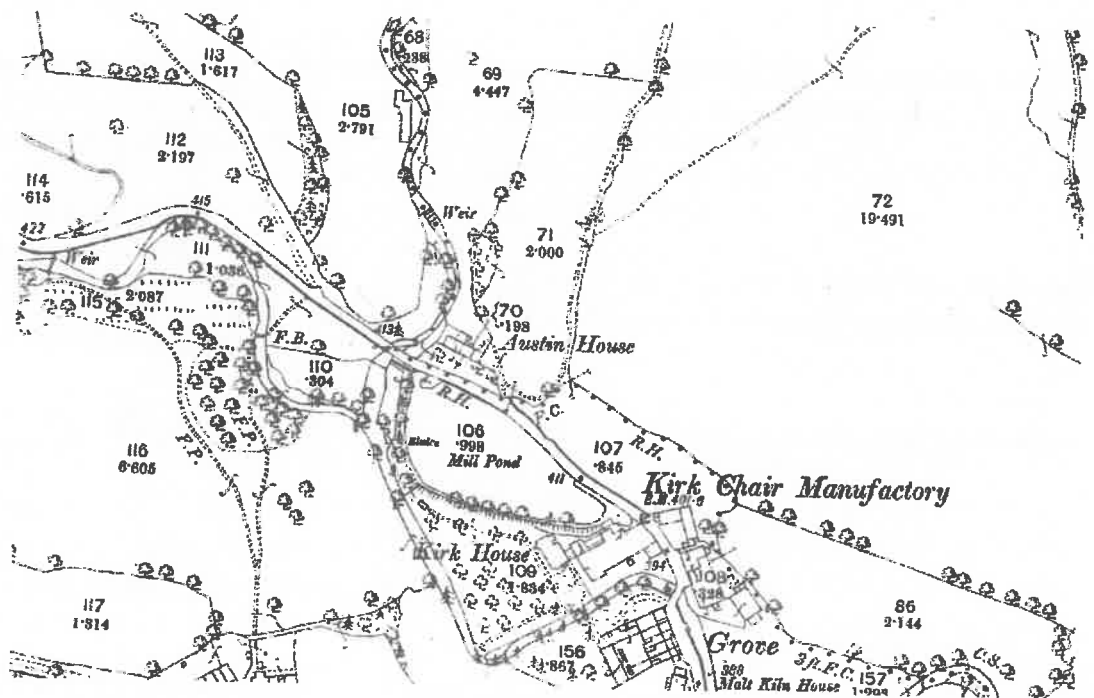


Kirk House

Chipping, Lancashire



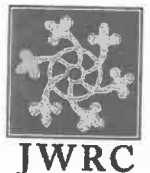
An Appraisal of its Historical and Architectural Significance

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Purpose of the Report

This report has been commissioned by Mr Dominic Hester, who has recently purchased Kirk House. The building is now in disrepair after being unoccupied. The report is intended to provide information about the architectural and historic interest of the house as a whole and of its surviving fabric, in order to inform decisions about proposed repair works and internal alterations. It may in the future form the basis for a Heritage Statement to be submitted with an application for Listed Building Consent.

1.2 The Survey

An internal and external inspection was carried out on 18 August 2011 by Jonathan Ratter BAMA DipSurv IHBC MRICS. The building was unoccupied but some fitted carpets remained and no opening up of the fabric had been carried out.

1.3 The Appraisal

The report discusses the age and probable development of the building, describes (in outline only) its external and internal features, and assesses its significance as a 'Heritage Asset' (the term used in Planning Policy Statement 5).

The house faces approximately south south-east, but for simplicity of description it is assumed that it faces due south and other directions are referred to accordingly.

2.0 The Significance of the Building

2.1 Historical Background

The house is dated '1793' on a lead rainwater hopper at the front. The late Georgian architectural details (including the stone doorcase, the canted 3-bay part of the facade, and the staircase and other internal joinery) make this a likely date for its original construction.

Chris Aspin's book, 'The Water Spinners' records the construction of numerous water-powered cotton spinning mills in Lancashire and adjoining counties in the final decades of the eighteenth century, following the invention and development of Arkwright's spinning machinery. Investors and speculators built cotton factories at suitable sites, which were often remote and had often previously had corn mills. The enterprises were usually short-lived because of technical problems with the water supply or machinery, or lack of capital. The development of steam power and more sophisticated cotton processing machinery in the nineteenth century made many of the early rural factories redundant. Those buildings that survive have often had several changes of use.

Kirk Mill at Chipping is one of a small number of 'Arkwright' mills surviving in Lancashire. It was built in 1785, but the original partners went bankrupt and the mill and partly-completed cottages were offered for sale in 1788. The new owners completed the cottages, and it seems that Kirk House was built as the mill master's house shortly afterwards.

The mill changed hands several times in the nineteenth century, but remained as a spinning mill until 1866, when chair making began.

