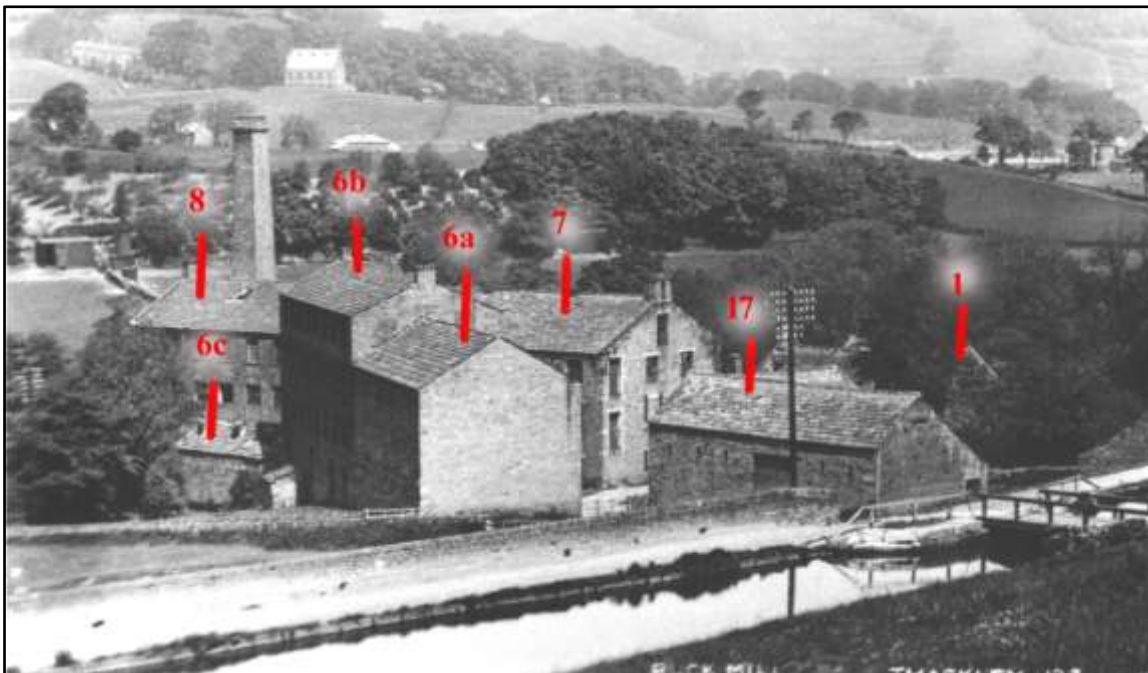


## Buck Mill, Thackley: a Walkover Survey, 2020

The Buck Mill site in Thackley lies at the bottom of Buck Mill Lane on land between the Leeds Liverpool canal and the River Aire at Grid Reference SE 17000 39170. The site contains the remains of a mixture of industrial, farming and domestic buildings. The function of the larger buildings: (1, Buck Mill House; 3, Stables; 6, Warehouse; 7, Corn Mill; 8, Fulling Mill; 9, Boiler House; 10, Chimney; 12, Long Barn; 16, Upper Barn; 17, Lower Barn; 18, Goit) has been determined by researching archival documents and other printed sources. The function of the smaller buildings: (5, Engine House; 13/14, Workshops; 15, Smithy; 31, Cowshed; 33, Piggery) is mainly conjectural, but guided by references in the printed sources.

In February 2020 a walkover survey was carried out on the Buck Mill site. There had been mills of various types on the site for several hundred years, but they had gradually fallen into decline and the buildings were eventually demolished in the early twentieth century. Today little remains of the buildings but with diligence their outlines can be determined.

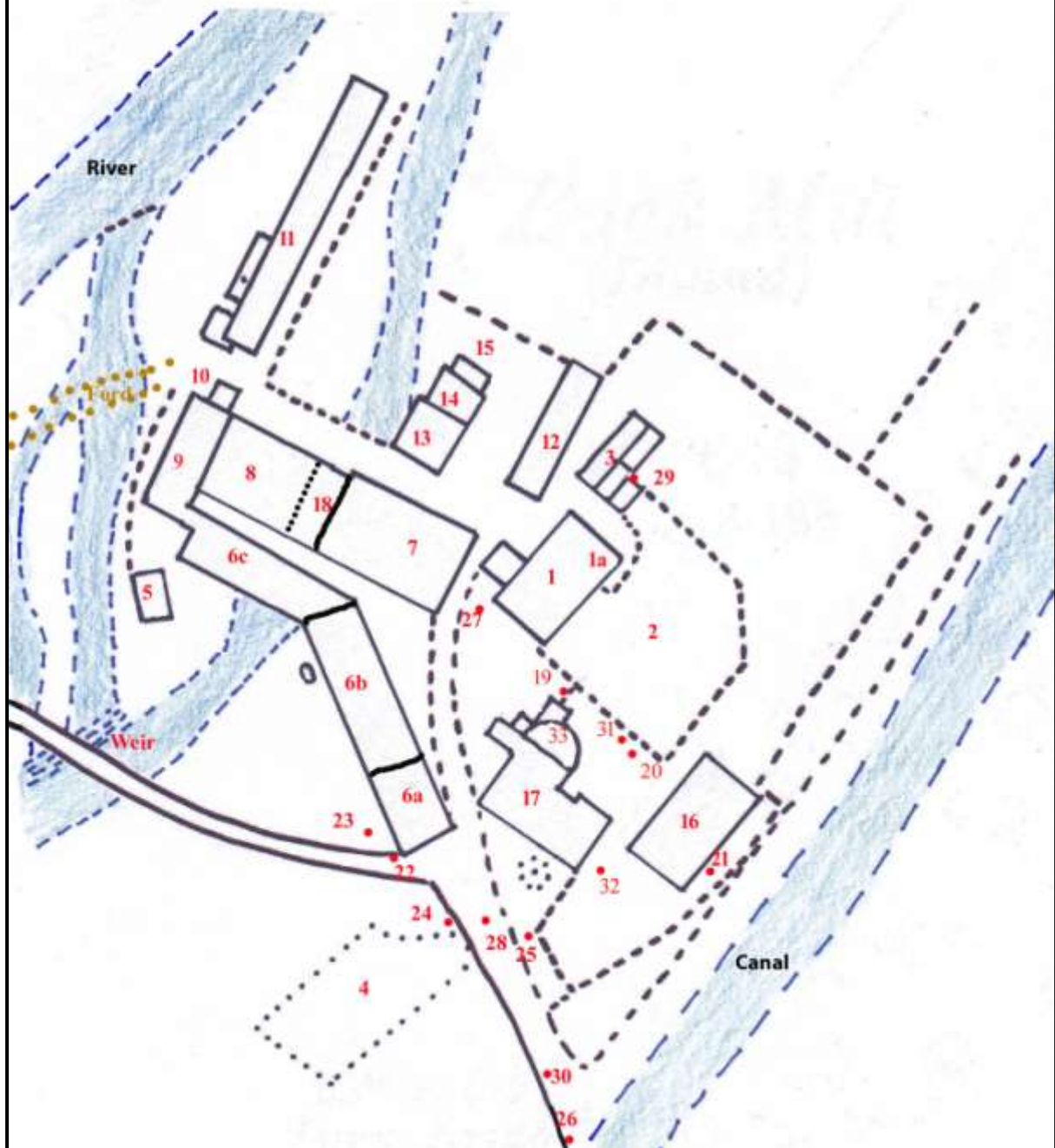
The tumbled and dispersed nature of the fallen masonry makes it extremely difficult to ascertain, with accuracy, the exact lines of the walls. Great care was taken to establish the true outlines of the buildings but it is inevitable that there may be some discrepancies



View of Buck Mill Showing Major Buildings

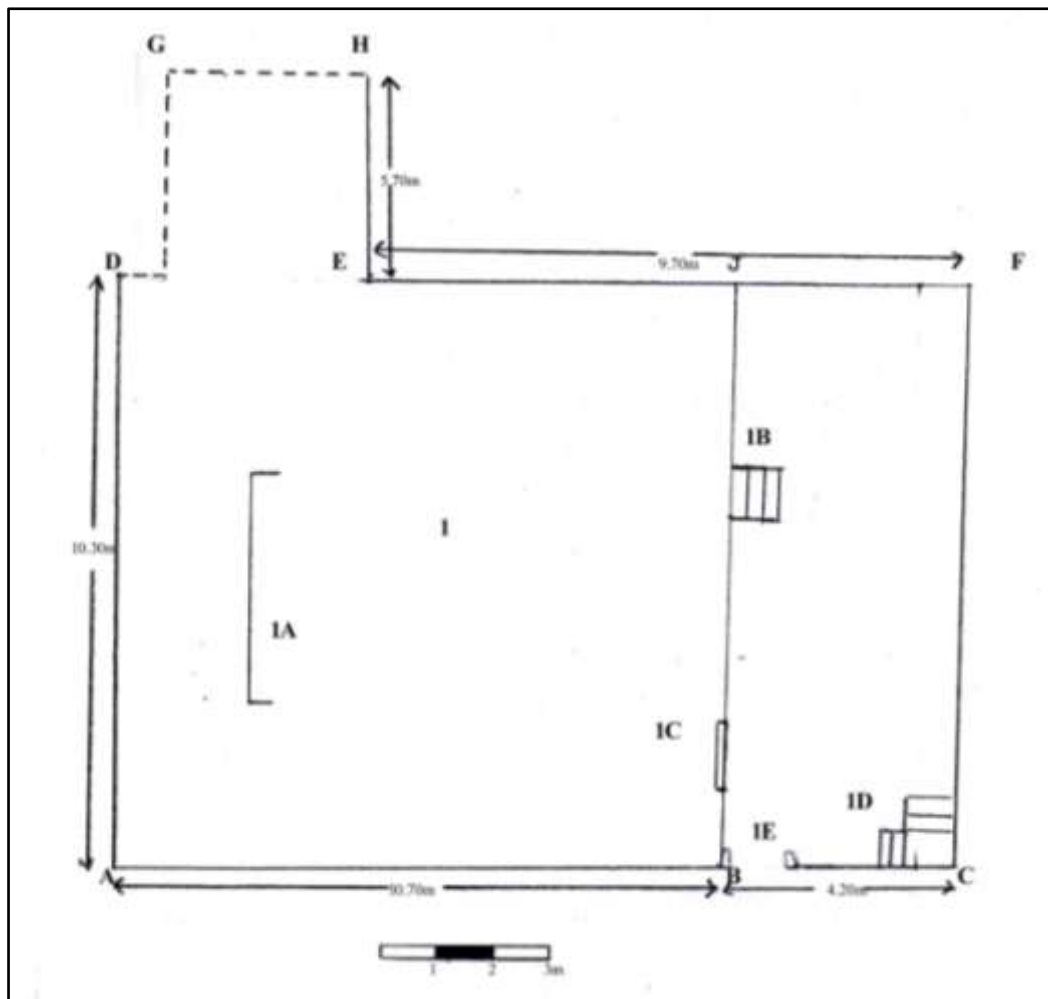
1	Buck Mill House	7	Corn Mill
6a	Warehouse	8	Fulling/Scribbling Mill
6b	Warehouse	17	Lower Barn
6c	Warehouse		

