

Rock Nook, Littleborough, Rochdale

Statement of Heritage Significance



March 2020

Marion Barter Associates Ltd

HISTORIC BUILDINGS ADVICE

Rock Nook, Summit, Littleborough

Statement of Heritage Significance

prepared for

Gay O'Gara Properties (Ireland) Ltd

by

Marion Barter Associates Ltd

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SUMMARY

This report was commissioned from Marion Barter Associates Ltd in 2019 by Gay O’Gara Properties (Ireland) Ltd, the owner of the buildings and site. The report’s purpose is to assess the significance of heritage assets, including Rock Nook Mill, that are likely to be affected by development proposals. Pre-application advice (ref.PREAPP/00096/18) was given by Rochdale Council in March 2019.

Rock Nook conservation area was designated in 2006, for its industrial buildings and historic landscape. Rock Nook Mill is a non-designated heritage asset that makes an important contribution to the conservation area, along with the Rochdale Canal and the other mills, Green Vale and Sladen Wood Mill. There are several listed structures in the area including Pike House canal lock and bridge and the Roch aqueduct. Development in the area is subject to the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act; the local authority has a duty to take account of the special character of the conservation area in determining applications for development, and policies on heritage assets in the NPPF also apply.

Historic England provides advice on compiling heritage significance statements which has been followed for this report. Section 2 provides a summary of the history of Rock Nook Mill and other buildings nearby, written with reference to research by Dr Pete Arrowsmith for the separate archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA). Rock Nook Mill originated as a woollen weaving shed in the 1850s and expanded under Fothergill & Harvey from 1870s; they built a 5-storey cotton spinning mill in phases between 1879 and c1898 and expanded the weaving sheds to the south over the next half century. The mill was in use into the late 20th century but was vacant by the time a fire damaged the upper floor and roof in 2015.

Section 4 discusses the significance of Rock Nook and other nearby buildings. Buildings are numbered and their significance summarised in the table below.

<i>Building</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Significance Level</i>	<i>Contribution to Rock Nook CA</i>
1. Rock Nook Mill	c1879-98	High for historical and landscape value. Medium for architectural value	Very positive
2. Boiler House	C1890s	Medium	Positive
3. Weaving shed	Rebuilt 1952	Medium	Positive
4. Warehouse	1892	Medium	Positive
5. Northrop shed	1902	Medium	Positive
6. 1913 additions	1913	Low to medium	Positive
7. Air raid shelter	1939-1945	Medium (historical value only)	Neutral
8. Summit Quarry building	Late C19	Low	Positive
9. Former stable and cottages	c1870	Medium	Positive

10. Prospect House	c1870	Medium	Positive
11. Fothergill offices and workshop	Late C19	Low	Neutral

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Report

The report was commissioned in November 2019 by Paul Clark of the C J Partnership on behalf of Gay O’Gara Properties (Ireland) Ltd, from the Marion Barter Associates Ltd. Pre-application advice (ref.PREAPP/00096/18) in 2019 included a request from Rochdale Council that a ‘comprehensive heritage impact assessment’ be provided, along with a ‘detailed archaeological and building assessment’. This report provides the first stage in the heritage assessment, to inform the design and planning process. A Desk Based Assessment (DBA) was commissioned in parallel from Dr Pete Arrowsmith; this refers to information in the Historic Environment Record for Greater Manchester and in local archives including Touchstones, Rochdale. The DBA covers a wider area around the mill on the east side of the canal; this informs this assessment of heritage significance which focuses on the mill and other standing buildings in the study area. Marion Barter and Pete Arrowsmith made a joint visit to the site in January 2020. The report covers Rock Nook mill and adjoining land, all within Rock Nook Conservation Area; the mill is not a listed building but is a non-designated asset. Since a fire in 2015 the mill has been a roofless shell.

1.2 Purpose of the Report

The report is designed to provide:

- A summary of the context, history and development of Rock Nook Mill, including other buildings in the vicinity,
- A description of the buildings and setting,
- A statement of significance for the buildings.

1.3 Location

The address is Rock Nook, Summit, Rochdale OL15 0LR

The National Grid Reference for the study area is centred at SD 9470 1785.

The local planning authority is Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council.

1.4 Acknowledgements

This report has been written by Marion Barter BA MA IHBC. Dr Pete Arrowsmith advised and undertook research for the Desk Based Assessment, which provides the historical background for this report. Historic maps and images are reproduced with the permission of Touchstones, Rochdale or Littleborough History Centre; we are grateful for assistance from Bernard Pratt, Manager of Littleborough History Centre and from Jessica Scott, conservation officer at Rochdale Council. The air photo from the 1980s mills survey is reproduced with permission from Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service. All other photographs are by the author.

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2.0 HISTORY, DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

2.1 Development of Rock Nook

Introduction

This section draws on research carried out by Dr Pete Arrowsmith for the DBA; the following is a summary. Local historians have also taken an interest in the area; the Littleborough Historical & Archaeological Society has published a series of history trails and maintains an archive of unpublished material and historic photographs, which can be seen at the Littleborough History Centre (on platform 1 at Littleborough railway station). Their collection includes an unpublished typescript about Rock Nook Mill's history, by Fothergill & Harvey dated 1952. Fred Jackson's research was published in 1943 and Littleborough Civic Society drew on his early 20th century research to compile *The Story of Littleborough*, written by John Street (1999). A summary of Rock Nook is available in Rochdale Council's illustrated leaflet for Rock Nook conservation area, designated in 2006. Rock Nook Mill was not the subject of detailed survey as part of the 1980s RHME mills survey, although aerial photographs taken for this survey are available via the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advice Service.

Rock Nook lies about 1.5 miles north of Littleborough town centre, just south of Summit in the upper Roch valley, at around 170m above sea level. The ground rises steeply from the valley floor up to Shore Moor to the north-west (407m) and Chelburn Moor to the east (c410m). The underlying geology in this part of the Pennines is carboniferous, with sandstone outcrops in the area; the Pennine Lower Coal Measures underlie the south of the site.

Medieval and post-medieval settlement

In the medieval period this was an area of scattered hill farms, with farmsteads recorded in the 13th century at Sladen Fold east of the site, and Lighthowlers to the south. Pike House developed as a farmstead to the south and Timbercliffe to the north-east in the 16th and 17th centuries.¹ There were numerous coal mines in the area, the earliest in the 16th century.²

Yates' map of 1770 marks no buildings within the study area. To the south-east, outside the study area, Sladen Mill is marked on Hennet's map of 1828-9 as a water-

¹ Arrowsmith, pp 5-6.

² There is a summary of coal mining in the area at <https://www.littleboroughshistory.org>

powered mill; this fulling mill may be on the site of a late medieval corn mill known to have been in this area.

Industrial period



Fig.1: the area around Rock Nook before Rock Nook Mill was built, 1st edition 6 inch OS map (1851, surveyed 1847-8)

This part of the Roch valley now contains several important transportation routes, developed between the end of the 18th century and the mid-19th century. This stretch of the Rochdale Canal (from Sowerby Bridge and Todmorden to Rochdale) was open by the end of 1798, and extended to Manchester by 1804.³ The numbered locks are marked on the 1st edition OS map (Fig.1); Pike House Lock and bridge is listed grade II. A contouring canal drain or conduit was cut into the slope east of the canal in c1801, to bring water from Hollingworth Lake to Summit for the canal (also shown in Fig.1); this is empty but is still legible.

The Todmorden Road Turnpike opened in 1824, part of the route to Halifax, to improve on an earlier track along Calderbrook Road. In the late 1839-41, the railway line was constructed for the Manchester and Leeds Railway, under engineer George Stephenson; this was the first trans-Pennine line to open and Summit Tunnel was the longest in Britain when it opened.⁴ Railway tunnel portals and an iron aqueduct carrying the Roch over the railway are distinctive features at Rock Nook (listed structures). The three major transportation routes shaped the character of the area and attracted industrial development, workers' housing and other amenities. Rock Houses, a long terrace of workers' housing on the west side of Todmorden Road was built before c1847. The earliest of these have plain mullioned windows and are probably early 19th century.