The first edition of the six-inch Ordnance Survey Map (Figure 1) was surveyed in 1844. It seems to show Kirk House with a wing on the east side but without the rear (north) wing. The first edition of the twenty-five inch Ordnance Survey map, surveyed in 1890-91 is much clearer. By that date the mill had been extended on the north side and the outline of the house is shown almost as it still exists today. This is surprising, as it suggests that the north wing, which appears to date from the mid twentieth century, is built on the footprint of a mid / late nineteenth century wing. This is discussed in more detail below.

2.2 The Development of the Building

The main three-storey building appears to belong to a single phase, but it does not incorporate a kitchen or other service rooms on the ground floor. These must have existed in another part of the building originally. The east gable, above the roof level of the present small-single-storey wing, has the outline of the roof of a 2-storey wing. The doorway from the hallway into the present wing matches the others and presumably originally opened into the larger east wing. Kirk Mill is immediately next to the house and was widened to accommodate new machinery, as well as being extended to the west, in the nineteenth century. It is likely that the east wing of Kirk House (which may have contained the kitchen) was reduced in size and a larger north wing built because of this.

The cellar doorway and steps, now accessible from the rear porch (which has an archway dated '1954') appear to be original, suggesting that the house originally extended beyond the north wall of the main block. The second storey of the rear porch appears to date from the 1950s, with an archway on the main staircase half-landing indicating the previous position of the stair window and suggesting that the original structure on the site of the north wing was single-storey. If the kitchen was in the now-demolished east wing it is possible that the single-storey structure extended to form a link between the wing, the cellar entrance, and the rear doorway from the entrance hall.

The present north wing probably dates almost entirely from 1954, which is the year when government construction licenses were abolished. Stylistically, it has arts and crafts inspired detail (roughcast, a chimney with an inglenook window), but it is rather coarsely detailed. The rubble stonework appears to have been largely rebuilt, as the coursing is irregular, and removal of plaster might confirm the extent of rebuilding. The projecting single-storey pantry probably survives from the nineteenth century wing, and the leaded window is re-set but probably dates from the eighteenth century. The narrowness and solidity of the internal wall dividing the ground-floor rooms in this wing suggests that it is built of brick or concrete blockwork.

3.0 Detailed Description

3.1 Exterior

South Front (Photograph 1)

Walling. Squared watershot sandstone, tightly jointed with lime mortar. Stonework to the plinth is sandstone rubble with lime mortar.

Gutters. Lead cornice gutter. Lead rainwater hopper dated '1793'. Remainder of downpipe renewed in cast iron. Unsightly SVP to its right.

Roof. Grey slate in diminishing courses. Sandstone gable copings and sandstone ashlar chimney caps.

Windows. Glazing bar sashes, probably original or original pattern. Some cylinder glass.

Doorway. Stone doorcase with open pediment. Plain semi-circular fanlight, which probably had glazing bars originally. Mid 19th century panelled door. Handrails and lampholders to stone steps in welded steel, probably an approximate imitation of the original ones.

West Gable of Main House (Photograph 2)

Walling. Roughly-squared watershot sandstone with cement struck pointing.

Windows. Glazing bar sashes, probably original or original pattern. Some cylinder glass.

West Side of Rear Wing (Photograph 2)

Walling. Lower walls sandstone rubble with cement struck pointing. Lack of coursing suggests 20th century reconstruction. Upper part of wall (and exposed part of rear wall of main house) grey cement roughcast.

Gutters. Cast iron.

Roof. Grey slate in diminishing courses.

Windows. Probably 1950s but crudely detailed (square sections, top-hung and side-hung casements, unequal pane sizes in casements, not recessed into wall.)

Doorway. Glazed door set into stone surround of late 18th or 19th century type (i.e. plain but hand-finished with bolster chisel.

Main Chimney. Projecting chimney with inglenook window is an arts and crafts detail, but relatively coarsely executed (window details similar to the others, chimney a uniform rectangular section.)

North Gable of Rear Wing (Photograph 2)

Walling. As on west side.

Windows. As on west side. Shallow exposed concrete of ground-floor window lintel confirms 20th century date.

East Side of Rear Wing (Photograph 3)

Projecting Pantry. Squared sandstone rubble with cement struck pointing. Coursing more regular than other parts of rear wing. Quoins with furrowed tooling, making a mid 19th century date more likely than a late 18th century one.

First Floor Wall & Window. As on west side.

Doorway to North of Pantry. Door opening difficult to date - rubble reveals and plain sandstone lintel. Plank door.

Window to south of Pantry. Archway and stonework of sill appear to have been reconstructed in

4.0 Conclusions

The building is mainly significant because of its close association with Kirk Mill: until its most recent sale it was the mill owner / manager's house. The mill was among the earliest water-powered spinning mills and so one of the earliest factories anywhere in the world. The main facade is its most important architectural feature. The rear wing has mid 19th century origins but was almost entirely reconstructed in the 1950s. The interiors are relatively plain and no original fireplaces remain. However, the staircase, window shutters, panelled doors and architraves in the main house all seem to be original.