- |                           |                |               |
|---------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1 Buck Mill House         | 12 Long Barn   | 23 Well       |
| 2 Garden/Orchard          | 13 Workshop    | 24 Gatepost   |
| 3 Stables                 | 14 Workshop    | 25 Gatepost   |
| 4 Reservoir               | 15 Smithy      | 26 Gatepost   |
| 5 Engine House            | 16 Upper Barn  | 27 Cobbles    |
| 6 Warehouses              | 17 Lower Barn  | 28 Cart Track |
| 7 Cornmill                | 18 Goit        | 29 Gatepost   |
| 8 Fulling/Scribbling Mill | 19 Gateposts   | 30 Footpath   |
| 9 Boiler House            | 20 Stone Slabs | 31 Cowshed    |
| 10 Chimney                | 21 Gatepost    | 32 Well       |
| 11 Cottages               | 22 Gatepost    | 33 Piggery    |



Plan of the Buck Mill Area

## Building 1, Buck Mill House



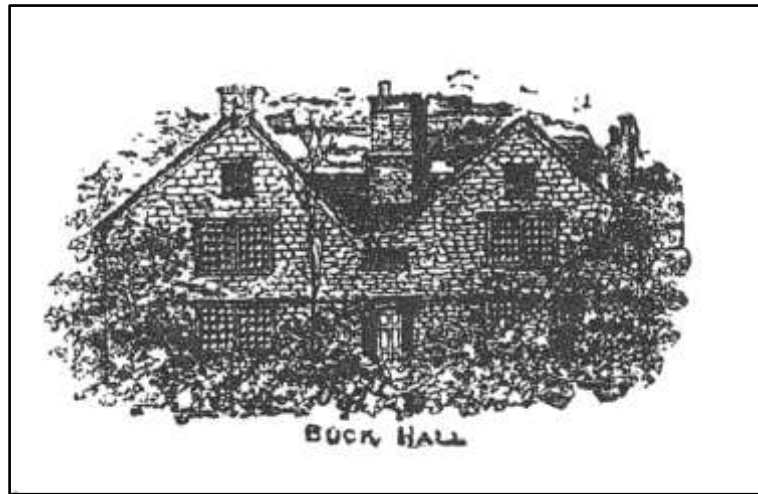
A SE17014 39169  
D SE 17009 39178

C SE 17026 39190  
F SE 17018 39183

Buck Mill House. The house shows signs of being extended at some time. The area bounded by B C FJ is the extended area. There is a quantity of more modern bricks marked with the letter WW which indicates they were made at the Manor Potteries, Eccleshill. Owned by William Woodhead the pottery ran from 1837 to 1912. In this area there is a stone window sill, marked 1C, 1.23m wide by 37cm deep, with marks for a mullion, which looks out into the area BCFJ. The wall BF, in which the sill is built, is approximately 60cm wide, the same dimension as wall AB. The house has a good sized vaulted cellar with two entrances.



**Building 1, Buck Mill House continued**



Buck Mill House from *Rural Walks Around Bradford: v. To Otley Chevin*. Bradford Weekly Telegraph, 28 January 1890. There is also a description of the house by "Ben Marcato" in the Shipley Times and Express, 19 November 1915. (Non de plume of George Dalton, a local journalist)



1A Central Hearth



1B Cellar Entrance

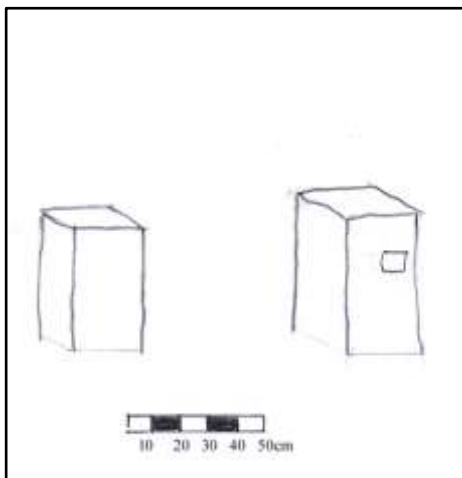


1C Window Sill



1D Cellar Entrance

## Building 1, Buck Mill House continued



1E, Gateposts



Inside the cellar

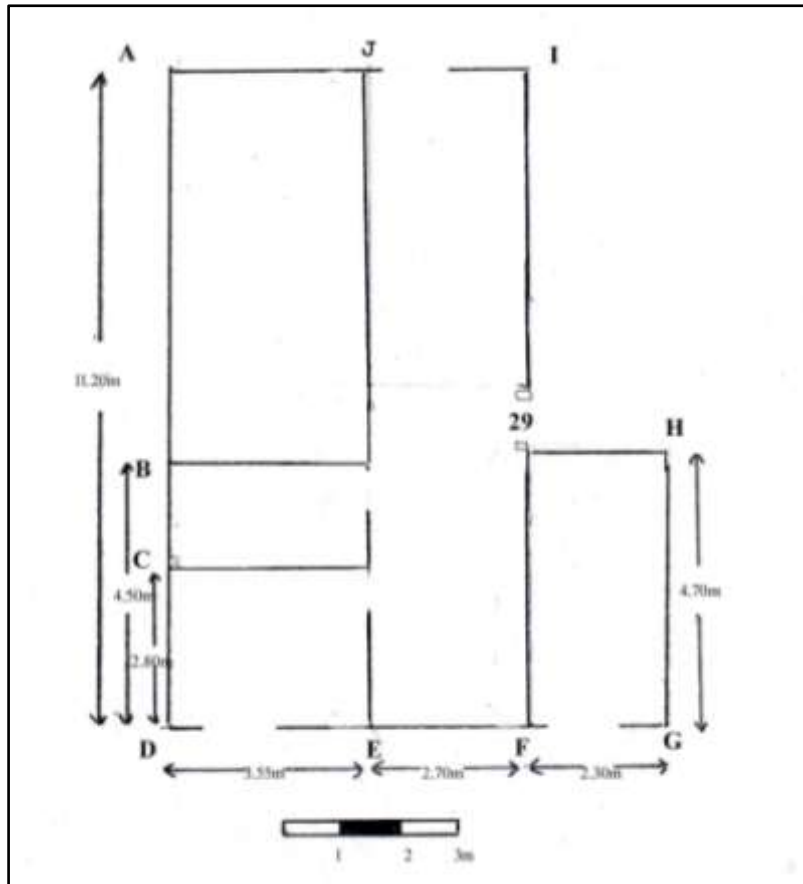


1F Brick from above the cellar

## Garden, Orchard

To the east of the house there was a walled garden or orchard. Parts of the wall have been removed and reused, the remaining wall probably reduced in height. It is now approximately 55cm high and 76cm wide. A more recent wall has been built reusing stone from the older wall. The new wall runs from north of the Lower barn in a north easterly direction to join up with the field boundary wall. It is 52cm high and 46cm wide.

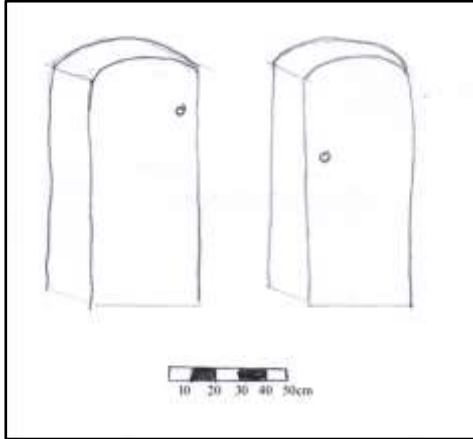
### Building 3, Stables



A	SE17029 39203	D	SE17021 39195
G	SE17025 39191	J	Se17034 39200

This block of buildings which appears to be stables has a confusing layout. The entrances are unclear owing to the tumbled masonry. There are a pair of posts at one entrance, marked 29, which are each 1.00 m high, 42cm wide and 19cm deep. There is another fallen post near entrance J which is 1.37m long and 15cm x 34cm wide.

