres of meadow, 20 acres of wodd etc." It further stipulated, "that John Walker and his heirs, at all tymes as they shall have any cloth redy to be mylled, or any corne to be ground, shall exercise and occupy the myll or myllnes within the lordship of Thurstonland And that they pay for the mylning of the seyd cloth and grynding of the seyd corne". John Walker and his heirs were also debarred from erecting any manner of mill or mills in the future within the lordship of Thurstonland. It is difficult to conceive that this mill could be any other than that at Mytholmbridge, which lies below the settlement at Thurstonland, given its proximity and direct access via the route up Thurstonland Bank.

Whatever, its early history, the manor remained with the Storthes family until the close of the reign of Elizabeth I (1558 – 1603), when they "alienated" the whole of their estate in the parish to Mr Richard Horsfall. This then accounts for the corn mill being included in the Inland Revenue Register compiled on behalf of the Storthes Hall estate in 1863. The corn mill then remained with his descendants, with the Knutton family as tenant millers, until the 1880's. On the 27th October 1898, the estate as a whole was then sold by Charles Horsfall Bill Esq., to Thomas Norton.

The corn mill itself was eventually destroyed in a fire in January 1880. This event was reported in the Huddersfield Weekly Examiner and in the Huddersfield Chronicle. The tenant miller was by then Thomas Knutton, and it was his daughter who first raised the alarm just as the family retired to rest in the evening. The Knutton family had been tenant millers there for at least four generations. At the time of the fire, Thomas Knutton owned the machinery within the mill and farmed 27 acres. Unfortunately, the mill and its contents were not insured and the loss was estimated in 1880 as from £700 to £1000. Thomas Knutton died two years after the fire on the 8th June 1882. Prior to his death, it appears that Charles Horsfall Bill Esq., the landlord, commissioned John Hirst Mitchell of Brockholes (wheelwright) "for planning and instructing" a Mr J.W. Senior with regard to the damaged corn mill. This work was carried out from June 29th to July 1st 1880, when the business's account book records that in addition to measuring and advising, a description and estimate of all wheelwright work was written out, though not posted to J.W. Senior until August 10th 1882. It would appear that the landlord had decided against going ahead with any repairs, since sometime between 1880 and 1890 the ruined building was demolished, and the site with the adjacent farm was put up for public auction by the new owner, a Mr. Joseph Silverwood, on Tuesday 7th October 1890 at the "George Hotel", Huddersfield. The outline of the mill appears on the auction plan, but on the 1893 OS 25 inch map there is no longer any trace of the mill and its pond, except for a slope running SSE through the field which represents the outer bank of the dam.



1890 AUCTION PLAN



1893 OS MAP

THE EXCAVATION



INITIAL TEST PIT

In May 2015, an exploratory trench/test pit was dug near the ridge first mentioned by the present owner, and shown by discolouration on a Google image. Its location was determined by taking bearings from field walls shown on the 1854 OS map. Immediately below a thin soil layer was a deposit of clinker over 1.0 metres deep. It was thought that this represented infill on the site of the mill pond, possibly from the boiler rooms of local industry in the late 19thC and early 20thC, and that following the demise of the corn mill the site had been used as a tip. A subsequent field walk identified stone near the surface nearer to the car park. At this point in time, only the 1854 map was available to show the position of the mill, and early measurements based on this seemed to indicate that the mill building was now beneath the car park adjacent to the field. A Survey Grid was established over the area identified on the 1854 OS map as the site of the mill and the adjacent northern end of the mill pond. The control point was the SW corner of the present Studio (formerly small warehouse and then garage), shown as an outbuilding to the farm in 1854, and now at the edge of the current car park. The step to this building also acted as the Temporary Bench Mark (TBM).



TRENCH 1

It was then decided to open a second test pit on the site of the exposed stone in the field. This subsequently became trench 1, and it revealed a culvert comprised of dry stone walls 0.6 m apart, to a depth of 1.45 m, with broken capstones, and a marked cut where thick deposits of clinker lay up against what was subsequently interpreted as the inner face and crest of a clay dam to the mill pond. Along the floor of the culvert was a relatively modern drainage pipe, which we interpreted as representing a relatively recent adaptation of an older structure to provide a field drain. As the trench was widened, the area to the NE was found to be considerably disturbed with various overlying deposits of fill. The owner believed this area to have been near where a utilities trench had been dug and a subsequent resistivity survey showed a diagonal shadow of lower resistance crossing over that area. It was also decided to follow the line of the culvert down slope towards New Mill Dyke. Here a sondage was dug to reveal the lower reaches of the culvert. The foundations were shown to be built onto the bedrock, with a width of 0.6m and sidewalls 0.8m in depth. Once more the capstones were found to be cracked. A second sondage revealed the absence of a cut between

the culvert walls and the clay dam, suggesting that the culvert had been built first and the dam wall subsequently built up on either side of it.



