

HERITAGE STATEMENT

**PROPOSED PART DEMOLITION, PART CONVERSION AND NEW BUILD TO
FORM 63 NO. APARTMENTS TOGETHER WITH 64 NO. NEW BUILD DWELLING
HOUSES**

AT

WESTWOOD MILL, LOWESTWOOD LANE, HUDDERSFIELD

WESTWOOD WILSON LTD

PROJECT ARCHITECTS:

MICHAEL WILSON RESTORATIONS

IN COMBINATION WITH

PRIME MERIDIAN LIMITED

MALCOLM SIZER PLANNING LTD.

February 2020

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Westwood Mill, Lowestwood Lane, Huddersfield.

Westwood Wilson Ltd.

Low West Wood Mills is the oldest surviving mill in the Colne Valley, with parts dating to c.1800.

An Historical Chronology

For the first half of the nineteenth century the history of the present Lower West Wood Mills is interwoven with a mill several hundred yards down the valley, (later called Beaufort Mill), which was on the site now occupied by Titanic Mill. Together they comprised the upper and lower Low West Wood Mills, both part of the Saville estate and from the 1790's both leased to the Shaw family. The lower mill was the senior, originally being a fulling mill, dating from the seventeenth century. By 1794 the Land Tax Returns show the property at Low West Wood to be occupied by James Shaw. In 1798 they record a tax valuation for a "new mill", though it is not clear whether this was at the upper or lower mill site. In the 1790's, throughout the Colne and Holme Valleys, the new scribbling and carding machinery was being housed in old fulling mills or in new buildings adjoining them, using the same water power, so this may be an addition to the lower mill. A 21 year lease in 1799 records the letting of property, including mills for the scribbling and carding of wool and fulling of cloth at £398.17s per annum, to James Shaw, of Lower West Wood, clothier.

By 1824 both mills were occupied by James Shaw's sons John, Jonathan, Joseph and Eli, also described as clothiers. Since they are not simply called "millers" this would indicate that, as well as running the mills, they also put out work to domestic handloom weavers. In 1824 several expensive improvements were carried out on the upper mill including the part rebuilding and extension of the west side of the scribbling mill and the erection, adjoining it, of a new two storey fulling mill 55ft 6ins x 46ft 2ins. The water courses were substantially rebuilt including the dam embankment, shuttles (sluices) and goits (channels) at a cost of £260 and a new iron water wheel installed for £290 along with an improved wheel race and wooden and stone pentroughs for £110.

Auxiliary steam power was added to supplement the water wheel in 1826 when a two storey steam engine house was built for £30 and a 30 yard high chimney for £79.10s. Fifty four people were employed at scribbling, slubbing, spinning and finishing, including children under 12 who worked as piecers or at clipping and cleaning teazles for finishing.

Some dispute arose between Jonathan, Joseph and Eli Shaw and their nephew, John's son Thomas who, in 1846 after his father's death, successfully petitioned the Saville (now Lord Scarborough) estate to make him the sole leasee on the lower mill. The antagonism still continued in 1849 when Joseph Shaw complained that the lower mill weir had been heightened over a foot by boards, causing the build-up of backwater, which affected their water wheel.

Joseph also appealed against a proposal to raise the annual rent for the mill, land etc. to £200. Around 1835 they had spent £583 on iron water wheels and shafting, in 1846 £217 on repairs and further money on the weir in 1847.

The Shaws survived a few more years at least, being recorded in the 1853 trade directory, but perhaps not much longer. Thomas Hirst & Sons were established at the mill sometime in the 1850's. It may have been they who introduced power loom weaving to the site. In 1865 they avoided a dispute by conceding a wage increase to their weavers.

Some alterations were done to the weir in the 1850's leading to complaints from the Radcliffe estate, which owned Lees Mill, the next mill upstream, that backwater was being created. A civil engineer George Crowther, was brought in to arbitrate and set a bench mark for the proper height of the weir.

In 1873 James Hirst, one of the partners in Thomas Hirst & Sons, died and two years later John Hirst was declared bankrupt and some of the machinery put up for sale. When he died in 1878 the remainder of the machinery was sold off and, the following year, room and power was advertised to let at the mill. The next occupants were John Sykes and Sons. Joseph Sykes retired in 1894 leaving John, Edward and Arthur to run the firm until it moved to Marsden in late 1897. By then they were employing over 20 male weavers at Low West Wood, who threatened to strike when Sykes tried to reduce wages in line with the lower rates in Marsden.

The mill was not leased out again but was advertised for sale in December 1897 as: "Three Stone Built Main Mills, on the West and North sides, being L shaped, four and three storeys high, supported by Iron Pillars two having Single Span and one Double Bay Grey Slated Roofs, respectively 60ft by 25ft, 84ft by 32ft and 77ft by 46ft". The motive power was provided by a 16 foot diameter water wheel with a 14 foot breast and a 14 foot fall of water and by a compound engine.

The latter, along with the double-flued boiler and shafting was owned by John Sykes and Sons, who agreed if they were offered a fair valuation, would leave it in the mill for the buyer.

The mill did not reach its reserve price at the auction and it was then, still empty, sold with the associated premises and land, by private agreement to Joseph and John Edward Crowther members of the leading textile dynasty in the Colne Valley, thus ceasing to be part of the Saville estate. In 1899 the Crowthers advertised the mill to let and in December it was leased, with an option to buy for £3,000, to Albert Edward Cotton of W.E. Cotton & Sons Ltd. Low West Wood Mill was used for the mungo and shoddy branch of the trade, employing 30 to 40 workers. The firm got off to a bad start when, in September 1900 a fire in a carding machine spread destroying almost £3000 of machinery and stock and seriously damaging the building.