**Building 3, Stables continued**



29 Entry Posts

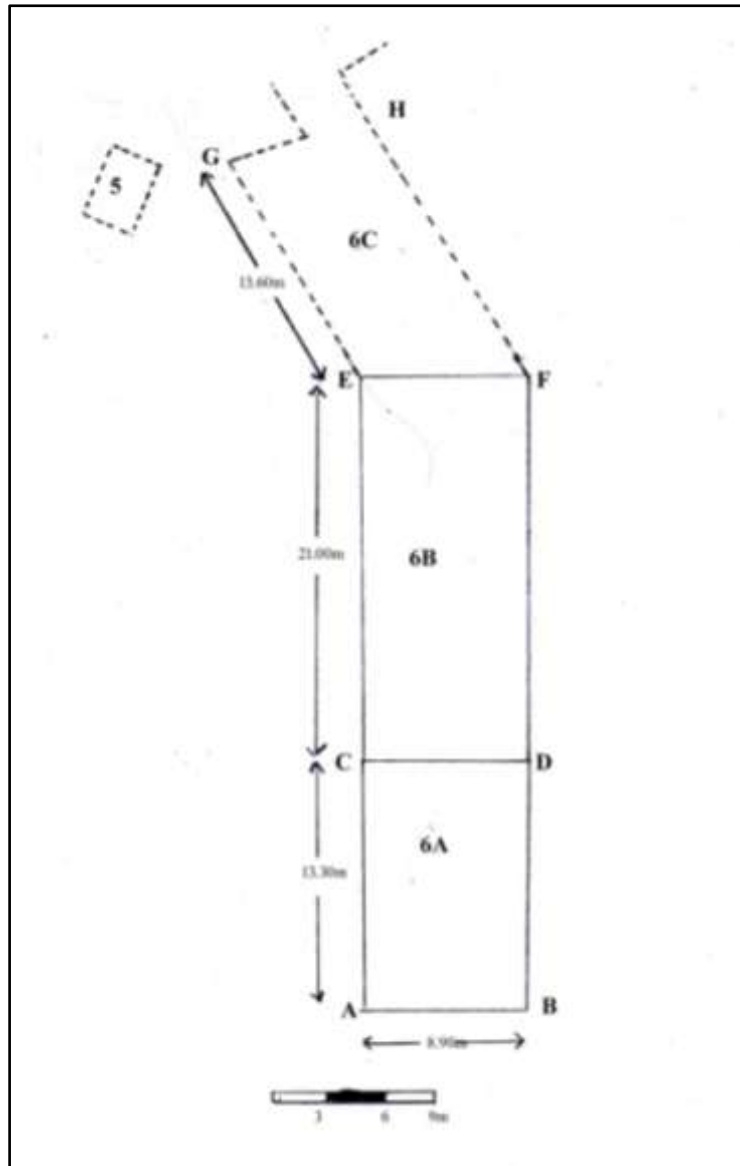


Fallen post near entrance J.



Overview of stables

**Building 5 Possible Engine House, 6A, 6B, 6C, Warehouses**



Building 5, Possible Engine House SE16955 39183

Building 6A, 6B, 6C.

Warehouses. 6A and 6B pre 1813.

6C pre 1867.

A SE16994 39141  
 D SE16988 39179  
 G SE 16960 39181

B SE17002 39144  
 E SE16896 39160  
 H SE16962 39188

C SE16988 39158  
 F 17002 39144

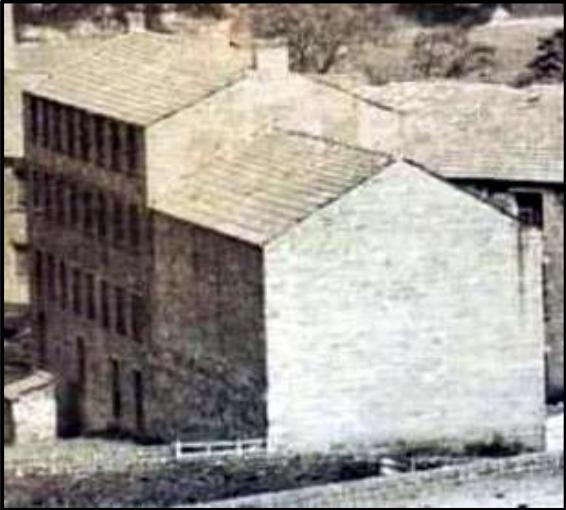




Dividing wall between Warehouses 6A / 6C



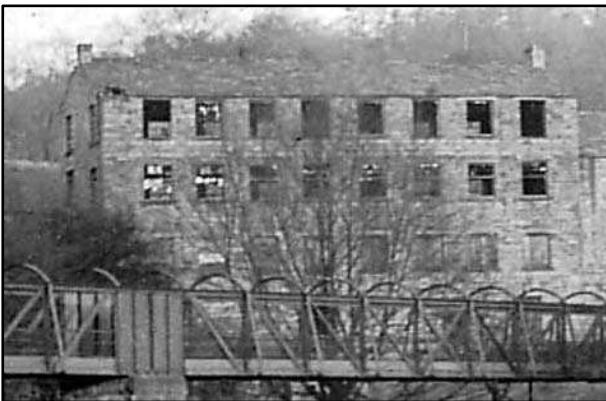
Interior west wall 6B



6A and 6B Warehouses



6A Warehouse

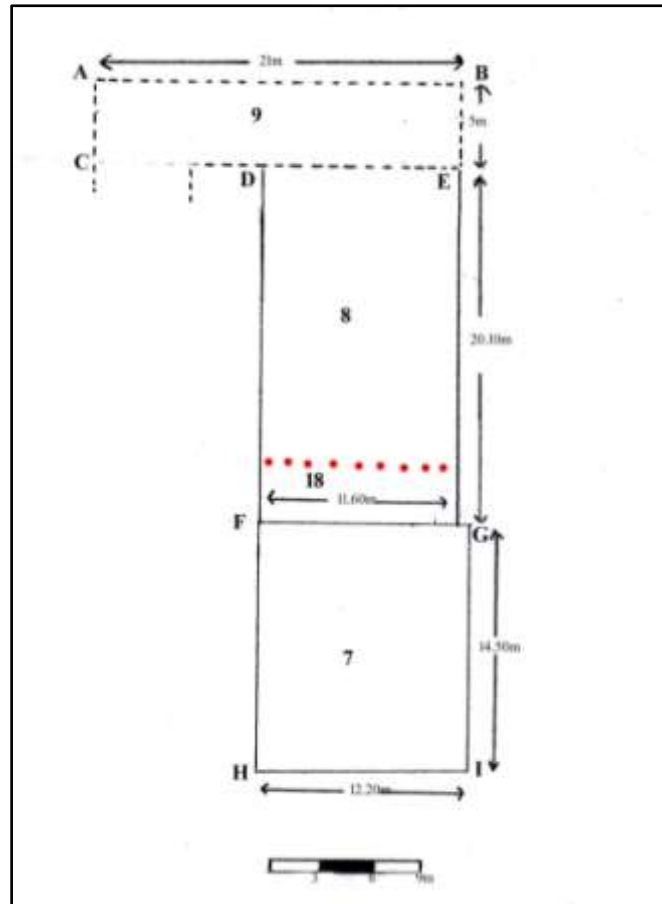


6B Warehouse



6C Warehouse

**Building, 7 Corn Mill, 8 Fulling Mill, 9 Boiler House, 18 Goat beneath building**



Building 7, Corn Mill rebuilt 1713

- |   |               |   |               |
|---|---------------|---|---------------|
| F | SE16984 39186 | G | SE16988 39198 |
| H | SE17000 39176 | I | SE17004 39187 |

Building 8, Fulling Mill with Scribbling Mill above. Built over goit.

- |   |               |   |               |
|---|---------------|---|---------------|
| D | SE16982 39195 | E | SE16971 39208 |
| F | SE16984 39186 | G | SE16988 39198 |

Building 9, Boiler Room with Drying Room over

- |   |                |   |               |
|---|----------------|---|---------------|
| A | SE16954 39190  | B | SE16962 39208 |
| C | SE 16959 39186 | E | SE16968 39206 |

Feature 10, Mill Chimney

SE 16967 39210

Little remains of the chimney except for a mound of rubble to the right of Boiler House wall marked BE



7 Corn Mill



8 Fulling/Scribbling Mill

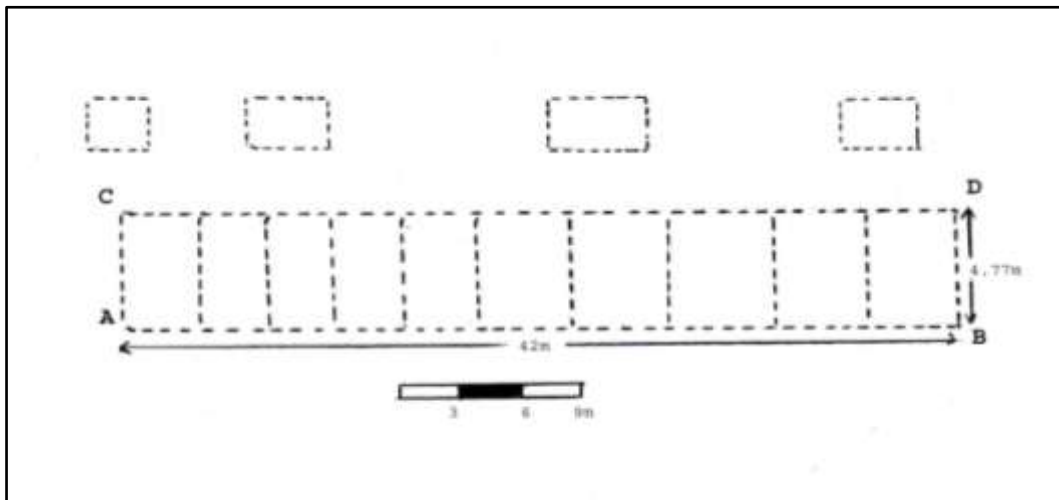


Interior west wall Fulling Mill 8



Part of Boiler House 9

## Building 11, Cottages



Row of cottages. Permission to erect a row of cottages was given in 1825 but it is unclear when they were actually built.