TRENCH 1, SONDAGE A



TRENCH 1, SONDAGE B

Finds found in Trench 1 included a miscellaneous mix of pottery sherds of brown, white and decorative glaze ware, in the overlying silt beneath the soil layer, and some pipe stems. This has been interpreted as detritus either from Victorian farming practices since the demise of the mill, or from flood debris deposited as the flood waters subsided in areas where the water was ponded

back. This would have occurred at the confluence of New Mill dyke and the River Holme, where flood waters in the latter would have impounded the waters of New Mill Dyke. Major floods occurred in the Holme Valley and surrounding area as late as 1852, 1857 and 1944.

Unfortunately no dating evidence has been obtained for the culvert itself, despite the excavation extending down to its foundations internally, near to its point of discharge into New Mill Dike. and a second sondage being dug alongside the outer SE wall.



TRENCH 2



TRENCH 2, SONDAGE

Trench 2 was opened immediately to the NW of the upper reaches of Trench 1, in the hope of identifying the dam wall on that side of the culvert, and the point at which it might turn inland away from New Mill Dyke to run behind the mill as shown on the 1854 OS map. However, it became clear that the area in close proximity to the culvert had been heavily disturbed resulting in overlapping layers of fill. This was found to coincide with the band of low resistivity, previously mentioned, which is shown to cut diagonally across the Survey Grid. This has already been interpreted as excavations relating to a utilities trench dug in the 1980's. In an attempt to relocate the clay dam, a sondage was excavated at the northern corner of Trench 2. This exposed a layer of undisturbed clay 1.42 m deep, resting on a block of dressed stone. Its relative position and height suggested that this could be a continuation of the dam wall at/near the point where it turned to separate the mill pond from the mill building.



TRENCH 3

Trench 3 was opened along the line of the fence separating the field from the car park. The 1854 OS map showed the former corn mill as being in that vicinity, with a NE to SW alignment. Unfortunately locating the exact position of the mill by triangulation was complicated by a discrepancy between the alignment of the farm's outbuilding on the map and their current position on the ground. At a scale of 6" to the mile, a single millimetre in difference could also mean an error in measurement of 69 cm on the ground. The margin of error in transferring measurements and the discrepancy in alignment rendered it difficult to get an accurate bearing. Fortunately, this problem was resolved with the discovery of an auction plan dated the 7th October, 1890, which showed the house and

homestead, and site of the old corn mill as Lot 12, and their alignment with modern maps and the present-day situation. By measuring the actual dimensions of the farm outbuilding and those on the auction plan, it was possible to produce a ratio which could then be applied to a current 1:1250 OS map, and in the field. This then enabled the site of the mill to be more accurately measured out. Consequently, excavation was then concentrated at the SW end of Trench 3.



TRENCH 3, SW CORNER

After digging down through a layer of grey-brown soil, then light-grey clay with stone inclusions and finally black cinder to a depth of 0.98 m, the top of a dressed stone wall appeared. Further excavation revealed a section of back wall and a small section of sidewall extending under the car park. From the evidence provided, this was interpreted as the SE corner of the partially demolished mill. The section of sidewall lay beneath a jumbled mix of lime mortar and dressed stones. Widening of the trench to expose the back wall and corner involved cutting into a previously hidden, substantial layer of orange-white clay, but with a pronounced cut at the NE end facing the field, separating the clay from clinker. Any initial reaction that the clay was natural and cut into to build the foundations was contradicted by the subsequent exposure of a low lying extension of this clinker to the SW beneath the clay. The wall exposed is comprised of outer facings of finely dressed stone, with a stone rubble core bonded with a lime mix. However, at its north eastern end the stonework from which water seeped was stained a dark red-brown. This was seen as possibly indicative that a water supply to the mill was in close proximity. Ochre staining is a characteristic of the New Mill Dyke when old mines are flooded upstream. Traces of walling possibly extending under the field were also found. These consisted of more weathered stone which was also red-brown in hue and poorly bonded with the main back wall. No evidence to date this stonework was found.



TRENCH 3, INNER WALLS SW CORNER

Having exposed this corner of the building, it was decided to excavate within the walls, and reveal the height of the remaining section of wall and its floor. Large blocks of dressed stone intermixed with clinker were removed, with the additional aid of shoring and props. At a depth of 2.85 m at the SW end and 2.97 m at the NE end of this trench, less well dressed foundations stones were located, and a surface of compacted stones sloping down eastwards from 2.94 m to 3.17 m below the string line. This was overlain by a thin deposit of dark red-brown silt on top of which lay broken flagstones. Having recorded this section of the building it was then decided to extend the NE end of the trench and to explore the outer wall in the SW corner. Both areas were to prove revealing.



TRENCH 3, NE END

By cutting into the wall of clinker at the NE end, two parallel walls of dressed ashlar were exposed 1.0 m apart extending SE towards the field. Between these walls, there was a hard compressed layer of grey black cinder with inclusions consisting of fragments of coal, brick, stone and grit over a metre in depth, under which lay a band of white clay 14 cm thick and a lower band of grey clay 46cm thick resting on a stone sill. Water continues to ooze through the cinder. To either side of the ashlar the stone walls of the mill were stained dark brown. Above these deposits, below the fence line and field, was a layer of rubble then soil with a combined depth of over 1.10 m. The lip to this feature was further exposed by excavating another 1.28 m down, again with the aid of shoring and props. The lip was found to be made from large blocks of finely dressed stone with a noticeable curvature before levelling off some 40cm in from the top of the lip. Also the parallel stone walls had been cut away to leave two opposing arches. The feature has been interpreted as representing the wheel well and water channel to feed the wheel. The arches are thought to be where the axel and machinery were originally installed. Since the curve levels off some 1.28 m below the lip, it has been construed that the wheel itself had a diameter of over 2.40 m (9 ft.), and was of the mid-shot variety.