Albert Cotton died in 1905 and a valuation of the mill and motive power by Eddison, Taylor & Booth put the whole at £2,000. The firm continued as W.E. Cotton & Sons Ltd and appeared in the 1910 Yorkshire Textile Directory as “raw cotton and cotton waste merchants, wool washers and shoddy manufacturers.

Modernisation of the mill continued and in 1911 the chimney was raised to 33 yards. By 1913 electricity had been installed, generated by a J.H. Holmes dynamo run off the water wheel. An inventory for 1913 also describes the wrought iron, two flued Lancashire boiler, 30 foot by 7 foot with mountings, the Meldrum patent forced draught furnace by Robert Taylor & Co. A new Hewitt & Kellett steel, two flued, 30 foot by 8 foot Lancashire boiler, with Hopkinson mountings, was put in by 1920. The new engine made the water wheel redundant and in the early 1920's it was taken out and replaced by a 85hp Gunther & Son water turbine, using 45,000 cub/ft of water a minute to achieve 250rpm. Remains of this are still in situ.

The demise of the steam engine is not recorded but the mill chimney was felled in 1962. The mill remained in the possession of W.E. Cotton and Sons until its closure in 1981 when it was valued at £70,000.

The mill from 1981 passed to several owners who utilised the building for storage and other purposes, but it was mainly vacant. The mill pond was drained to avoid maintenance and for safety purposes (presumably). The developers, Magna Holdings Ltd, subsequently bought the property and proceeded to gain planning permission for 43 apartments and houses. They sold it on to Knowle Acre Ltd. They then considered the scheme more carefully and moved to gain planning and listed building permission in 2005 for 108 apartments as 2/3rds new build mill design. The approval then allowed a process of working drawings, including structural design, to proceed, which then facilitated a more accurate costing and viability exercise to begin. This, combined with an over-supply of apartments in Yorkshire, demonstrated that the development was too border-line to work. There was then a full down-turn in the market with the 2008 economic collapse which put paid to any further activity on the site for some four or five years by which time the owners were forced to sell and wind up the company. One of the two directors of Knowle Acre, Michael Wilson, subsequently purchased the site (in the name of Westwood Wilson Ltd) as one of the few developers

capable of dealing with the project; he did however, benefit from the enormous amount of work already produced on the existing mill and was determined to see a proper conclusion to the scheme. There had already been investigation into the idea of substituting the mill apartment scheme for housing and a more defined process began, to evolve the enabling argument now submitted that produces sufficient income to restore the listed mill element, as originally approved in 2005.

Archaeological Report (circa Jan 2004)

An archaeological report was commissioned in January 2004 which provides a comprehensive record of its basic historical background and analysis, building description, phasing summary; all backed up with a photographic register; together as two separate volumes (only volume 1 is attached at Appendix 1 with photographs available on further request as they are extensive.

Geotechnical Report (June 2003)

(Available for inspection on request – circa 200 pages)

This is a full investigation of the ground conditions in and around the mill buildings which provides all the technical detail required by the engineers to put together the internal support systems for new floors and roof all with stability recommendations for the remaining structure of the mill buildings.

Design Concept for Existing Mill

The scheme proposed was discussed and approved back in 2005 as a part of an overall enabling scheme which included one third original mill and two thirds new build mill apartments.

The concept then, and now, is to restore all of the original floor levels in the same locations with additional space created within the open truss roof areas for mezzanine/gallery accommodation. The external envelope does not change, nor do the window positions, style and materials.

Most of the original floors are beyond recovery and unsafe. The structural analysis of the stability of the buildings, notably Blocks “A, B and D” (C already constructed as concrete floors) indicated solid concrete floors to be a solution to all deteriorated beams and joists, but supported on a new “beam and post” inboard of the outer walls so as to not overload the existing foundations.

The base of the post and beam grid would be supported by ground beams bearing on new mini piles leaving the original structure unaffected. The existing stone walls and replacement walling remain self-sufficient with windows and doors re-inserted exactly as per the historic design.

The new floors are reinforced concrete laid on a steel rib deck that rests on the rhythm of beams in their original locations. The concrete provides fire separation foremost but also sound and thermal benefits as separation between apartments. The soffits of each bay can be retrofitted with salvaged joists and floor boarding to replicate how the original underside of flooring would appear.

At roof level the trusses which have collapsed with most of the ends in the walls having rotted and decayed as support. Replica replacement to the same detailing would be required to support roof rafters, purlins and tiling/slate/stone outer coverings as accurately as possible to the original. This also relates to Block C where the design provides for significant patent glazing to top light the atrium space below and the mezzanine elements of the apartments.

The fit out internally is creating the modern future use of the mill as residential. The re-creation and restoration of the envelope of the building with roof, windows, walls and floors all as per the original open space is the priority so as to satisfy the spirit of the enabling permission being submitted. The fit out and construction of the new build apartment range (E-G) does fall into the new build programme of house construction roads and landscaping (including the mill pond re-creation).

The original mill pond walls to the mill itself do require restoration works as part of the first phase of mill buildings which will then secure the rear terraces of Blocks B-F which all form an integral part of the overall original mill zones. Similarly there is a retaining wall to Block A which is quite secure but comes into the Phase One package.

The materials used in the mill restoration will be, as previously stated, a copy or re-use of the original; notably the stone walls, timber or crittal windows, soft wood beams, joists and floor boarding (using salvaged material from elsewhere) replica stone roofing where stone was originally used or slate, as the mill moves away from Zone A towards the new build element at Block G. There is in summary a general note of all restoration work to utilise and copy all the original detailing.

Listings

At Appendix 2 are the Listing Descriptions for the 5 sections of the mill to be restored.

At Appendix 3 is a plan identifying those sections.

MALCOLM SIZER PLANNING LIMITED

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