Fig.2: south portal of Summit Tunnel and Sladen Wood Mill, from the south

³ McNeil and Nevell, p40

⁴ McNeil and Nevell, p41

Quarrying of the local sandstone probably took place on a small scale from an early date. Several 'sandstone quarries' are shown on the 1st edition OS map, including Summit Quarries and Backing Hole Quarry, the latter so-called because the stone was used for 'backing' not for facing masonry work; later this was the site of Rock Nook Mill (Fig.1). The history of Summit Quarry is discussed in section 2.3, below. The surviving small building on the west side of the lane up to the quarry is of unknown function, but was possibly a counting house on the upper floor. The quarry owner probably built the range of buildings below this small building, on Lightowler Lane (now partly offices for Fothergill Engineered Fabrics Ltd)); this probably contained a steam-operated process such as cutting, as there was a chimney.

Textile mill development in the study area took place at a relatively late, compared to other locations in Rochdale where fulling mills and water-powered woollen mills were built on rivers from at least the 18th century (Sladen Mill to the south-east was an early mill).

The canal provided the main impetus for mills in the Rock Nook area; the earliest mill was Pike House Mill to the south of the area, where water power was used to run a fulling mill, with a weir, leat and several reservoirs to the east of the mill. The date of construction is not known but it existed by 1841, and is shown on the 1st edition OS map. In the second half of the 19th century the mill was owned and run by the Chadwicks; there was a dye-house and steam power was installed from at least the 1860s and in 1912 Herring & Co Ltd, a firm of calico printers and dyers occupied the mill. It was later used for 'currying hides', but the buildings were demolished between 1929 and 1960.⁵ A row of workers' cottages, Pike House Cottages, survives to the south.

Sladen Wood Mill, to the north-west of Sladen Bridge, was built alongside the canal by Thomas Holt in c.1852.⁶ It was built over a culverted section of the Roch. Holt lived at Sladen Wood House, which he built just north of the mill (the house was demolished in the late 20th century). Green Vale Mill was built on the west side of the canal just south of Rock Nook, in the mid-19th century. The first building at Rock Nook Mill was a weaving shed built in the 1850s (none of these three mills are shown on the 1st edition OS map). The history of Rock Nook Mill is discussed in more detail in section 2.2. Grove dye works was built on the west side of the canal with associated ponds.

North-east of Punch Bowl Bridge (also known as Sladen Bridge), a brick and tile works was developed in the early 1850s by Honour Matthews and sold to John Tetlow in c1858; under him, the works produced drain and sanitary pipes. The site of the works

⁵ Arrowsmith pp 14-15

⁶ Arrowsmith pp 15-16

is outside the study area, but other buildings associated with John Tetlow are within the area, including Prospect House, built in c1870 by John Tetlow; in 1891 and 1901 this was occupied by the works manager. Below this, to its west is a building (east of Punchbowl Bridge) that contained two cottages and a stable. This was also built c1870 by Tetlow, and is first shown on the 1892 OS map.

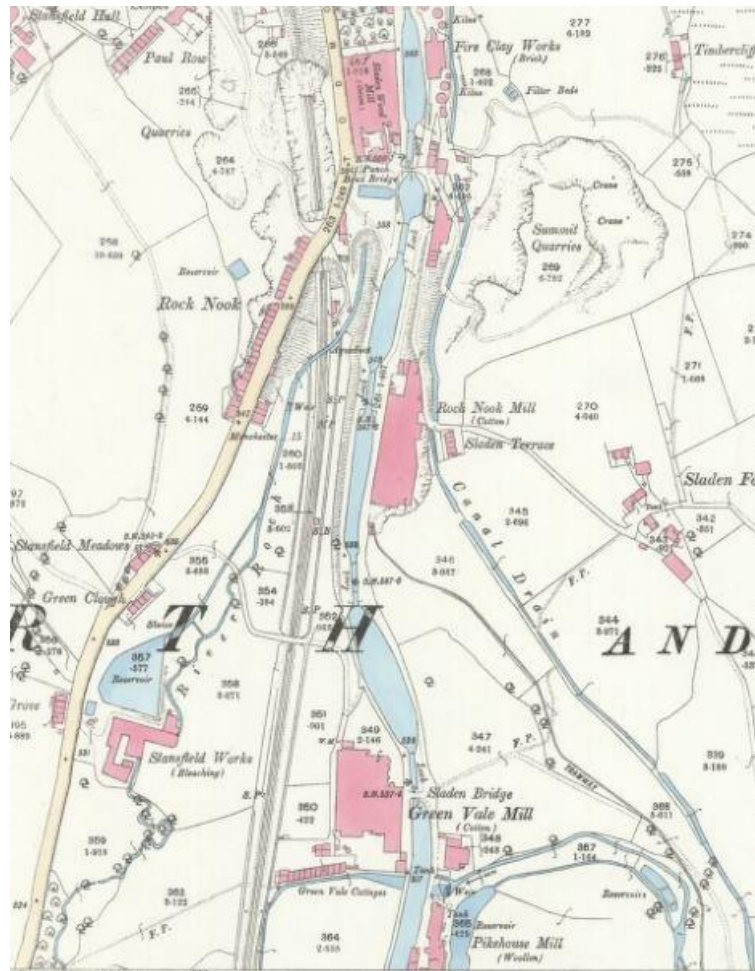


Fig.3: 1892 OS map (25" to the mile, surveyed 1891)

Arrowsmith writes that 'Originally the two southern bays seem to have comprised two dwellings (stacks shown on an undated photograph have been removed and their front doors have been converted to windows), and the two northern bays stabling' (in 1877 a valuation refers to a 'new stable'). The building is believed to have been built c. 1870 by John Tetlow of the neighbouring brick and tile works.⁷ A tramway was built from the canal close to Rock Nook Mill, to Sladen Mill, where coal and clay was dug for the tile works, by 1877; the line of the tramway is marked on the 1891 OS map but was later partly built over. Fothergill and Harvey bought

⁷ Arrowsmith p16

Tetlow's tile works in 1911; the works produced building blocks made of clinker and concrete, used by the firm to build houses at Timbercliffe, in the north-east corner of the conservation area (outside the study area) in the 1920s. A short terrace of four cottages, called Sladen Terrace, was built on land above and to the east of Rock Nook Mill in the early 1880s. Arrowsmith writes that 'The row appears in the valuation book of 1888, owned by James Scarr whose name also features among the occupants.⁸ The 1891 census given his occupation as cotton warp beamer; the other heads of household were a warehouseman, 'cashier cotton mill' and a cotton weaver. All perhaps were employed at Rock Nook Mill. The houses were still standing in 1960 but aerial photographs taken for the Greater Manchester Textile Mill Survey in the mid-1980s show the site as vacant.'⁹

20th century and recent history

The canal fell into disuse in the second half of the 20th century but was re-opened in the late 20th century; the locks and the section at Rock Nook were re-opened following a restoration in 1988-1990. The canal drain is no longer used and is silted up, although its line is still a feature in the landscape.

The area of Grove dyeworks was turned into a nature reserve by Groundwork in the 1980s, with public access via footpaths. Summit Quarry was landscaped with trees planted around the same time, also for recreational use. A long-distance footpath also follows the canal tow path.

Sladen Wood Mill, Green Vale Mill and the weaving sheds of Rock Nook Mill are still in use for manufacturing.