A SE 16973 39219

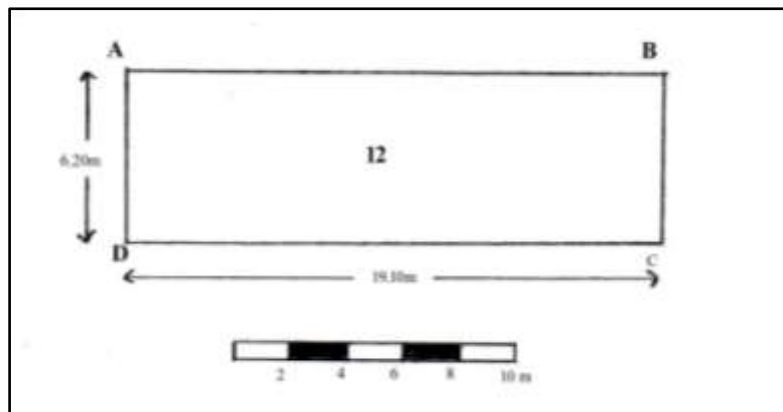
B SE 16991 39754

C SE16968 39222

D SE 16987 39256



## Building 12, Long Barn



Long barn built before 1710

A	SE17009 39194	B	SE17021 39212
C	SE 17025 39209	D	SE 17013 39191

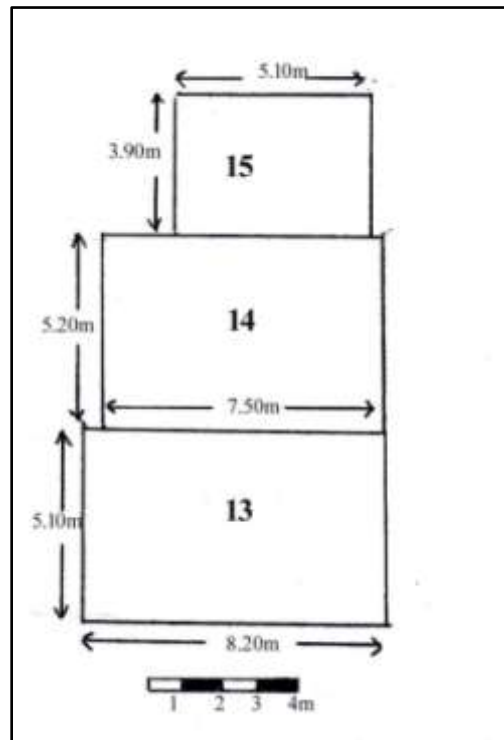


Interior wall 12 Long Barn



Air brick 12 Long Barn

**Buildings 13, 14 Workshops, 15 Smithy**



- |   |                |   |               |
|---|----------------|---|---------------|
| A | SE17002 39213  | B | SE17007 39210 |
| C | SE 16991 39201 | D | SE16998 39198 |

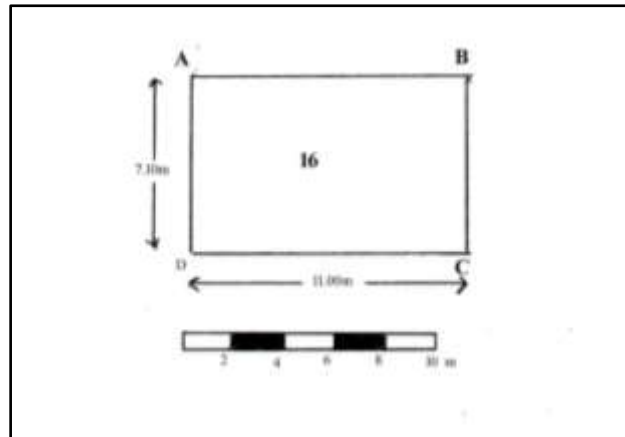


14 Workshop



15 Smithy

**Building 16, Upper Barn**



A SE17046 39144  
C SE17027 39141

B SE17034 39133  
D SE 17039 39152

Upper Barn erected before 1838



North east wall 16 Upper Barn

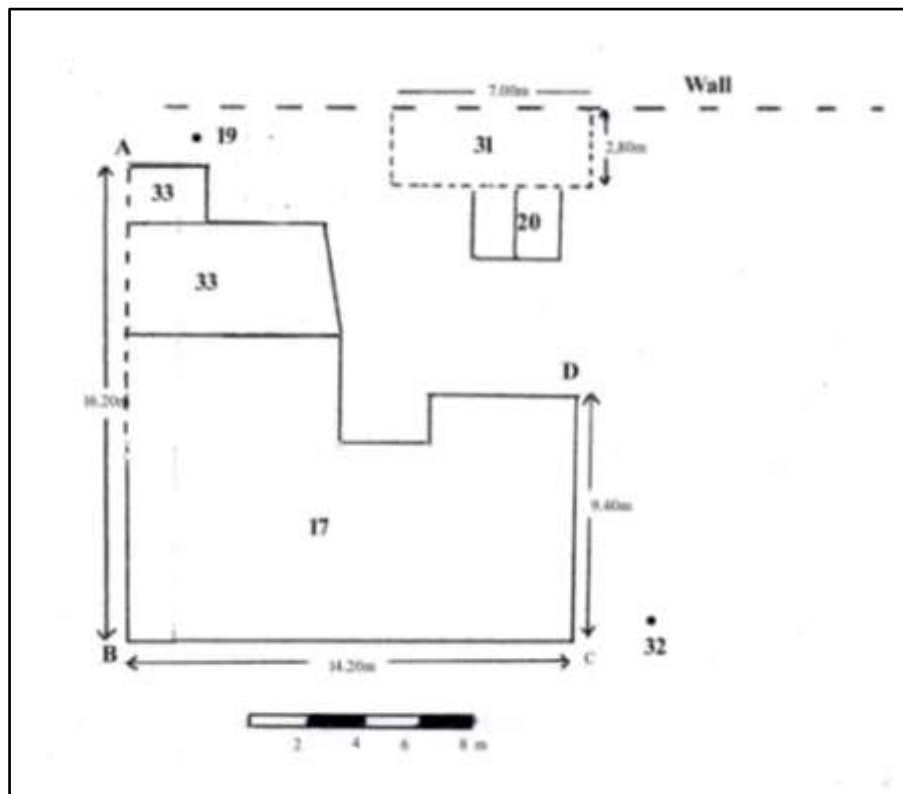


East wall 16 Upper Barn



16 Upper Barn

**Buildings 17 Lower Barn, 31 Cowshed?, 32 Piggery**



**Building 17,** Lower Barn pre 1838. Partly used for threshing and possibly incorporating small cow sheds.

- |   |                |   |                |
|---|----------------|---|----------------|
| A | SE 17014 39162 | B | SE 17005 39147 |
| C | SE 17018 39138 | D | SE 17024 39144 |



17 Lower Barn





17 North East wall and rear entrance



33 Piggery

**Feature 19,** Two gate posts 2.62m apart. Barrier to prevent livestock straying into the mill yard.

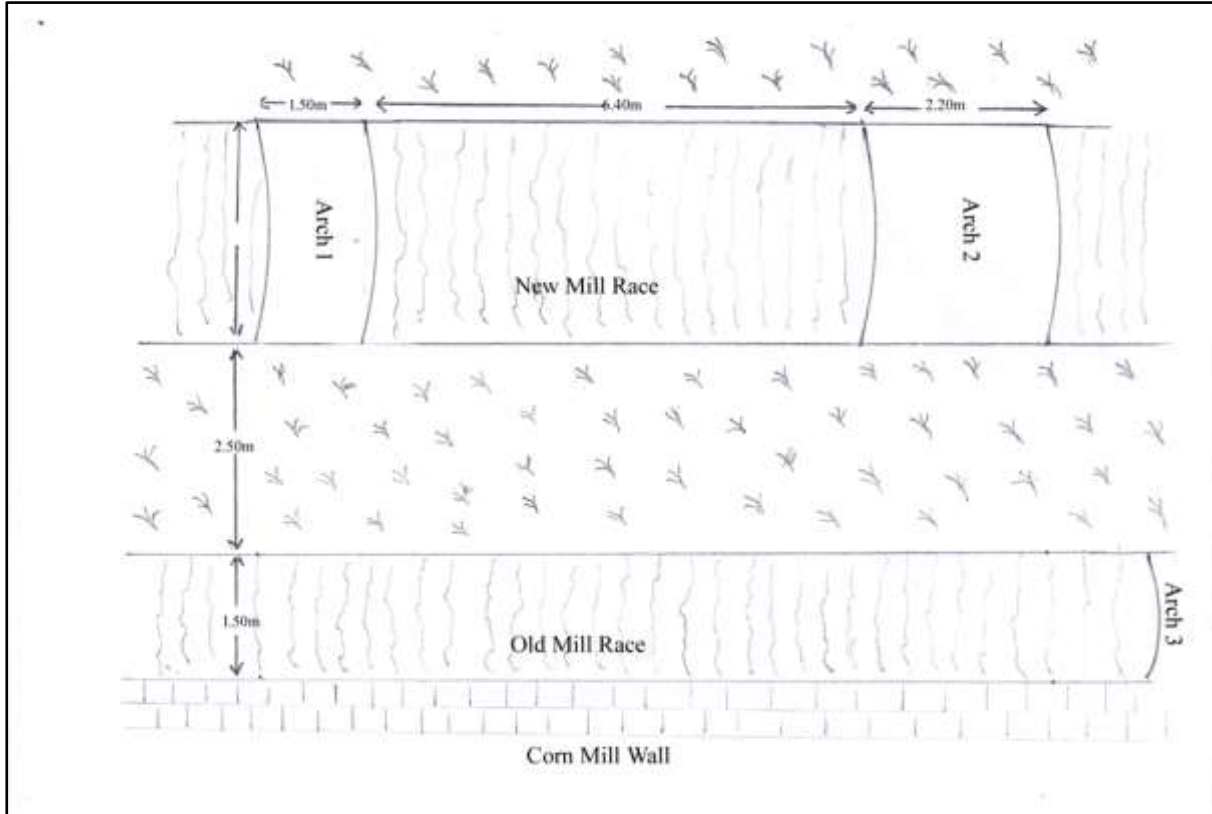
**Feature 20,** SE 17023 39158 Two large horizontal stone slabs capping a possible well. The soil beneath the stones is very soft silt to a depth of at least 1m. The slabs rest on a supporting stone wall.