TRENCH 3, OUTER WALL

At the SW end of the trench, further excavation involved cutting down into a thick layer of clay and removing very large blocks of stone. This revealed an outer wall which varied in composition. For 80 cm below the top of the corner stone, it consists of finely dressed layers of stone. For another 50 cm below this the stone work is more irregular and more crudely dressed. The final (as yet) 80 cm consists of coarse blocks of stone. In all, the outer wall extends downwards some 2.10 m and at its current lowest point is 3.05 m below the string line. This is not dissimilar to the depth reached internally within the SE corner of the building, but is noticeably different from the depth of the wheel well below the lip, which is some 4.0 m below the string line. It had also been hoped that by reaching the foundations of the building, dating evidence might be found. Unfortunately no such evidence was found in this trench. It was also hoped that the building standing in 1880 might have been built in or near older foundations. Though the nature of the stone work changes with depth this is not necessarily evidence of older foundations. That said the traces of red-brown stonework butting on to the back wall, and at the side of the water channel to the wheel well could well be remaining fragments of an older structure.



TRENCH 4



TRENCH 4, NE END



TRENCH 4, SW END

Trench 4 started as a test pit to locate any extension to the water channel into the field, and to determine how the water was transferred from the mill pond. An extension was found approximately 1.0 m below the surface of the field. However, the sides of the channel were found to be diverging, and over a distance of 1.5 m had widened from 1.0 m apart near the fence boundary at T3 to 1.6 m apart further into the field in T4. At the NE end of the trench, the dressed stone was found to curve in a NW direction in a line similar to that shown for the edge of the mill pond running behind the mill on the 1854 map. At the SW end, the side of the mill pond was shown to approach the rear of the mill at an angle before straightening to follow the line of the water channel in T3. Beneath a thin soil cover, most of the overlay consisted of rubble with large dressed stone inclusions intermixed with some metal objects (inconclusive), glass fragments, and part of a pipe stem. Under this was a thin layer of red-brown clay with grit inclusions, a pot sherd and clumps of felt or hair. The widening was considered as possibly to 'funnel' water from the mill pond into the channel. In addition, level readings on the top stones showed an O.D. height of 120.33 m and 120.57 m, whereas the level taken on the crest of the clay dam identified in Trench 1, had a height of 121.56 m, and the bottom of the culvert a height of c.120.02 m. This would have enabled the culvert identified in Trench 1 to act as an overflow channel. In Trench 3, the overflow lip for the wheel was a further 1.63 m below the top stone of the channel, at a height of 118.81 m. At some point in the field this would require a sluice gate to control the flow of water from the mill pond passing over the dam and descending into the water channel to feed the wheel.

In conclusion, it can be said that the Society has been able to locate the former corn mill at Mytholmbridge. Features identified include its mill pond, earth /clay dam, overflow channel and the

remaining SE corner of the mill building with its water channel and wheel well. A retaining wall for the embankment, associated with the old Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company which led to the former viaduct across New Mill Dyke, is still visible to the east of the field, where it protected the former mill pond. The branch line to Holmfirth was opened in 1850. Upstream, the weir which fed the mill race leading to the mill is also still visible. Traces of the tail race can still be seen on the other side of Luke Lane where a small cutting feeds into the River Holme. However, most of what might remain of the mill itself lies beneath the current car park at some considerable depth.

Regrettably no evidence was found to date the original mill. However, the date of the remaining structure in the SW corner can be inferred from early map evidence and its mode of construction, as well as from the material found in the overlying deposits. The large well-dressed quoins and small regular stonework for the interior wall would suggest the late 18th to early 19thC. The coarser and more weathered stone work forming the foundations of this part of the mill, and the fragments of walling with their dark red hue which are poorly tied in behind the back wall, are clearly older. As to the mill pond, there is a clear reference to it already being in existence in 1745, for in that year the diary of Arthur Jessop records: "May 8th Joseph Hollingworth of Hades Ing. Drowned himself this morning in the Mytholm Bridge Dam, he was laid upon his face and had his hat upon his head". All other evidence as to its earlier origins may be inferred from the 16th C documents mentioned in the section on Background above.

Finally, I would like to thank all those members of the Society involved in this investigation, without whose efforts, evidence would not have been found. These have included at various times, John and Meryl Auty, Alan Brooke, Nick Brook, Colin Dunn, Chris Hardy, Geoff Higgs, Andrew Nocon, Ron Organ, John Smithson and Robin Stocks. I should also like to express my gratitude to the owners of the site, John and Sue Clay, for having granted their permission and for their patience and advice.

For a more detailed account with plans and section diagrams, and a full photographic record, please refer to The HDAS archives.

John Cross

April 2017