⁸ Arrowsmith, p16

⁹ Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service



Fig.4: footpath signage on restored canal at Punch Bowl Bridge

2.2 Summary History of Rock Nook Mill

Primary phase weaving shed

Also known as Backing (Back'ith) Hole Mill, after the quarry in which it was built, the first manufacturing building at Rock Nook was a weaving shed for woollens built in c1850. The site was to the east of the canal between locks 42 and 43, shown as a sandstone quarry on the 1st edition map (Fig.1). The expansion of the works is recorded in valuation books in the local studies library in Touchstones, Rochdale, researched by Pete Arrowsmith.¹⁰ In 1852 the partially completed single-storey weaving shed was described in a newspaper advertisement as 81ft (24.7m) by 60ft (18.2m). It was steam-powered with a boiler house, chimney and engine house, although it is not clear where this power plant was located due to later changes at the site. From the 1850s up until the early 1870s the woollen works was leased by Messrs Shackleton and Co; in the late 1860s and up until 1872, it was run by Susannah Shackleton who sold off the machinery (102 power looms) when her lease ended.¹¹ The site of the first weaving shed is commemorated on a plaque on the west wall of the weaving shed rebuilt in 1952 (Fig.5) and its form is legible in historic images (Fig.7).

¹⁰ Arrowsmith, Table 1, p18

¹¹ Information from valuation books and newspapers archives, in Arrowsmith, p18

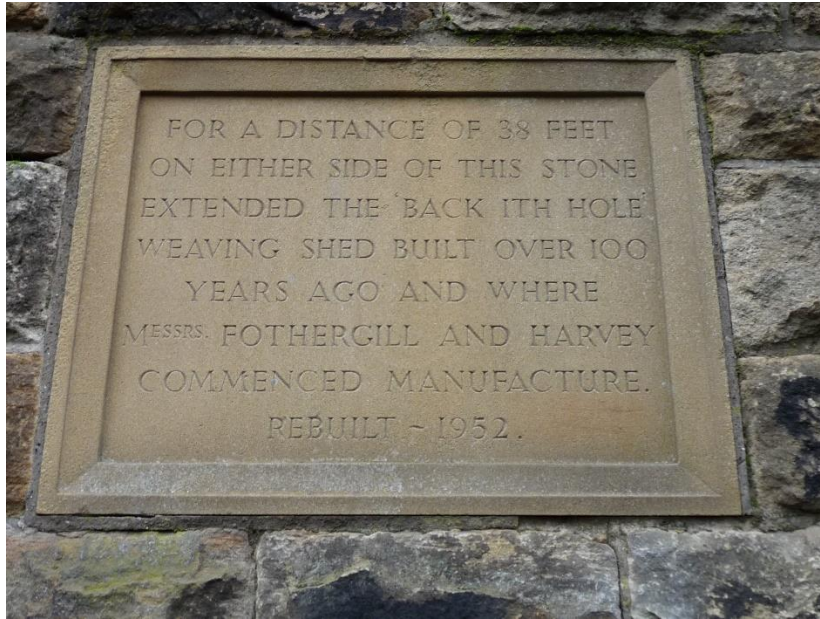


Fig.5: plaque on west wall of weaving shed, dated 1952

Fothergill and Harvey

In c.1874, Fothergill and Harvey bought the weaving shed; the two men, Alexander Cummins Harvey and Thomas Fothergill had set up a partnership in the 1840s, to run a cloth and yarn business in Manchester. The company expanded to become the principal employer and a key landowner in Littleborough. They bought Sladen Wood Mill, to the west of the canal north of Punch Bowl Bridge, in 1859. According to a typescript dated 1953, written by the company, Fothergill and Harvey acquired a 'little weaving shed known as Back-in-Hole' in 1872...and land adjoining it was leased in 1877 and shortly afterwards this was enlarged and the looms increased to 200. The first part of the present 5-storey spinning mill known as Rock Nook Mill was built on a portion of this land in 1879. It was extended in 1887 and again in 1898....In 1879 the mill was driven by two horizontal steam engines, mounted directly over two Lancashire boilers. One engine driving the spinning mill and one the looms.' ¹² The location of this engine and boiler house is not known but it must have been between the 1879 mill and the weaving shed, possibly on the site of the south tower of the mill, which was extended upwards in c1898. The historic photograph taken in c1900 (Fig.6) shows the weaving sheds and the first phase of the mill with darker masonry than the later additions, which then still had clean stonework.

¹² Unpublished typescript dated 1953, Fothergill & Harvey, *A Century of Progress*, p4 (Littleborough Historical and Archaeological Society collection).

The warehouse to the south of the weaving shed was built in 1892 (Fig.6). In 1893 the company also bought Green Vale Mill; the three mills were operated under the name Sladen Wood Mill Co. Sladen Wood House became the home of Alexander Harvey's son Gordon Harvey who managed the mill from c1879 and was later Liberal MP for Rochdale (from 1906 to 1918).¹³ The company had offices and a warehouse in Manchester on Peter Street.¹⁴

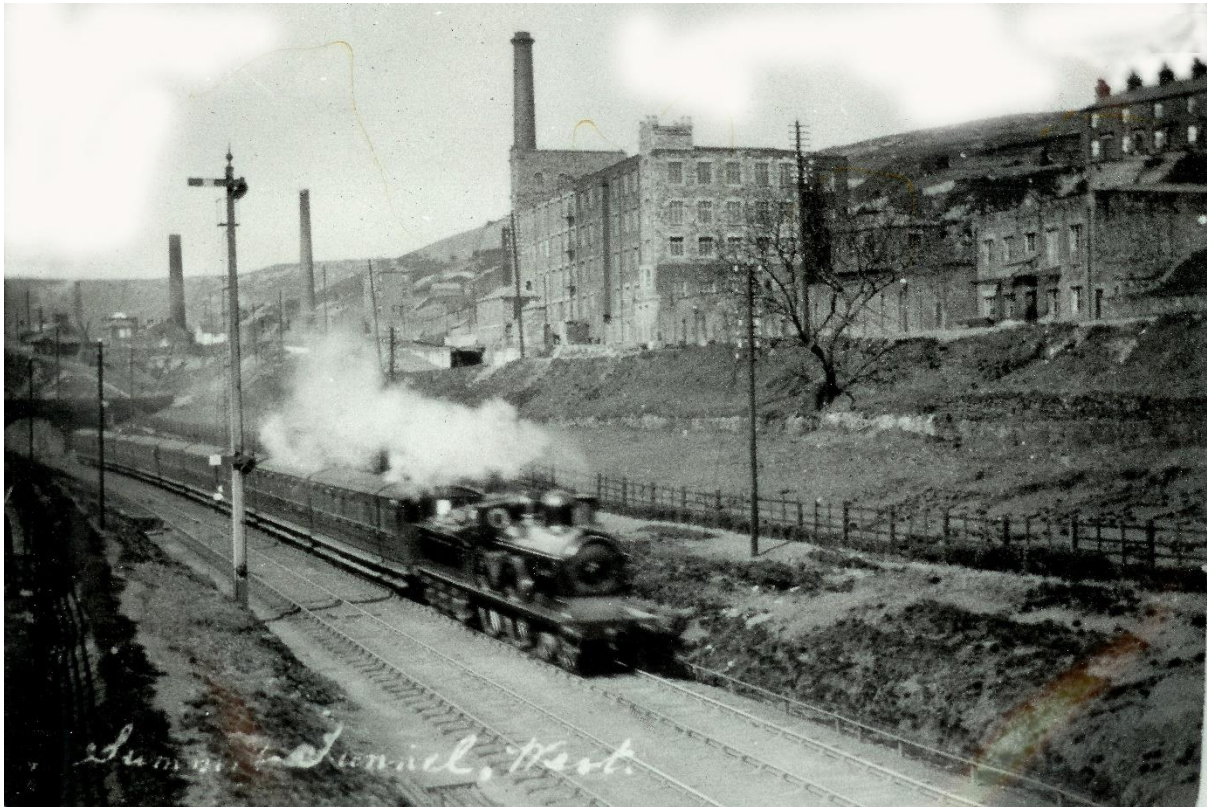


Fig.6: Rock Nook Mill in c1900, soon after the towers and north part of the mill were built (reproduced with permission from Littleborough History Centre)

¹³ Arrowsmith, p10

¹⁴ https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Fothergill_and_Harvey



Fig.7: undated view of the mill from the south-west, c1920 (Touchstones)

The first OS map to show the multi-storey cotton mill is the OS map published in 1892 (surveyed in 1891) (Fig.3). Unfortunately, no plans or documents have been seen to provide a detailed chronology or internal plan of the spinning mill. The extended mill's steam power plant was built at the north end of the mill, with a chimney and boiler house built after 1887, the date when the north half of the mill was built with an integral engine house. The boiler house is extant (Building 2) but the chimney to the north had gone by the middle of 20th century; it is shown in historic photographs and in a view of the mill in the early 20th century (Figs 6 and 7). The mill was powered by electric motors by c1901.¹⁵

A drawing of c1920 (Fig.7) shows a new office building at the south end of the mill and the Northrop Shed built in c1905 to the south of the 1892 warehouse (both in separate ownership). In front of the spinning mill, to the west were two ancillary buildings (demolished) of unknown function, probably warehousing as they are shown with an overhead crane projecting towards the canal lock.