**Building 31,** SE 17023 39158 Possible Cowshed. The wall behind is part of the original garden/orchard boundary wall.

**Feature 32** SE 17017 39143 Site of a possible well

**Building 33,** Piggery

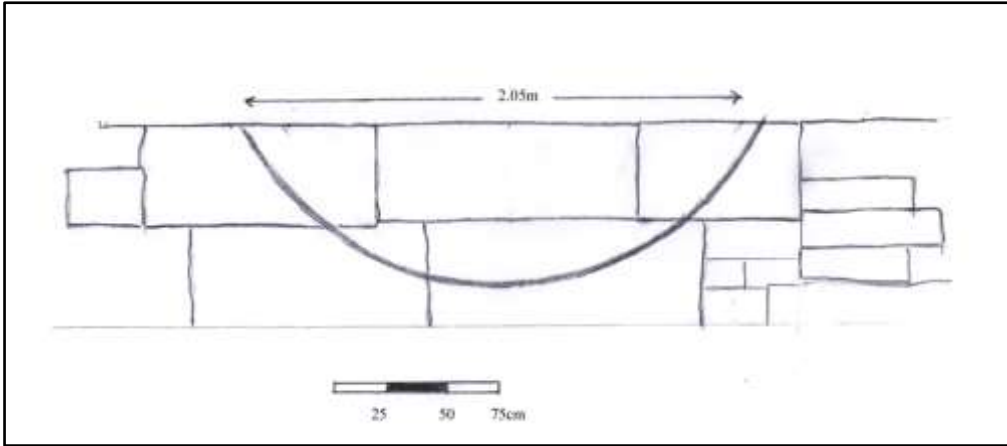
**Feature 18,            Goit running beneath former buildings.**



The mill goit aerial plan.

The goit ran along the western wall of the corn mill and the fulling mill was built above it.





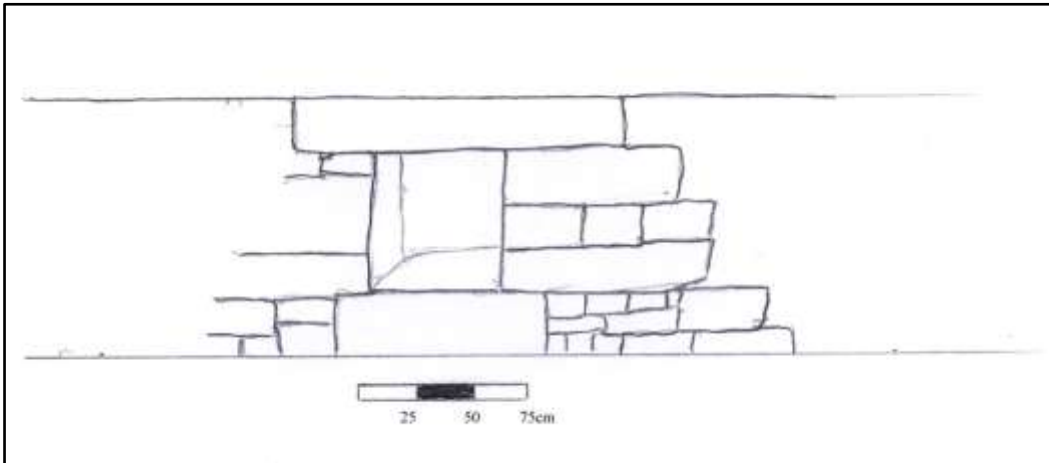
New Mill Race, looking west showing marks from waterwheel



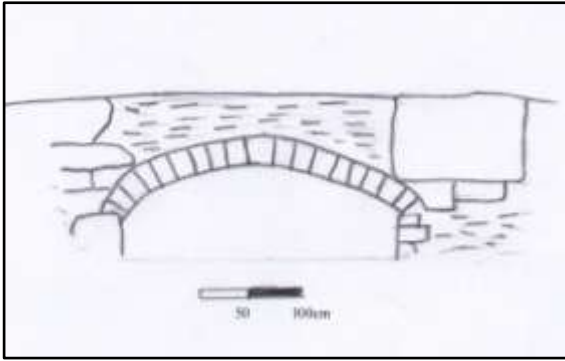
New Mill Race



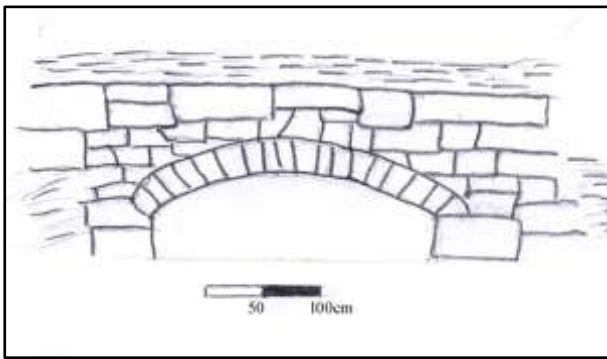
Old Mill Race



Old Mill Race, looking east showing an inlet into the race



Arch 1



Arch 2



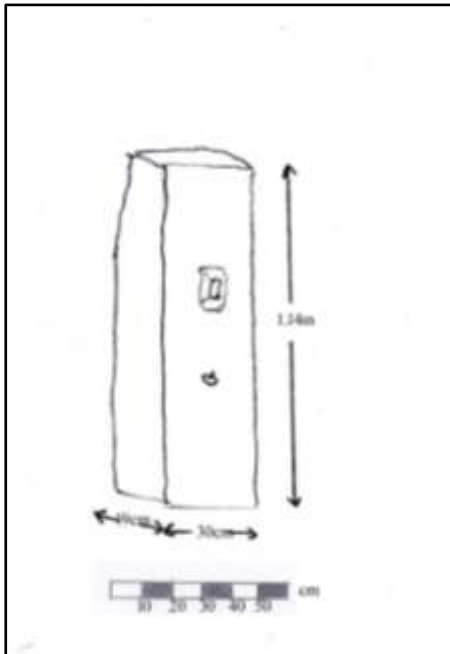
Arch 3



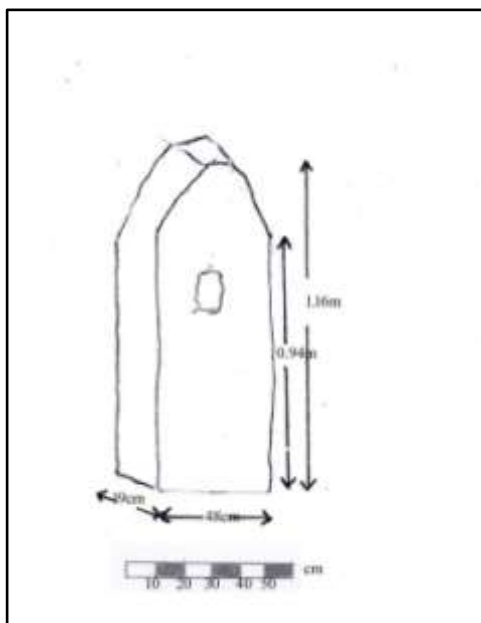
**Features 19A, 19B.**

**Gateposts**

These two posts set at a distance of 2.62m apart form part of the boundary of the farm, preventing livestock from entering the mill yard.

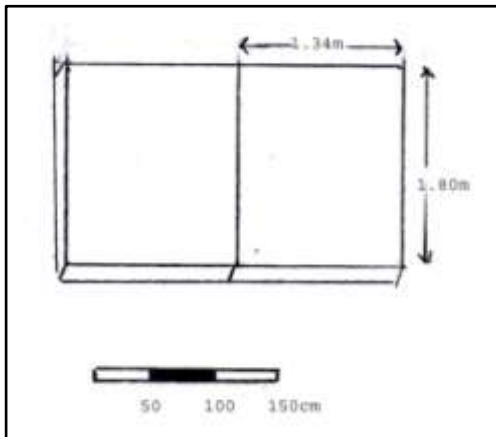


19A Gate Post: SE17022 39169



19B Gate Post : SE17022 39170

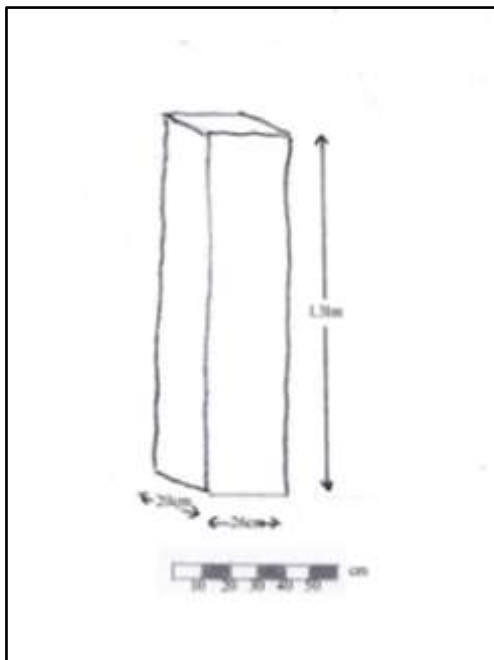
**Feature 20**                      **Two large stone slabs**



SE 17023 39158

Two large horizontal stone slabs of unknown use. There appears to be deep silt underneath.

