

Stacey Hill Snippets

Early Residents at Stacey Hill Farm

When Stacey Hill Farm was first built under the directions of the Radcliffe Trustees in 1847, the tenant was already of high standing in the locality, and warranted a building that would be in keeping with his position in the community, William Battams was a gentleman farmer, and indeed from the records it can be seen that he contributed greatly to planning and laying out the farm. In total, he farmed some 600 acres, for which he employed 22 men

There is a very good record of the people who first moved into the newly-built farmhouse in the national 1851 census. There was William himself, together with his wife Martha, and there were also four servants listed as living at the farm, three house servants and a farm labourer. The eldest, Elizabeth Walker, came originally from Newport Pagnell and was probably the cook. 'Mary' from Northampton was likely to be the housemaid, whilst John Banbrose, aged 15, a local lad from Wolverton was probably the footman. Charles Woodward is listed as a farm labourer and was probably the ostler looking after his master's horses.

It is not fully clear where the servants lived and worked, though this can be deduced. The most obvious starting point is the kitchen where all the servants would have gathered to work or eat. The head would have been the cook, in the kitchen which was originally situated in the area presently occupied by the Museum's school display and toy exhibition. The centre-piece of the room would have been the range where the cook would have prepared all of the meals for the master and his wife, as well as for the servants.

The front part of the farmhouse was the farmer's domain. The main room was the Drawing Room, almost certainly the room the Museum has set out as the parlour. Across the hall from this was possibly a Morning Room or Dining Room. An alternative location for the Dining Room was the room opposite the present School Room. Both are listed in a valuation of the household furniture and effects, carried out in 1883 for the purposes of administration following the death of William Battams. A number of household items are particularly itemised in the house inventory, and one can imagine the housemaid using a 'copper coal shoot' in the drawing room to build up the fire, or the footman cleaning the 'twelve silver dessert spoons' at the table in the kitchen.

Attached to the house and situated to the rear of the kitchen was a stable, the preserve of the ostler. It was here that the farmer kept his domestic horses. (the working horses were stabled in the area of the present Granary Tea Rooms). The domestic horses would have been used for riding or for pulling a carriage. Adjacent to the stables, possibly where the wheelwrights is situated now, would have been the coach house, It is known that Battams had a four wheel phaeton carriage.

The front of the farm house was undoubtedly the location of the main bedrooms. To the rear, however, is a passageway leading to several small rooms, which were the servant's quarters. These rooms are currently used for Museum's administration offices. From the 1883 inventory, which lists the contents of the Maid's Room, we have the following furniture and other items in her room:



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Washstand and part service
Three wheel-back chairs
Chest of five drawers
Timepiece
Wheel-back armchair
Painted French bedstead
Straw palliasse
Feather bed, bolster and pillow
Blanket and counterpane
Carpet

It might appear from this that the maid was well provided for, but it must be remembered that the contents of the room belonged to the family and not to her.

Moving forward ten years to the 1861 census, Charles Woodward is now listed as a groom and is in his seventy fourth year. Now recorded for the first time is a fifteen year old dairy maid Annie Charrock. The dairy was situated off the kitchen, in what is now the exhibition room opposite the current school room. Also listed is a houseman - George Delafield from Bradwell. He was a male servant ranking below a footman. However, unlike a footman, he would be most unlikely to enter the dining room or wait personally on the master of the house. By 1861 there had been a change of cook with 26 year old Ann in the kitchen. Two farm labourers, both in their twenties are also listed as living in the house.

The year 1871 saw a complete change in the servants. Emma Fossey is now the dairymaid whilst eighteen year old Emma Markham is the housemaid. William Bambrook and Martin Bremmanare are listed as farm servants. The 1881 census was the last for which the Battams family were recorded as residents of the farm, and a Charles Rogers is listed as an indoors farm servant, living in the farmhouse along with his wife and four children.

By the time the Battams family left Stacey Hill Farm it had been reduced to 380 acres due to enlargement of Wolverton Town, and the farm staff had dwindled to ten men and five boys.