Gordon Harvey and his brother Ernst ran the company in the early 20th century, when they initiated some changes to improve condition for the workers. Arrowsmith writes that these works 'included the repositioning of machines at Rock Nook Mill to create broader alleyways, improvements to humidification, and the provision of

¹⁵ Unpublished typescript 'Fothergill & Harvey - A Century of Progress', 31 December 1953 by (Fothergill & Harvey (Sales) Ltd (courtesy of Littleborough History Centre)

heated cloakrooms and canteen facilities. Their mills were among the first to end smoke emissions and Harvey unsuccessfully attempted to pass a Bill through Parliament to compel others to do the same'.¹⁶

In 1913 a new winding room and sizing room were added to the south of the weaving sheds, with a boiler house containing a new boiler supplied by the Oldham Boiler Works Co. The stair tower to the south-west corner is dated 1913 and carries the company's initials. The 1913 additions cost over £7000 and were designed by Butterworth and Duncan; the drawings are in Touchstones, Rochdale. This southern part of the mill site is now in separate ownership to the multi-storey mill.



Fig.8: stair tower to Fothergill & Harvey Ltd 1913 extension

Amenities provided by the company for the workers included a bowling green to the west of the canal and a cricket ground with a pavilion to the east, south of the mill. The pavilion, associated with the Fothergill and Harvey Cricket Club is first shown on the OS map for 1929, and was destroyed by fire in 2017. The company was unusual in providing some landscaping to the land around the mill, particularly beside the access road where shrubs such as Rhododendrons were planted. Gordon Harvey was responsible for the landscaping.

By 1946, Rock Nook mill was powered by electricity with a new substation. The same year, Fothergill and Harvey became a public company. From the mid-20th century, the decline of the cotton industry led to changes to the business; the company

¹⁶ Arrowsmith, p10

diversified into new synthetic fabrics such as glass and carbon fibre and in 1974 new looms were installed at the Rock Nook weaving department.¹⁷ The mill was used to manufacture polymer fabrics by Fothergill Tygaflor Ltd in the late 20th century, but was vacant by the time of the fire in 2015.¹⁸ The mill is no longer owned by Fothergill Group which continues to manufacture high performance textiles in the weaving sheds and 1913 buildings to the south of the site and in Green Vale Mill.

2.3. Summit Quarry

Pete Arrowsmith writes, 'In 1847-8 three quarries were also being worked on the hill slope to the east of the canal drain. By 1891 these had been amalgamated into a single large working named on the mapping as Summit Quarries and comprising an upper and lower level (Figure 3). The upper workings seem to have been abandoned by 1909 but working of the lower level continued before final closure by 1929. Access to the quarry was provided by a steep road leading up from Lightowlers Lane opposite Punchbowl Bridge. A building standing at the junction of those roads may have been associated with the quarry (Building 11). OS mapping of 1891-1909 shows rail lines running from the front of this building to the canal pound below Punchbowl Bridge, and a chimney is indicated to the rear. It is possible that the building was used for the steam-powered cutting and/or rubbing of stone before this was loaded onto canal boat. In the 20th century part of this range was rebuilt as an office. A taller building which still stands at the rear of the offices by the trackway to the quarry was perhaps a counting house (Building 8).'¹⁹

2.4 Architectural and Industrial Context: Greater Manchester Textile Mills

The key account of the textile industry in the Greater Manchester area is the volume written by Mike Williams and D.A. Farnie for Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit (GMAU) and the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) published in 1992. The book and related survey material provide an overview of the main textile districts and an account of the development of the industry from water powered rural sites to urban steam and electric powered mills. The survey in the 1980s was undertaken in response to the closure and demolition of textile mills; similar mill surveys took place in West Yorkshire and East Cheshire, also with publications by RCHME.

¹⁷ <https://www.fothergillgroup.com/history/>

¹⁸ <https://www.rochdaleonline.co.uk/news-features/2/news-headlines/96403/mill-fire-at-rock-nook-summit-littleborough>

¹⁹ Arrowsmith, p8

The mill heritage in Greater Manchester began with buildings relating to the woollen industry, with 17th century fulling mills and domestic weaving. The first mills were water-powered, such as Crimble Mill, Heywood or Styal Mill built by the Gregs in the 1790s. By the early 19th century, the availability of coal, imported cotton and new technology enabled the building of larger steam-powered cotton mills, built away from river valleys but next to a canal. The earliest surviving example is in Manchester in Ancoats (Murrays Old Mill of 1798), which demonstrates advances in building engineering and steam power for mechanised processes, using coal brought by the Rochdale Canal. Early steam-powered mills were not fire-proof, but built with timber beams on cast-iron columns; Rock Nook Mill is of this type. The combustible nature of cotton processing later led to changes in building design, with fire-resistant brick-vaulted floors built in mills.

Cotton production became part of the area's manufacturing base but the continuing woollen industry protected Rochdale's economy when cotton suffered sharp declines, during the American Civil War for example.

The external form and scale of 19th century cotton mills reflect the processes that took place within them. Cotton spinning was powered by steam engines, usually in a 2 or 3-storey internal engine house that was built transversely at one end of the multi-storey mill, with an adjacent boiler house and chimney. The engine house was separated from the rest of the mill by a substantial wall to which the power transmission was attached. From the fly wheel in the engine house, a vertical drive shaft ran the full height of the building, connected by gearing to horizontal line shafts that ran through the wall onto each floor via bearing boxes. These rotating line shafts were fitted with pulley wheels which drove leather belts connected to the machinery. Machinery rarely survives in cotton mills; boilers and steam engines were generally removed for scrap when mills converted to electricity. Evidence for power transmission can still be seen in mills in the form of cast-iron bearing boxes embedded in walls, particularly in the wall between the engine house and the mill, and in the bolting faces for line shafting on the cast-iron columns.

Rock Nook is not part of the first phase of steam-powered mills built before 1860, but is representative of the next phase of late 19th century development when there was a resurgence in the cotton industry during periods of economic growth. Multi-storey cotton mills built after 1860 were described in the GMAU/RCHME survey as 'typically both longer and wider than most early mills'.²⁰ Most of the later mills had four to six storeys. Efficient internal layouts to make the most of advances in machinery and power transmission were typical of the late 19th century mill and 'internal engine houses remained commonplace until the 1880s'. Single-storey ranges projecting from the mill for carding and other processing were also a feature of late 19th

²⁰ Williams and Farnie, p90

century mills. Mill complexes of this date often combined offices, warehouse and other functions on one site, within a defined boundary.

Early 19th century mills had rectangular mill floors arranged with a grid of cast-iron columns, designed to fit with the dimensions of the machinery. The columns supported timber beams, which were not fire-proof. By the 1870s 'almost all new cotton-spinning mills were fireproof' (ibid p101); to reduce risk of fire, these mills were built with brick jack-arched floors, on cast-iron columns. Some mills still had timber beams; only one late example of a 'slow-burn' timber mill floor is known in the area, at Crest Mill, Rochdale. Rock Nook Mill was apparently not built as a fire-proof mill with brick vaulted floors, but with beams and columns, so was not up to date or innovative. By the 1890s, rolled iron or steel beams enabled wider spaces between columns, and reinforced concrete gradually replaced brick for floors in the early 1900s.