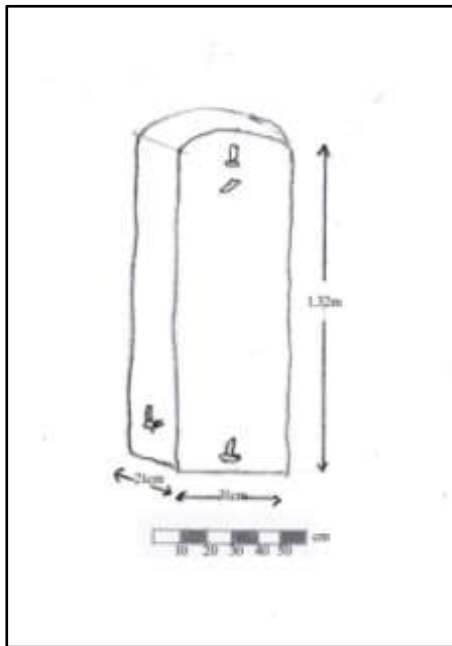
**Feature 21**                      **Post**



SE17030 39133

**Feature 22**

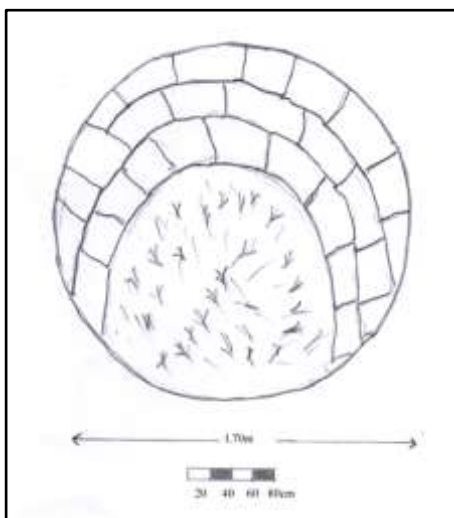
**Gatepost**



SE16990 39141

**Feature 23**

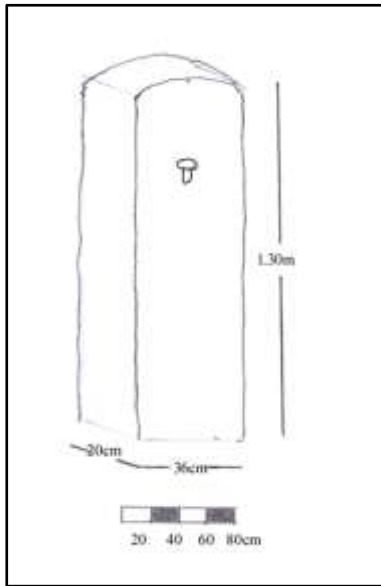
**Well**



SE 17047 39174

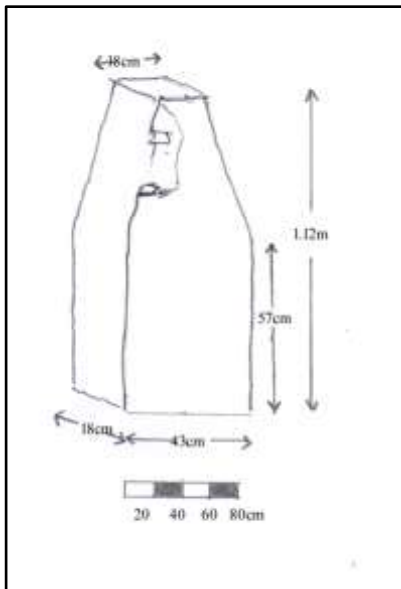
Well. Circular hole lined with stone, 85cm deep

**Feature 24 Gatepost**



SE 16999 39137

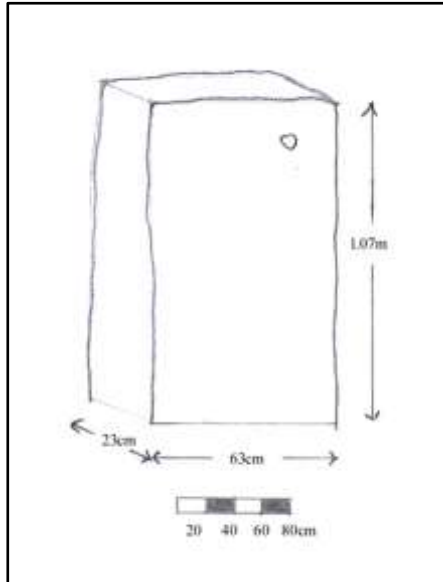
**Feature 25 Gatepost**



SE 17010 39133



**Feature 26, Gatepost**



SE 17031 39124

**Feature 27 Cobbled Road**

SE 17005 39189

Remains of cobbled road that ran from the Ford and through the mill yard.



**Feature 28,                      Cart Track**

SE 17003 39128

Remains of cart track which ran up to Thackley Road. In 1888, when the bridge was being planned this was described as a good road. Erosion has taken its toll.



**Feature 30,                      Footpath**

Top SE17004 39119 Bottom SE 16996 39140

This footpath, varying in width between 1.30m and 2.00m, runs for 34m up to the canal. It then continues above the canal. It was built with stone from the demolished mill.

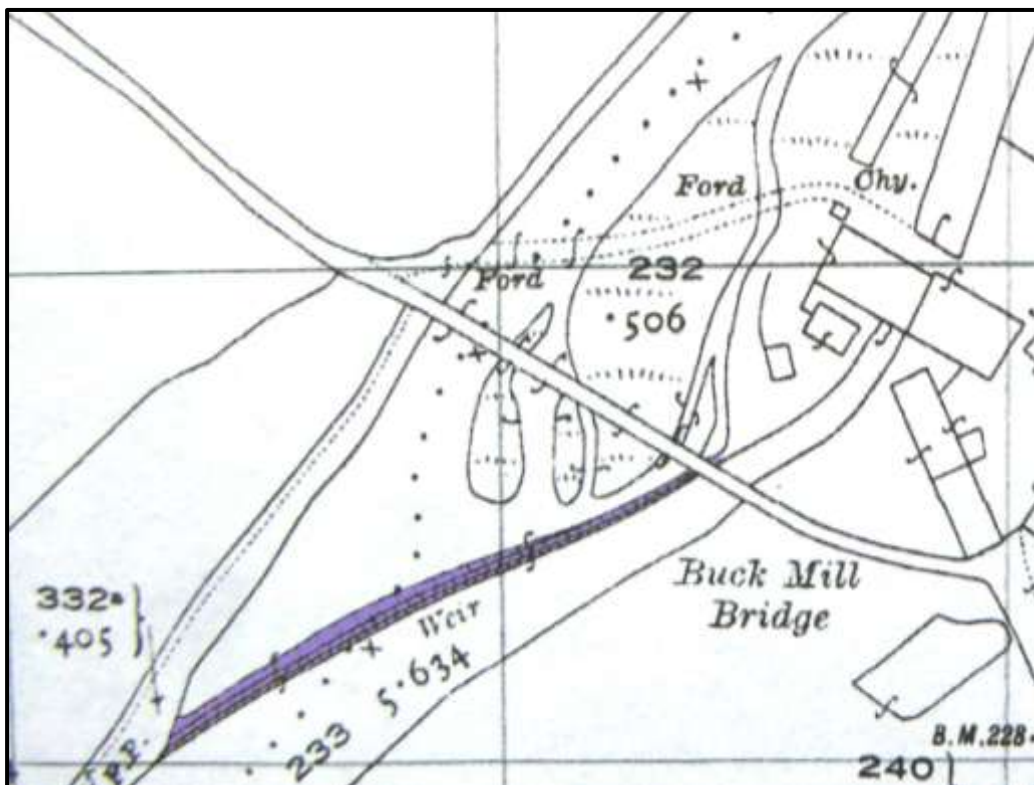


## Buck Mill Weir

The weir across the river at Buck Mill has its origins back in the 13<sup>th</sup> century when Nigel de Plumpton, the Lord of the Manor of Idle, was given permission in 1213 to construct a mill and dam across the river Aire between Idle and Baildon<sup>1</sup>. The precise position of the mill was not noted but a map of 1584 depicts the mill in the position that is familiar to many people in Thackley.

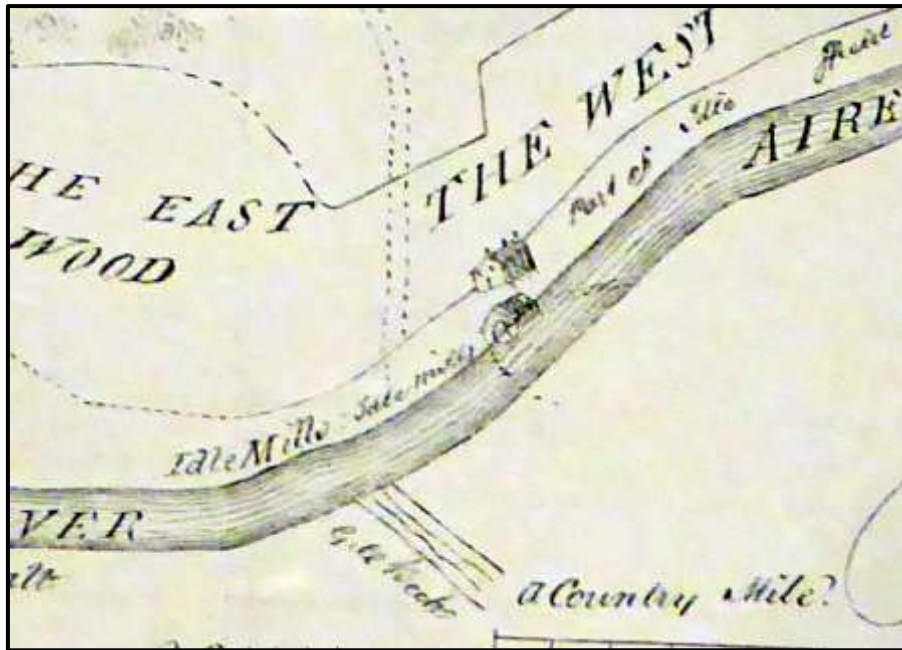
When the mill was built it was sited at the best point for supplying water to power the mill wheels. At some point a large stone weir was built across the river to divert water into a goit (an artificial channel for water) to provide more power to drive the mill wheels. It is difficult now to see the route of the goit as the building of the footbridge caused changes in the flow of the river and a build up of sediment and islands immediately below the bridge. Studying old maps shows how soil has built up in the river over the years around the bridge.

In its heyday the weir was 450 foot (137m) long, running diagonally from the Baildon side of the river to just past the bridge on the Thackley side. The weir started at SE 16829 39100 and ended at SE 16945 39159. It was a substantial feature rising several feet above river level, as can be seen from old photographs. Today the remaining stones barely break the surface of the water and are mainly unnoticed by passers-by.



