

🌀 History of Spout House 🌀

Historical Descriptions

Thomas Middleton in his ***History of Hyde*** describes Spout House as follows:

In Stockport Road, below Enfield is Spout House. Shaded by the branches and foliage of ancient trees and framed by an old world country garden. It must have been well and pleasantly situated in rural surroundings on what was a hedge fringed country high road.



This description could have been written today, and a tree standing in the front garden must be four or five hundred years old.



Aikin writing in 1795 describes Gee Cross: -

Near the commencement of the eastern horn of Cheshire which runs up the hill into the wild country bordering on Yorkshire and the Peak of Derbyshire is Hyde Chapel, or, as it is now called Gee Cross. The chapel is a dissenting place of worship. About twenty five years ago, there was only one house besides, and now the place looks like a little town, and forms a continuous street for nearly a mile.

It seems certain to me that Spout House is the house Aikin was talking about, and that Tabitha Jackson, who was living there during the period Aikin describes, must have watched the place grow after her father built the road.

Inside the House

The current owners of Spout House Barn, Jack and Lynda Shufflebotham kindly agreed to let me visit and take photographs. Jack and Lynda started to convert the barn into living accommodation in the 1970s and what was once the piggery, stables and hayloft is now a spacious and comfortable home full of many original features.



About twenty five years ago Jack and Lynda made an appointment at Cheshire Record Office to try to discover what they could about the history of Spout House. Here they found maps and documents of Werneth dating back to the 17th century showing the farmhouse, which was the only building in the area, pre-dating the chapel. There was the possibility of searching even older records, but their time was up.

They also discovered that Spout House was originally a stagecoach stop on the main Stockport to Sheffield Stage Coach route. At the left hand side of the barn is a newly constructed workshop, which originally had been a farriers, but was in much too derelict a state of repair to renovate along with the rest of the barn.

On checking the Werneth Land Tax returns for 1797 I had already found David Jackson at Spout House Farm, but the very next entry was for Samuel Woods occupying the Smithy. It seems to have continued as such right up until the 1930s where Kelly's Trade Directories for Cheshire have an entry at the same address for Alfred Darbyshire, Wheelwright and Blacksmith, 314 Stockport Road.

I have shown the photographs and given a general description of the property to a local member of Tameside Archaeological Society who confirms that a 17th century date is reasonable for parts of the property and that it could be even older. Dendrochronological testing of the beams would prove interesting. The beams have no dates on them but they do have numbers indicating how they should be fitted together. One of the beams intended for his kitchen had rotted quite badly at one end, but Jack managed to find another one to replace it, that fits in pretty well with the originals.

The barn became Lynda and Jack's property via Lynda's aunt Florence Shakeshaft, who came into Spout House via Alfred Darbyshire mentioned above. Now Spout House is separated into five different properties, but in Florence Shakeshaft's time she owned the whole, including a large barn that used to be at the back and various out buildings including a hen-run and a milk bottling plant. When Florence owned the property it was a working dairy farm and her brother Sam had the milkround. Jack Shufflebottom remembers bottling up the milk as a young boy. Alfred Darbyshire also owned a timber yard across the road. The gardens at the front used to be used for vegetables, and not as the cottage garden it is today.

Overhead View of Spout House



1. Three Storey Weavers Cottages – now 310 Stockport Road.
2. First bay Farmhouse – now separate accommodation.
3. Second Bay originally the shippon – now separate accommodation
4. Third and Fourth Bays originally the piggery, stables and hayloft, now Spout House Barn – Jack and Lynda Shufflebotham's House.
5. Originally the site of a row of terraced cottages called Farmside.
6. and 7. Modern bungalows now occupied by Lynda's relatives.
8. Now separate accommodation – Bumble Cottage 308 Stockport Road.

Before Spout House was split into individual dwellings when it was all the property of Florence Shakeshaft, there was a set of doors leading right through SPOUT HOUSE from 8) through to the end of 4).

A curious feature of the house and a possible reason for the name SPOUT HOUSE is that between bays 3 and 4 is an internal walled space where a stream runs through the property, which Jack has had to accommodate into the house's drainage system. There was also an old well here that had been lined by the simple expedient of piling nine or ten bottomless barrels on top of one another. So it seems that the house had running water from very early days.