Externally, windows became larger towards the end of the 19th century, as construction methods improved and glass was cheaper. Some architectural expression of the owner's pride and success, such as an embellished entrance, stair tower or tower for the water tank (needed to supply sprinklers) became more common, compared with plainer earlier mills. By the late 19th century, some architectural firms were specialising in mills, with firms such as Stott and Sons of Oldham and Bradshaw Gass and Hope of Bolton responsible for some notable mill designs. In Oldham, Bolton, Wigan and Manchester brick was the usual material, but sandstone remained the norm in the Pennines, particularly on sites close to a canal where transport was cheap. The Italianate style became popular for mill design due to its association with commerce. Roofs were laid with slate and arranged with transverse ridges and valleys, as at Rock Nook.

The large mills of the early 20th century incorporated new features to reflect advances in technology, both in manufacturing processes and in building construction; concrete and steel allowed for larger floor plates with more space for machinery, larger windows and improved fire-proofing. Power was provided by electricity instead of steam, so engines, boiler houses and chimneys were no longer needed. Pitched roofs were replaced by flat roofs finished in asphalt, some designed to hold water as a reservoir. Showy features such as water towers and chimneys carried the name of the firm and were local landmarks; the 1913 stair tower on the additions south of the mill is a typical example of this.

A mill complex also required storage facilities for storing raw materials and finished goods, fuel storage, a mechanics workshop for the millwrights to repair machinery, offices for administration and welfare facilities for the workers, which were initially very basic. It is known that Harvey and Fothergill were committed to provision of welfare facilities for their workers, but it has not been possible to assess the survival of

these amenities in the mill due to the mill's poor condition; they provided recreation facilities nearby such as the cricket pitch and pavilion (fire damaged). At many early mills, the owner's house was nearby, but by the late 19th century, there was a trend for owners to live further away; the house at Sladen Wood was initially the home of Gordon Harvey. At Rock Nook there are still terraces of housing on Todmorden Road, but Sladen Terrace above and to the east has been demolished.

The recent 2017 mills survey undertaken by the University of Salford for Historic England updated the findings of the 1992 mills survey; almost half the mills that existed in 1992 have since been demolished. In the Greater Manchester region there were 972 mills in the 1980s, and by 2017 there were 540, a 44% rate of loss.

In Rochdale there were 229 mills recorded in 1992, but only 102 mills had survived by the time of the mills survey in 2017, a rate of loss of 48%. 12 of the extant mills are listed buildings. Of the surviving mills in Rochdale, 25.4% have been assessed as 'at risk'. Within the boundary of Rock Nook Conservation Area, three mills survive: Sladen Wood Mill, Green Vale and Rock Nook, with the site of the demolished Pike House Mill to the south and the site of Grove dyeworks to the west.

3.0 DESCRIPTIONS OF ROCK NOOK MILL & OTHER BUILDINGS

3.1 Introduction

This section describes Rock Nook Mill, including the multi-storey spinning mill and later weaving sheds to the south. It also covers other structures which are either ancillary to the mill or built for other industrial purposes such as the quarry or the former fire clay works to the north. Green Vale mill is not covered.

Rock Nook mill comprises six main elements, built in different phases. For convenience, the buildings are numbered in the following descriptions and marked on the aerial photograph below. Only buildings 1 and 2 are in the ownership of Gay O'Gara Properties (Ireland) Ltd; the others are in separate ownership but are included here to aid an understanding of the complex.

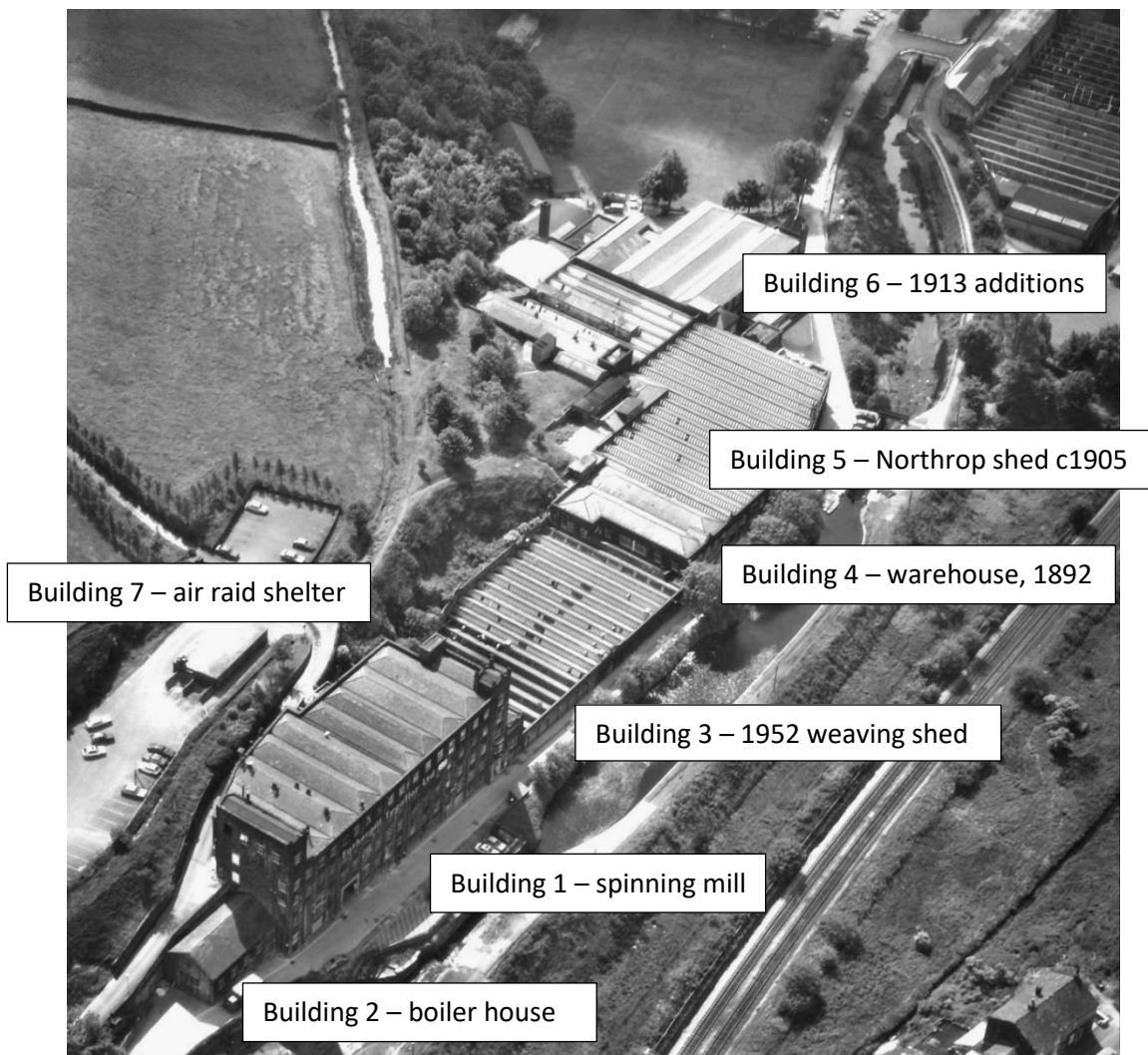


Fig.9: the mill in the 1980s from the north-west (courtesy of GMAAS)

- Building 1: spinning mill c1879-1898
- Building 2: boiler house, c1890s
- Building 3: weaving shed, rebuilt 1952
- Building 4: warehouse, 1892 (datestone)
- Building 5: Northrop weaving shed, c1905
- Building 6: 1913 south additions (datestone)
- Building 7 – WW2 air raid shelter

3.2 The Mill (Building 1)

The mill was last used for manufacturing in the late 20th century, and has since been vacant. A fire caused serious damage to the roof and upper floors in 2015. The interior is not safe for access, although there are photographs taken by urban adventurers available on the web which illustrate the condition and character of parts of the interiors, before and after the fire.