Buck Mill 1922 showing the extent of the weir

<sup>1</sup> C. Alvin, Buck Mill, Thackley: a short history, 2019



Map of 1584 showing the Buck Mill and weir



Views of the weir in the early 1900s



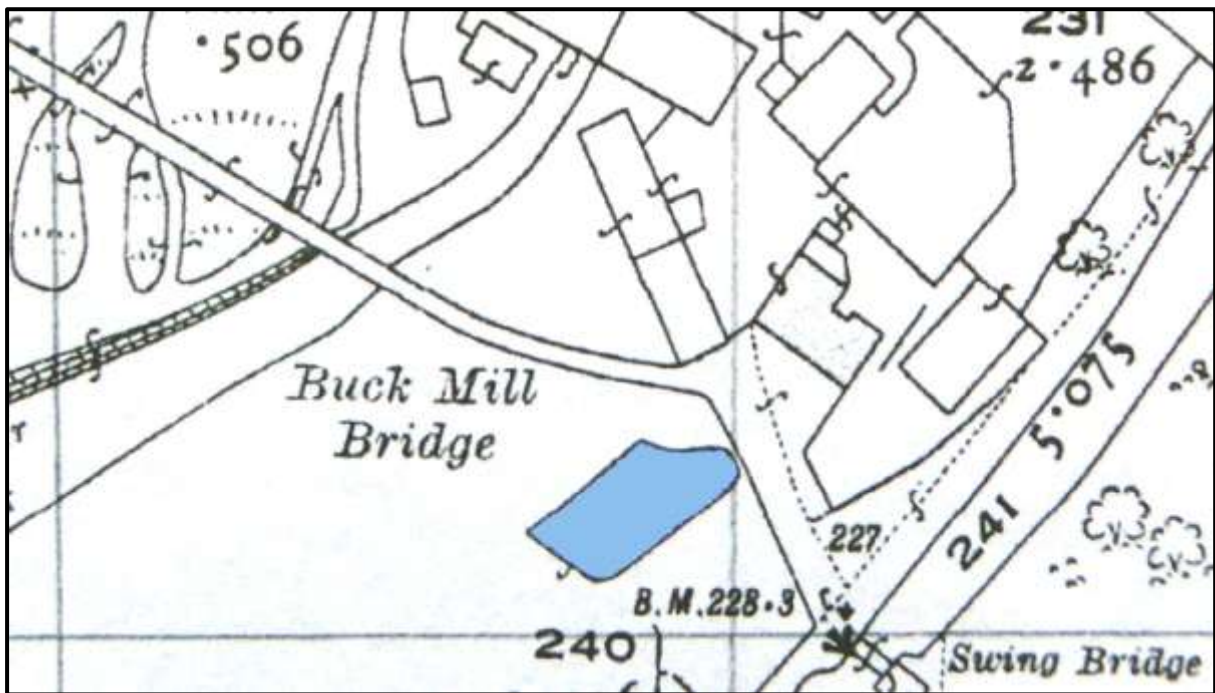
The remains of the weir today



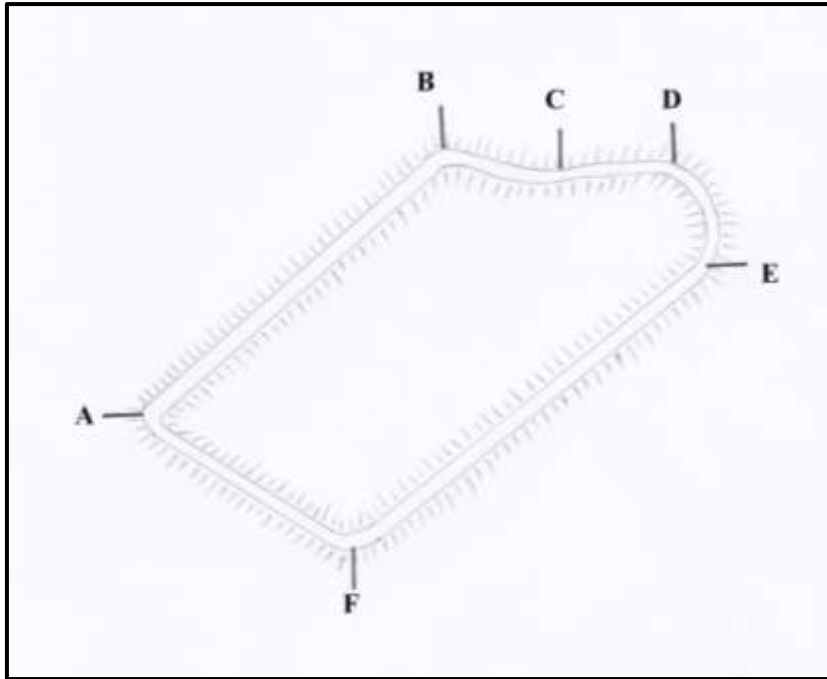
### Buck Mill Reservoir

The first record of Buck Mill was in the thirteenth century when Nigel de Plumpton, Lord of the Manor of Idle, was given permission to construct a mill and a dam across the river Aire. The mill continued until the start of the twentieth century. During this long history the mill existed in many differing forms mainly powered by water which was drawn from the dammed river. As production increased there was a need for a more reliable source of water to power the new steam engines, and a small reservoir was constructed in a field adjacent to the mill. There is no accurate date for its construction but the first map that depicts it is the Ordnance Survey map of 1893. There is evidence that there were two underground culverts that carried water from the reservoir to the mill buildings.

The mill dam is 26.7m long and 16.7m wide. Once the mill ceased to operate the dam gradually started to silt up and today little is left apart from the mounds comprising the walls within which is a boggy area.



Buck Mill and its Reservoir



Buck Mill Reservoir

A	SE16970 39116	B	SE16937 39129
C	SE16992 39127	D	SE16999 39128
E	SE17000 39124	F	SE16981 39108

Dimensions

A – B	25.6m	B – C	6.1m	C – D	5.9m
D – E	6.95m	E – F	26.7m		
D – A	0.80m wide	A – D	1.10m wide		



View of the reservoir from Leeds and Liverpool Canal

## Buck Mill Ford and Stepping Stones

The shallow nature of the river Aire at the site of Buck Mill provided a natural point for fording the river, and there had been a crossing point there from at least medieval times. A track way, mentioned in a court case of 1393, came down from Idle, along the route of the current Buck Lane and then across the river.<sup>2</sup> From there it was joined by another track coming down from Guiseley, through Hollins Wood to Esholt and then passing through Baildon by what is now Station Road and over the moors to Bingley.

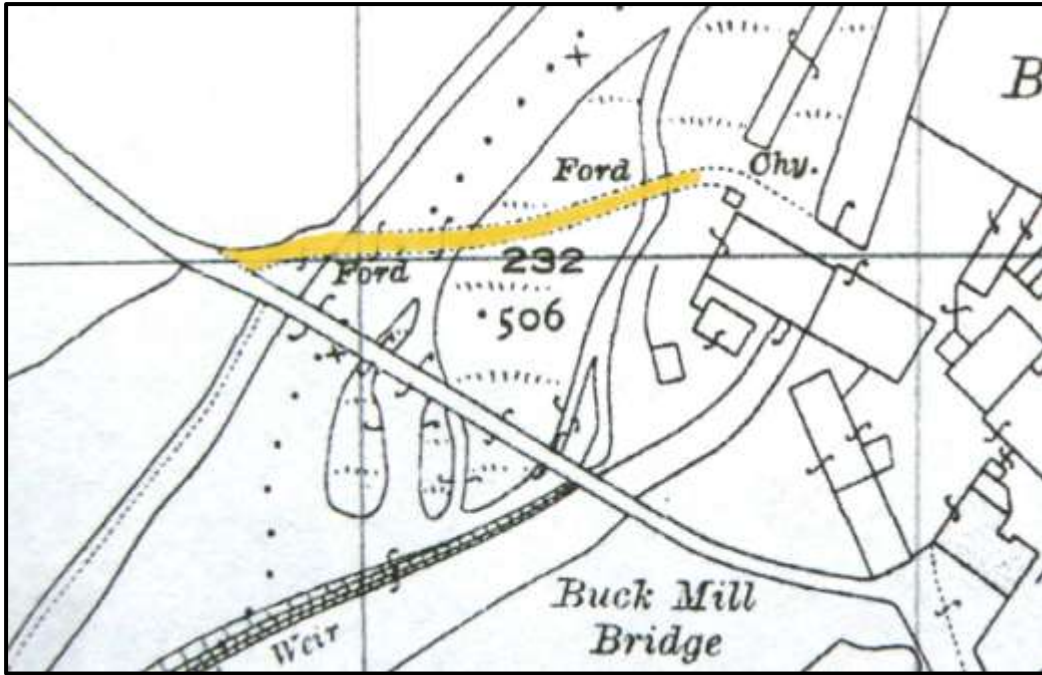
The ford is marked on one of the earliest maps of the area. The 1584 map of the Manor of Idle clearly shows Buck Mill, its weir and a ford. Over the years improvements were made to this natural crossing point. At some time a stone lined ford was constructed. This ford is marked on the Ordnance Survey map of 1922 which shows the overall length was 210 feet (64m) and 12 foot (3.65m) wide. It on the Baildon side immediately north of the bridge at SE16899 39205 and close to the chimney of Buck Mill SE16963 39217. When the river is low it is still possible to see the old surface of the ford where it leaves the Baildon bank of the river. After crossing the ford travellers made their way through the mill yard and then up the old trackway to Thackley and beyond. The ford was well used until the bridge was built in 1889. General Stansfield, the mill and land owner was keen to put an end to the steady stream of people passing through his property and once the bridge was constructed the right of way through the mill yard was removed.

