

Stacey Hill Snippets

Stacey Hill Farm - the Granary Range

At Stacey Hill Farm it is apparent that the granary range stands apart from the rest of the farm buildings. The range, forming the west wing of the yard, was for three things – farmworkers, horses and grain. Grain stored in any quantity will create heat and with heat there is always a risk of fire. This suggests why the Radcliffe Trust, the builders, would have situated it apart from the rest of the farm.

The brick granary is at the end of the building range and currently houses the Museum's printing exhibition. It is a double storey building, the grain being originally stored on the upper floor and, for delivery, being loaded into a waiting cart on the ground floor via a chute. The cart gained access through a large opening from the farmyard. There is an outside stairway on the end of the building for the farm hands to gain access to the top floor. It is possible to imagine the farm hands carrying two-hundredweight sacks of grain up these stairs, but more than likely there was also a sack hoist to ease the labour.

The area next to the granary, currently occupied by the Museum's tea room, was stabling for the working horses who provided the motive power on the farm. The horses would have been led through into the tack room (now converted to toilets). The door to this room can still be seen on the end of the building, albeit now bricked up. This is an extra-wide door to accommodate a large working horse like a Shire. From this door it was just a few steps across the yard to the once open-fronted cart hovel (soon to be the museum's new communications gallery).

Adjacent to the tack room was a small cottage, contained within the rear part of the building. There were two main rooms with a smaller scullery. As elsewhere in the farm there is a back-to-back fireplace. These rooms were much altered when Milton Keynes Development Corporation was in occupation of the farm, so it is hard to be precise how these rooms were once laid out, but the Museum's reconstruction of the two main rooms - as a kitchen and a bedroom - are thought to be close to the original layout.

The actual build date for the farm is around about 1847, although there is no firm evidence from census records that the granary building was in fact built at this stage. The first census records that show a family in occupation of the cottage was that of 1881. In that year the Rogers family occupied the granary cottage. Charles Rogers lived with his wife, three daughters and a son; Charles was recorded as a farm servant (indoors). William Battams, the tenant who was in occupation of Stacey Hill Farm at that time, was a wealthy farmer and would have certainly employed a number of staff to run the house in addition to his farm labour. For the record, also listed in the census is a cook, housemaid and a second farm servant (indoors).

By the time of the 1891 census the Richards family were the tenant farmers. At this time the cottage was occupied by the Shillingford family - George, his wife Fanny and their young son Arthur. Their son's place of birth was listed as Ivinghoe so it can be inferred that they had only recently moved to the farm. There are no details of who was in occupation in the cottage at the time of the 1901 census, but by April 23rd 1910 the '*Bucks Standard*' newspaper was reporting as follows:

'In common with other places in North Bucks, Wolverton experienced the full force of the



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severe thunderstorm which swept the South Midlands district on Saturday afternoon April 17th. When the storm was at its height what is described as a thunderbolt entered a little cottage occupied by Mrs Horwood, on Stacey Hill Farm, devastated the chimney pots and stacks and terrified the inhabitants. Mrs Horwood was in the living room when she saw a terrific flash followed by an explosion described like a cannon. The fire in the grate seemed to jump right out and the whole house trembled. Mrs Horwood, screaming, rushed to the open door, only to see the chimney falling at her feet. Her husband, who was working in an adjoining barn came immediately. In the bedroom, which is on the ground floor he found that the fire grate had been lifted bodily from its place and thrown against a chair and the bed. The grate was not otherwise damaged, but one or two of the bricks were broken in two, everything in the room was covered in soot. The bedroom chimney was entirely demolished, two pots on the top were smashed to atoms and the slates on the roof were scattered in all directions. Miss Richards, whose father is tenant of the farm, and who witnessed the affair from the farmhouse, says that she heard the loud explosion and saw a bolt of fire enter the chimney. Naturally the accident considerably alarmed and unnerved Mrs Horwood and the children and under the circumstances it is extremely fortunate that no-one was injured'.

Maybe there is evidence of the incident still to be found within the roof of the cottage? Just for the record the Horwood family appear in the 1911 census, still living at the farm. The husband's name was William and he was listed as a shepherd. His wife's name was Harriet and they had an eleven year old son, George, living with them. At the time of the census they had been married for twelve years.

There is no definite record that the cottage had a garden, but there is a hint that a garden might have existed in the *Wolverton Express* of December 1954. This issue includes a report of a court case concerning the theft of fowls both from Stacey Hill Farm itself and from an adjacent allotment. It was reported that the accused was employed as a farm labourer by Messrs S.S. Lockett and Son of Stacey Hill Farm, Wolverton and lived in the cottage on the farm. He was in the employ of the Locketts from 23rd May to 31st October. Following enquires the victim and a police constable went to the 'garden adjoining the cottage' and the victim identified the fowls belonging to him. The accused was fined £4. with 18 shillings costs.

Some 150 years after its construction the cottage is still here, and its garden is now being set out as a kitchen garden. It is not always easy to piece together the past history of a building, especially one that has been out of use for such a long time, but with research through the census records together with reports from local newspaper archives it has possible to tease out at least a little of its history.