The 4 to 5-storey mill is constructed of sandstone. Ashlar is used for architectural features but most of the elevations are faced in coursed rock-faced stone. The principal elevation faces west towards the canal and is 16-bays long, excluding the flanking towers; the elevation is on one plane and has a unified appearance although the main part of the mill is of two main phases (c1879 south 7 bays and c1887 north 9 bays) The flanking towers were added in 1898. The mill is sited on a slope with the ground falling from north to south so that the elevation is taller towards the south (5-storey) than to the north (4-storey).

The position of the engine house is expressed by a wide semi-circular arched opening towards the north end of the elevation, blocked with 20th century infill masonry and glazing. The engine house occupies three bays of the main mill, with the six upper floor windows also with arched heads. The north bay of the mill extends one storey above the eaves of the rest of the mill, in the form of full-width 'tower' which acts as a visual 'book-end' to the north end of the mill. There is a straight joint between the tower bay and the engine house visible on the west elevation, indicating that the tower was added. The tower also has arched windows of a similar design to the floors over the engine house, to the west front and the upper floor of the north return. The roof of the tower's west front is in the form of pedimented gable with pilasters and corner finials, in a simple classical style. The datestone in the pediment is inscribed EXTENDED/1898.



Fig.10: the north end of the mill from the west, with 1898 tower to the left and engine house position marked by the wide arched opening

South of the engine house there is an inserted square headed opening that occupies two bays. Above and to the south of this all the windows are plain flat-headed openings with 9-pane windows with hopper lights. A wider pier between windows in bays 7 and 8 (numbered from south to north) marks a break between the c1879 and c1887 construction phases. Bay 4 from the south is a former loading bay, expressed architecturally by rusticated quoins from the ground to 3rd floor and by the tall openings with worn stone sills, historically with taking-in doors, but now glazed. This bay and the adjoining bay to the north (bay 5) have wide doorways with rusticated quoins to the ground floor.

The tower bay to the south end of the mill appears to have been altered, perhaps in the early 20th century, with an ashlar-faced entrance projecting from the elevation; this has a doorway to the left and a tall window to the right. The first floor of this end bay has a canted stone oriel window and arched windows to each floor above (of c1898). Similar to the north tower, this south addition is topped with a tower with a pedimented gable, finials and corner pilasters, but the structure only rises above the corner and has no date stone. The character of the entrance and oriel express this as the location for the mill offices.



Fig.11: the south of the mill from the west with former loading bay to bay 5 and office entrance to right (in 1898 tower)



Fig.12: detail of quoins to ground floor blocked doors. Fig.13: offices, south of mill

The form and position of the 3-storey office built against the south end of the mill suggests that it may be on the site of a former engine house to the weaving sheds built in c1852. The office is not extant in a photograph dated c1900 (Fig.6) but is shown on the c1920 image (Fig.7); its appearance and style indicate it was built in the early 20th century. The office exterior is faced in stone with the roof behind a parapet, with an office entrance from the front, with a large tripartite window (boarded) to the first floor and a row of smaller windows to the top floor. The facing stone to the upper floor and parapet of the south side elevation has fallen away,

exposing the inner skin of brickwork. The structure has a modern sheet roof and brick east wall.



Fig.14: south-east corner of mill from the east, with 3-storey office to left

The tower bay to the south (added c1898) has a shallower depth than the rest of the mill with 5 openings to each floor on the south elevation; the rear (east) part of this bay is carried above the eaves in the form of a small tower, but without the embellishment used for the front north and south tower features. The rear east wall is plain brick and all windows are blocked with masonry (probably contains a hoist).

The rear, east elevation of the mill faces the hillside into which it is built, with a more complex footprint in response to the topography of the former quarry and the lane. At the north end of the mill, the later phase is built against the hillside with only the upper two floors overlooking the lane. The tower to the north bay forms a feature in views of the mill. Straight joints in the masonry of the east elevation may indicate breaks in phasing. Openings are plain and there is no architectural detailing to the rear. The workers' entrance was via the doorway facing the lane on the north elevation,²¹ with a taking-in door above (both infilled).

²¹ Pers comm Bernard Pratt, Littleborough History Centre, Feb 2020



Fig.15: rear, east elevation from the south-east



Fig.16: the north tower from the east

Prior to the fire the mill had a roof arranged in 8 transverse hipped roofs covered in Welsh slate, originally with lead-lined gutters behind parapets, shown in the 1980s

aerial view. The roofs are fairly intact to the north end of the mill, but have been lost to the south.

The interiors are not accessible but photographs in online collections such as www.derelictplaces.co.uk record parts of the mill, including in 2015 prior to the 2017 fire. These appear to show that the engine house is still a large full-height space, with walls part-lined with glazed brick.²² Upper floors have been altered with modern linings, but where these have been partially removed cast-iron columns are visible, also visible in views from the lane to the east into the upper floor. It is not possible to comment on the floor or roof construction, but the mill does not appear to have been built with 'fire-proof' floors.

3.2 Boiler House (Building 2)

The boiler house adjoins the north gable elevation of the mill, aligned north-south. This dates from c1898, and was built at the same time or shortly after the north tower of the mill which it abuts. The single-storey structure is built of coursed stone, with a pitched roof laid (the slates are missing) with coped verges and gutters on plain stone corbels. There is a large door opening to the north gable-end, which appears to be a later alteration with a cement surround and later infill, above is a circular opening, probably a vent. The building is built against a retaining wall to the lane to the east and there are only windows to the west elevation, the four openings are semi-circular headed with plain ashlar details.



Fig. 17: the boiler house at the north end of the mill

²² <https://www.derelictplaces.co.uk/main/industrial-sites/31260-rock-nook-mill-littleborough-june-2015-a.html#.Xl0w1m52uhd> and <https://theroamingrenegades.com/revisiting-fothergills-rock-nook-urbex/>

Inside, the walls are faced in red brick. The 4-bay roof structure is intact with king-post trusses and purlins. The interior was not accessible and these features were observed from outside the building.

3.3 Buildings 3, 4, 5 and 6

South of the multi-storey mill lie a series of weaving sheds and other processing buildings. These are outwith the ownership of the client and are not described in detail. The northerly weaving shed (Building 3) was rebuilt in 1952 as recorded on a stone plaque on the outer wall; this single storey range with north-light roofs is on the site of the smaller weaving shed built here in the 1850s, the earliest manufacturing building at Rock Nook Mill. The weaving shed has a blind outer wall of coursed stone, with downpipes and one or two later openings.



Fig.18: Building 3 weaving shed, rebuilt 1952, from the south

Building 4 is a 2-storey warehouse, built in 1892, as recorded on a datestone to a pedimented section of the parapet. This has transverse hipped roofs as on the multi-storey mill. The east elevation has a ground floor single entrance (roller shutter), a first floor taking-in door and large modern windows facing onto the lane.

To the south is the Northrop shed of c1905, a 2-storey structure with north-lights behind a parapet wall. All the windows are modern PVCu, with roller shutters and metal fire escapes and the roofs have been replaced.

At the south end of the site is a complex of manufacturing buildings built in 1913 for Fothergill and Harvey, as recorded on a datestone on the stair tower. These are faced in coursed stone, with modern PVCu windows and roller shutter doors. The buildings are all in use and in separate ownership.



Fig.19: Building 4: warehouse built 1892, from the south



Fig.20: view onto roofs of Buildings 3, 4 and 5, from the north-east



Fig.21: Building 6: 1913 additions to the mill, at south end of complex

3.4 Building 7: air raid shelter

In the car park, above and to the east of the mill is a heavily constructed brick single-storey structure. This is shown on Aerofilms photographs dating from the mid 20th century (Littleborough History Centre) and is interpreted as an air raid shelter for the mill workers. The red brick is laid in English bond and the low-pitched roof is of reinforced concrete.