The ford offered a comparably safe means of crossing the Aire but it was not without danger and difficulties. When the water levels were high or the river was in flood only the foolhardy attempted to make the crossing. There are several instances of people being swept to their deaths. In 1770 the Leeds Intelligence reported that the body of a man had been found. He had been missing for six weeks after attempting to cross the ford. His companion, who had also been swept away, was still missing. In 1844 two brothers and their horses were drowned whilst trying to cross the river at night with their wagons and horses. Although the river was swollen and running rapidly after recent heavy rain, according to the local newspaper, “the elder, a headstrong fear-nothing young man, presuming that as he had crossed in safety before, he would do so again, disregarded the counsel of his parent.”

There was another means of crossing the river: stepping stones or hippins as they were called locally. These stones, which probably ran alongside the ford, provided a means, for the physically active, to cross the river without getting wet. Yet again they were unusable when the river was running high. Eventually they fell into disrepair and a correspondent from Idle pointed out in the Shipley newspaper in 1876 that, “the stepping stones or ‘hippins’ as they are termed in local parlance, at Buck Mills, are in a very dilapidated and dangerous state. Never, perhaps, having been repaired for generations, they are sunk, worn, and shifted by floods, until it is next to impossible for anyone but the young and active to pass over them without stumbling; and a slight freshet in the river rends it wholly impassable for pedestrians.” Letters such as this led to a campaign to find a better means of crossing the river, and after much debate the footbridge was eventually built in 1889.

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<sup>2</sup> *West Yorkshire: an archaeological survey to AD 1500*, 3 vols. WYMCC, 1981, p. 629-30



Map of 1922 showing the route of the ford



The cobbled surface of the ford



## Buck Mill Bridge

The nineteenth century saw a steady increase of the populations of the two townships of Idle and Baildon, and consequently there were an increasing number of people needing to commute between the two townships. The ford and stepping stones provided a means of crossing the river but both were perilous, and when the river was full it was impossible to cross. The only alternative was to use the bridges at Shipley and Apperley Bridge. Both entailed a lengthy detour of about three miles, and at one crossing, at least, the payment of a toll.

The first official mention of concern about the crossing came in December 1872 when the Idle and Baildon Local Boards agreed some improvements were needed. However they thought it was the responsibility of the County or the owner of the adjoining land, General Stansfield. In 1876 the poor state of the stepping stones was brought to General Stansfield's attention; he replied that he did not think he was liable for the upkeep of the crossing. Following on from this decision the Baildon Local Board, which was reluctant to increase the rate burden for its citizens, declined to cooperate any further with the Idle Board in securing a safer crossing.<sup>3</sup> There then came a period of inaction until the matter was raised again in 1884 when both Boards agreed that if any improvements were to be made they would have to foot the bill. Various plans were drawn up but it was obvious that the Baildon Board was reluctant to undertake any great expenditure, and thought that Idle, having the larger population, should bear the greater part of the cost. This attitude was to sour the future planning and construction of the bridge.

General Stansfield was supportive, being willing to allow his land to be used for the bridge and the approaches. The configuration of the existing ford and stepping stones meant that people crossing the river had to pass through the yard of Buck Mill, and the General was keen to put an end to this practice. He therefore proposed that the bridge should be wide enough to carry horses as well as foot-passengers. The first plans for the bridge were well to the west of the mill with passengers going down Buck Lane, then across a field to cross the canal by means of an existing overflow tunnel. Eventually a compromise was agreed with the site for the bridge being just to the west of the mill with a new access path from Buck Lane and the existing route through Buck Mill yard being closed off.

A plan for the bridge was finally agreed in May 1888.<sup>4</sup> It would be an iron bridge 208 feet long and 6 feet wide, at a total cost of £778. The cost was to be shared equally between the two Boards, although Baildon still continued to have fears about escalating amounts and was adamant that they would not pay a penny more than the £389 they had agreed to. The bridge was designed by Messrs. Jowett Kendall and J. Harper Bakes, local Idle architects and was to be constructed by Messrs. J. Bagshaw and Sons of Batley. The Idle Board was to organise and oversee all the construction.

Construction began in September 1888 and it was estimated that it would be ready for foot passengers by the end of October. However a number of delays meant that the bridge was not completed until well into the following year. The opening ceremony eventually took place on 19th April 1889, with all the members from each Board being present. After appropriate speeches the bridge was declared open and the Board Members retired to the Great Northern Hotel in Thackley for a celebratory meal. The Baildon Board invited members of the Idle Board to a reciprocal meal in Baildon on the 1<sup>st</sup> May.

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<sup>3</sup> *Idle Local Board Minutes*, 23 December 1872, 22 September, 18 December 1876, 15 January 1877

<sup>4</sup> *Wharfedale and Airedale Observer*, 4 May 1888

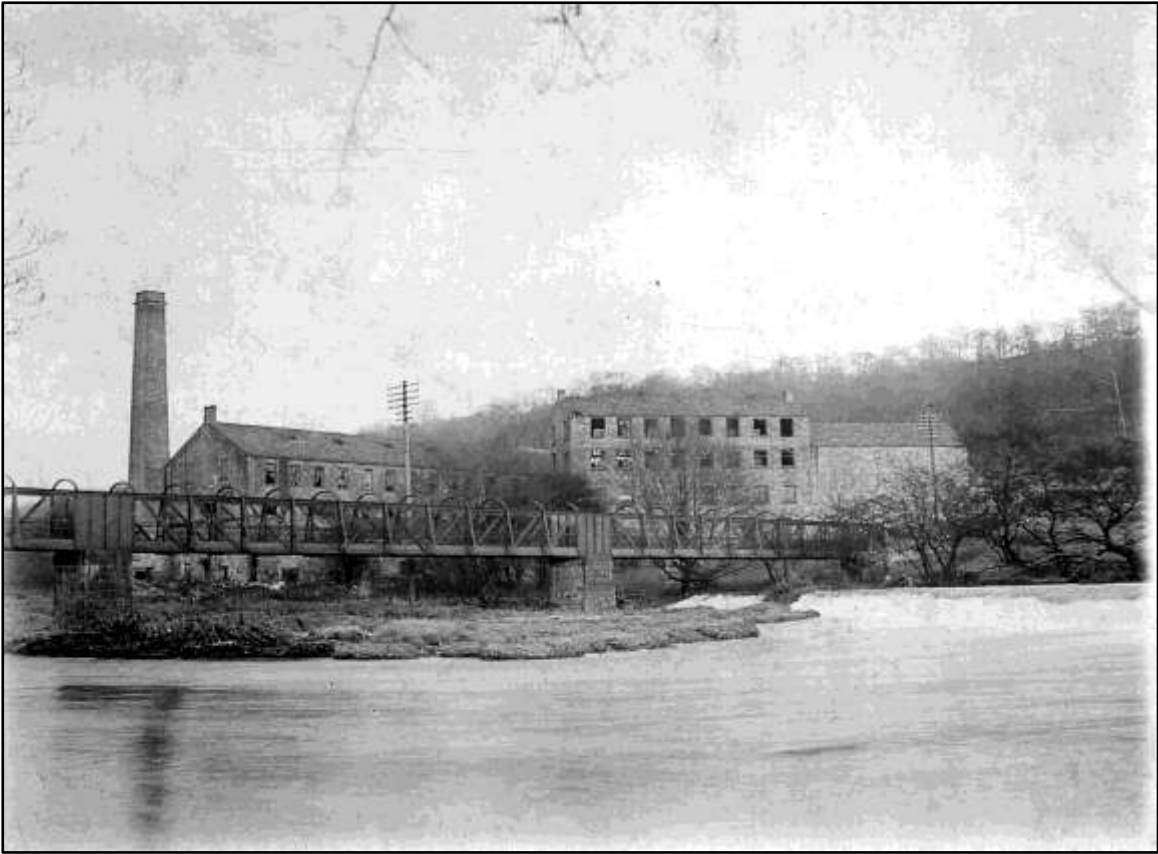
## The Bridge

A full description of the bridge appeared in local newspapers giving many technical details. The bridge, which was originally painted red, is constructed of iron and consists of three spans supported on pillars. The approaches on each side of the bridge are six feet wide and slope gradually down to the bridge platform. The foundations to the piers and abutments are constructed of cement concrete and go down to a depth of five feet below the river bed. The piers, which have angular cut-waters and abutments, are built of sandstone ashlar from Windhill Wood End quarries, and filled in with solid rubble and solid concrete...

The superstructure of the bridge is twelve feet above the level of the river bed and consists of three spans, each measuring 88 feet, supported by piers and abutments, making the total length of the bridge 264 feet. The whole of the superstructure is constructed entirely of wrought iron. The main girders are of the single lattice type, seven feet deep, and placed six feet apart, with parallel horizontal booms, vertical struts and diagonal ties eight feet apart, carrying a three inch plank platform at the bottom. The booms consist of tee iron and flange plates riveted together. The diagonals are flat bars and the verticals are angle irons riveted to booms. The girders are braced together and stiffened by means of an ornamental system of horizontal and diagonal wind bracing on top, bottom and sides. Each main girder is constructed so as to show, when riveted up, a camber of two inches at the centre of the span measured on the platform level. The platform structure consists of cross tee iron bearers, spaced eight feet centres apart, with crossed diagonal flat bar bracings. The cross bearings and diagonal bracings are directly connected by means of rivets to the bottom booms. Suitable railings and hand-rails are provided alongside each main girder. (Wire netting was later added to the hand-rails to provide extra protection to children) The fixed ends of the girders are carried on bearing plates, bedded on sheet lead upon the foundation stones, and securely bolted down, while the end plates of the girders, at the joints of the piers, are also bolted together. The total weight of the wrought iron, supplied by Dorman Long and Co. of Middlesborough, is about forty tons.<sup>5</sup> At both ends of the bridge there is a metal plate bearing the names of members of both Local Boards, the architects and the Batley constructor.

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<sup>5</sup> *Shiopley Times & Express*, 7<sup>th</sup> July 1888, *Ibid*, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1889



**View of Buck Mill Bridge and Buck Mill**



**Cobbles of old ford**



**The bridge**



**Bridge platform**



**Baildon and Idle Board Members**



**Abutments**



**Side girders**



**Steel producers**



**Modern floods restrict use**