Fig.22: Building 7 – air raid shelter to east of the mill

3.5 Building 8 - Summit Quarry building

North of the mill and accessed via the narrow track past Prospect House is a small 2-storey structure built against the steep hillside. This building is first shown on the OS map surveyed in 1891, as part of a larger complex. The east elevation is single-storey (the upper floor) and faces onto the track to the quarry. The west elevation is 2-storey and faces the rear of the Fothergill Engineered Fabrics offices (seen in views across the canal from the west). The structure is built of coursed sandstone with a slate roof and simple rectangular openings, but the south gable-end has been rebuilt in red brick after part of the west end was demolished. Historic photographs show chimneys and the building extending further to the south; the upper floor may have served as an office or counting house for Summit Quarry.



Fig.23: Summit Quarry building from the east

3.6 Building 9 – former cottages and stables

On the east side of the canal, close to Punch Bowl Bridge is a single-storey structure built of watershot sandstone. This building is first shown on the OS map surveyed in 1891 (Fig.3); the north part of the structure is thought to have been a stable for John Tetlow's fire clay works, with a pair of cottages to the south end. The building has been altered with doorways added to the south gable-end and former doorways on the west elevation have been infilled, the chimneys that appear on historic photographs removed and a large doorway and windows inserted into the south gable-end. Its original appearance is shown on photographs at Littleborough History

Centre. A flight of historic stone stairs runs against the north gable-end, probably to access a doorway to the former hay loft. Above and to the east of this building is Prospect House.

The building appears to be vacant, but was last in manufacturing or business use. The interior has not been assessed.



Fig.24: former stables and cottages, east of Punch Bowl Bridge



Fig.25: former stables and cottages from the north-west

3.7 Building 10 -Prospect House

Prospect House was built for John Tetlow, owner of the fire clay works, in c.1870. It is built into the hillside, with the 2-storey entrance elevation facing north towards the site of Tetlow's works and a 3-storey elevation to the west. The house has a rectangular plan and a hipped slate roof. Elevations are faced in cementitious render, above a sandstone retaining wall; historic photographs (at Littleborough History Centre) show it with walls of brick or another material, possibly made of fire clay. All windows and the lean-to extension to the north are modern.



Fig.26: Prospect House and the former stable and cottages, from the west



Fig.27: Prospect House from the north-east

3.8 Building 11 - Fothergill Engineered Fabrics Ltd Offices

To the north of Rock Nook Mill and on the east side of the access road is a range of linear buildings, built in the late 19th century, probably for Summit Quarry. The long range to the north end has been refurbished for offices with new fenestration, render and a slate roof.



Fig.28: Fothergill Engineered Fabric Ltd offices, from the north

The 2-storey range to the south is constructed of coursed stone, with signs of rebuilding, blocked openings and a wide doorway to the north of the west elevation. The building interior has not been assessed. This may have been a workshop associated with Summit Quarry, built in the late 19th century.



Fig.29: stone workshop to south of offices, fro the east

3.9 Setting and Rock Nook Conservation Area

The NPPF defines setting as 'the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve'. The setting of Rock Nook Mill is provided by the valley landscape, with the transportation infrastructure overlying the natural Pennine landscape. This is a palimpsest, with many layers of history expressed in the features created between the end of the 18th century and the early 20th century.

The conservation area was designated in 2006 by Rochdale Council, to protect the distinctive character and appearance of this area. The Council's leaflet states that 'Rock Nook is an exciting and spectacular place where mills, cottages, locks, tunnels and bridges are set in a striking moorland valley'.

The conservation area contains a dramatic sequence of views created by the historic infrastructure of the roads, canal and railway and the industrial sites. The valley topography enables good views across the valley from Todmorden Road to the east, towards Rock Nook Mill, the buildings relating to Summit Quarry and Tetlow's buildings associated with his fire-clay works. The mill is a key element in the landscape, and the dominating feature on the east side of the valley. The 1898 towers that 'book-end' the mill are eye-catching features in views from the main road.



Fig.30: Rock Nook Mill seen from Todmorden Road over the railway line and Roch aqueduct

Historic images from the 19th century show an almost tree-less landscape, enabling clear views of the quarry face in Summit Quarry, the mills and infrastructure. In contrast, the valley is now well-wooded with trees that are either self-set or were planted; there is some attractive shrub and tree planting by Fothergill & Harvey in the vicinity of the mill and more recent amenity tree planting in Summit Quarry.



Fig.31: shrub planting frames views of the north end of Rock Nook Mill

The recreational facilities provided by Fothergill & Harvey for their workers are also part of the setting of the mills and other industrial sites, particularly the former cricket ground and the bowling green. The cricket pitch is no longer used and is in poor condition and the pavilion has been subject to arson.



Fig.32: remains of cricket pavilion from the west

4.0 SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 The concept of significance

Significance is defined in the NPPF (*National Planning Policy Framework, 2018*) as the 'value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from the heritage asset's physical presence but also from its setting'.

Understanding significance is a key principle for managing change to heritage assets, and is embedded within the NPPF; a key objective of government policy is 'the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation ...' (NPPF para.192). Historic England published guidance on *Statements of Heritage Significance* in 2019, advising on the process of assessing significance to address the NPPF requirements. This values-based framework was previously introduced by Historic England in 2008 (*Conservation Principles*). Significance can be assessed using four main values or interests; archaeological, historical, architectural and artistic. Intangible values such as communal interests may also be relevant.

Measuring the level of significance is helpful when making decisions about heritage and balancing significance against other public benefits. The NPPF advises that the more important the heritage asset the greater weight should be given to its conservation (para. 193). Measuring significance relies on a combination of comparative analysis, an understanding of the building and site's development, history and the level of alteration or loss. Heritage significance can be measured in a scale of levels:

- **Exceptional/Highest** – an asset important at the highest national or international levels, including Grade I listed buildings and landscapes, our most important scheduled monuments and World Heritage Sites. The NPPF advises that substantial harm should be wholly exceptional.
- **High** – a designated asset important at a national level, including Grade II and II* listed buildings and some conservation areas. May also include non-designated archaeology of national importance. The NPPF advises that substantial harm should be exceptional.
- **Medium** – usually an undesignated asset, important at a local to regional level, including local list (non-statutory) buildings and unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to a conservation area. Buildings, landscapes

and structures in this category should be retained where possible, although there is usually scope for adaptation.

- **Low** – structure or feature of very limited heritage or cultural value. May include insignificant interventions to listed buildings, and modest buildings that do not contribute positively to a conservation area. The removal or adaptation of structures in this category is usually acceptable where the work will enhance a related heritage asset.
- **Negligible** – structure or feature of no heritage value and structures or features that may harm the value of a heritage asset. Removal of such features can be considered, taking account of setting and opportunities for enhancement.

4.2 Significance of Rock Nook Mill

Rock Nook Mill is a complex of textile mill buildings which are not designated but contribute to the character of the conservation area. The Rock Nook conservation area as a whole has high significance as a good example of a multi-phase industrial area that developed around the canal. The significance of individual buildings is summarised below.

The mill makes a very positive contribution to the conservation area, but it is not designated and its level of significance is at a medium to high level. It is a good example of a Pennine mill combining spinning and weaving on one site, developed in the second half of the 19th century and has a particularly distinctive appearance due to the towers at either end. Despite the 2015 fire and various alterations to the buildings, the complex is legible as a coherent whole. However it is a fairly late example of a textile mill and is missing its chimney, which reduces its overall significance. The mill is one of three extant mills in the conservation area and part of the overall industrial landscape.

Following the methodology for assessment of heritage significance set out in Historic England's Conservation Principles and using terms used in the NPPF, the mill complex is considered to have the following heritage values or interests.

Historical Value

The buildings which form the mill have historical value as a good example of a steam-powered textile mill built in phases from the 1850s to 1913, by a prominent local manufacturer, including a multi-storey mill and weaving sheds. The mill complex reflects the development and expansion of the textile industry in the late 19th and early 20th century but not all of the power plant is intact (the chimney is

missing). The site has been altered and adapted, but the different elements are still legible and express the history of the site and the expansion of the company.

The association with Fothergill & Harvey contributes to the historical significance of Rock Nook. Gordon Harvey was an important local figure who was MP for Rochdale in the early 1900s, and is important for his active concern about welfare standards for workers, and the quality of the mill environment and setting.

The mill has high significance for historical values.

Archaeological Value

Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service were consulted about this site. The Historic Environment Record (HER) holds some records for the mill; there is no measured survey but a set of aerial photographs were taken for the GMAU/RCHME Manchester mills survey in the 1980s.

The Desk Based Assessment by Dr Pete Arrowsmith should be referred to for a detailed assessment of archaeological potential of Rock Nook Mill and other sites and buildings within the study area.

Architectural Value

The multi-storey mill is the dominant element in the landscape and the towers make this mill a dramatic local landmark. The main external mill features are the outer stone-faced walls, the regular fenestration, stone parapets, the tower details and the integral engine house which is on main elevation. However, the level of architectural significance is reduced as the mill is a relatively late example in Greater Manchester and does not contain the most up to date structural engineering for the date. The name of the architect is not known. The mill windows are likely to be replacements for the originals, and are probably of early 20th century date; the 9-pane windows are a consistent type. The interior has not been assessed, but is not known to contain innovative mill architecture or engineering.

The mill's west elevation and end towers have high value in the landscape, but the east elevation is of no more than low to medium value. As a whole, the mill has medium architectural value.

Communal and Intangible values

The mill is likely to have communal significance as a workplace for many local people and as the dominant feature at Rock Nook; this value may be negative, neutral or positive depending on people's experience and in relation to the current state of the mill. This aspect has not been researched for this report.

4.3 Schedule of Significance

The table below summarises levels of significance for all buildings on the site. See photograph in Fig.9 for building locations.

<i>Building Number</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Significance Level</i>	<i>Contribution to Rock Nook CA</i>
12. Rock Nook Mill	c1879-98	High for historical and landscape value. Medium for architectural value.	Very positive
13. Boiler House	C1890s	Medium significance	Positive
14. Weaving shed	Rebuilt 1952	Medium	Positive
15. Warehouse	1892	Medium	Positive
16. Northrop shed	1902	Medium significance	Positive
17. 1913 additions	1913	Low to medium significance	Positive
18. Air raid shelter	1939-1945	Medium for historical value only	positive
19. Summit Quarry building	Late C19	Low	Positive
20. Former stable and cottages	c1870	Medium	Positive
21. Prospect House	c1870	Medium	Positive
22. Fothergill offices and workshop	Late C19	Low	Neutral

Fig.33: schedule of significance

4.4 Designations & Rock Nook Conservation Area

Rock Nook Conservation Area was first designated in 2006, including the mills, canal, railway tunnel and housing. A map of the boundary is in Appendix 1. A conservation area appraisal has not been published by Rochdale Council, but an assessment was compiled at the time the conservation area was designated in 2006, and is available from the Council. The Council have also produced a leaflet to explain its importance; this states that 'Rock Nook is an exciting and spectacular place where mills, cottages, locks, tunnels and bridges are set in a striking moorland valley'.

There are several listed structures in the conservation area, but none within the study area or on land owned by the client; the canal lock and bridge at Pike House Mill, the Summit Tunnel portal and the aqueduct for the Roch over the railway are listed Grade II. These share a valley setting that includes the canal and the mills. Non-

designated structures can make a positive contribution, be neutral or have a negative impact on a conservation area. A summary of the contribution made by the non-designated buildings is set out in the table above. Rock Nook makes a very positive contribution to the conservation area's character and significance. Some buildings make a positive contribution for their historical value, even though they have been altered or have low architectural interest, such as the air raid shelter. Building 22 has been altered to the extent that it is not legible and is therefore neutral.

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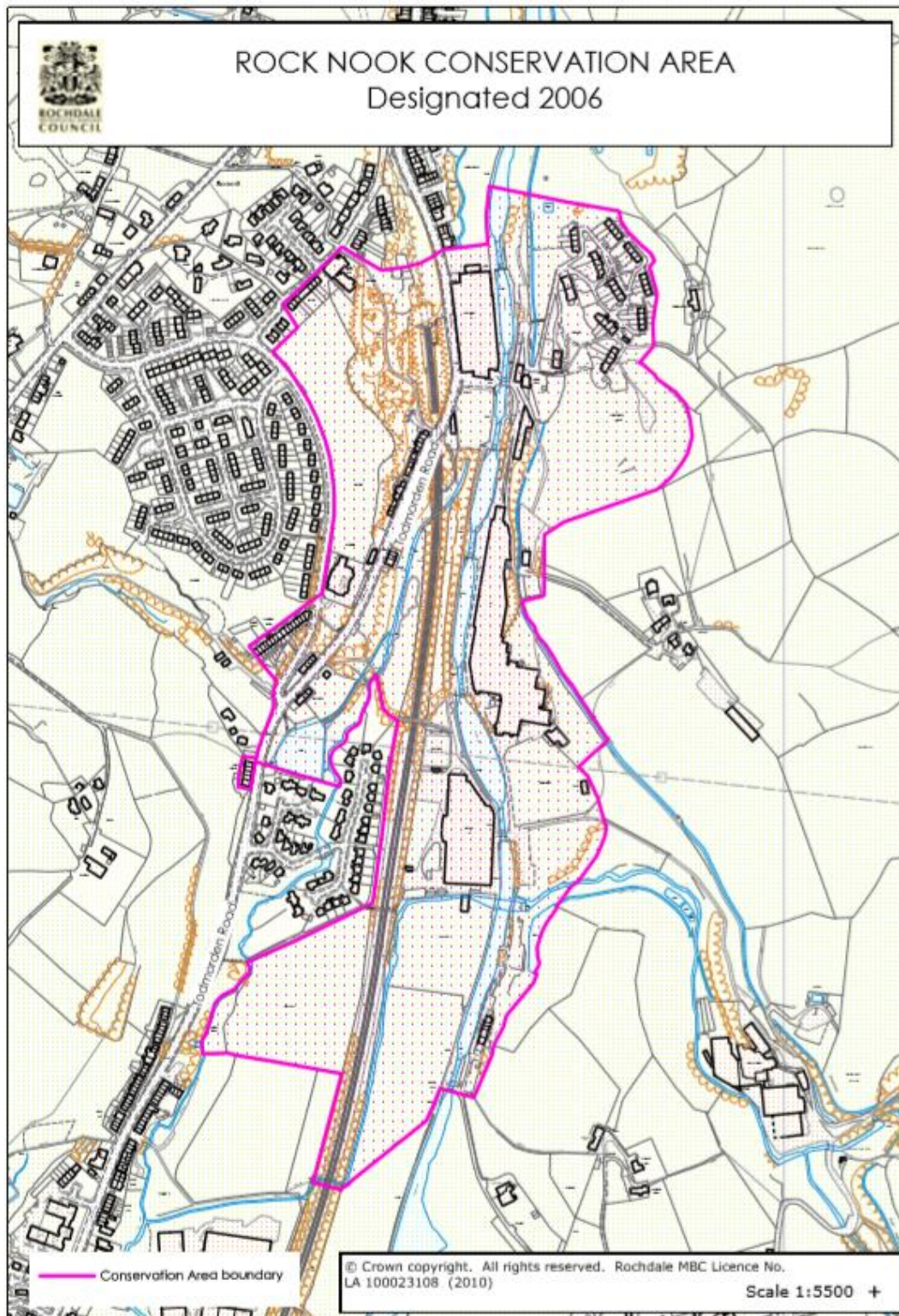
Websites

Rochdale Council, Rock Conservation Area leaflet, nd

Touchstones, Rochdale (historic photographs, maps etc)

<https://link4life.org/online-services/touchstones-online-collections>

Appendix 1: Rock Nook Conservation Area (Rochdale Council)



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