Jack Shufflebotham told me about the days when his barn was a stables. The horses used to come in at the back, but couldn't turn round to get out, so two large stable doors were built at the front to lead the horses out onto a cobbled courtyard at the front of the house, where they turned round and went back through the barn to the farm. At the front and back of the barn, a couple of breather holes can still be seen that are remnants from the time it was used as a hayloft.

When Jack applied for planning permission to convert the barn, he was obliged to dig out foundations three foot deeper than they were originally, to satisfy regulations regarding headroom below the beams on the upper floor. The walled front garden is still at the original level and the cobbled courtyard is underneath the front lawn.

After Dowson Road was built, around 1930, the farmlands were sold off to Dean & Whipp builders, who built approximately 300 houses on the site. Rather astutely Florence Shakeshaft made sure that she kept the land bordering on her property on the left by Tatton Street and on the right by Hepworth Street. This was to ensure that there was no access from Stockport Road through to the newly built houses, thereby maintaining the privacy of her property.

Previous Occupants of Spout House

Robert Ashton

In an undated newspaper article written by Ron Braddock about the history of Gee Cross he tells us that in 1712 Spout House was in the occupation of a Robert Ashton, and that five years later in 1717 by Widow Ashton.

I have checked the Hearth Tax records for Werneth and they show that in 1664 there were two Robert Ashton's living in Werneth at the time. It would be intriguing to do a little more research into these Ashton's to see if they could be linked to the Gee Cross Yeoman family of Ashton's that spawned Thomas and Samuel Ashton of Ashton Brothers. It was also interesting to find a Joshua Gerrard's name right next to the Ashton's in the Hearth Tax records for in the Land Tax Records of 1797 we find the Ashton families living at Gerrards and Polebank. The Ashton Family's Tree has a Samuel Ashton born in 1674 from an un-named Yeoman Family from Werneth. It was this Samuel Ashton who helped to found Hyde Chapel. The proximity of the Chapel to Spout House and Gerrards is interesting.

I have since found an abstract of title in Chester RO in favour of Joshua Gerrard for the rentals from various properties in Gee Cross, Werneth and Bredbury from the manorial lords of the manor, the Egerton Family, dated 1681. Some of the properties mentioned are, SPOUT HOUSE, Beacom Houses, cottages at Hill End and what looks like Butty Lane and Hepeleys in Bredbury. I haven't been able to transcribe this title deed in full since it contains four A3 pages of close print in very poor handwriting for the time, full of abbreviations and amendments etc. The gist of it appears to be that after Joshua's death his wife, Mary, is entitled to these rentals, but after her death by some complicated jointure to their surviving sons or their wives. One son is Joseph Gerard the Vicar of Tarvin, another son is Joshua a Practitioner of Physick in Warwickshire and their son John. Mary left a will which I will send for.

David Jackson

The next set of records we have are the Land Tax Returns for Werneth 1780-1831. These show that David Jackson was living at Spout House from 1780-1797. We do know that David and Tabitha Jackson were living at Spout House a little earlier than this, from the entry in the Chapel's baptism register showing they were there in 1777, indeed we might be able to speculate that they were there even earlier, perhaps from 1767 when they got married. These Land Tax Returns show that David Jackson was assessed at £1 0s 7d in 1781 rising to £1 5s 8d in 1789 and falling back to £1 0s 0d in 1797.

Where David and Tabitha went after 1797 is not known, but they are buried in Hyde Chapel's churchyard David in 1822 aged 86 and Tabitha in 1813 aged 71. However I have found an entry in Slater's Manchester and Salford Trade Directory for 1843 showing a Joseph Jackson with a Cotton Spinning Mill at Portwood Place, Stockport, with his residence at 17 Turncroft Lane. Joseph was the name of David Jackson's eldest son. Most of the cotton manufacturers of Gee Cross had to move further down the valley to build their larger steam powered factories, due to the absence of a good supply of coal. The Ashton's moving to Flowery Fields. David Jackson's father-in-law, Blind Jack, did say that his son-in-law's cotton business was at Stockport, (so maybe?).

Joseph Redfern

Next we find Joseph Redfern acquiring the property in 1798. He was still assessed to pay £1 0s 0d. By 1828 the land was in the hands of his executors, and in the last records we have in 1831 the land was only assessed at 14s 0d. Were there outside factors responsible for this decline in value or was it due to neglect. According to the Poor Rates record of 1804 Joseph Redfern was listed as a shopkeeper of Spout House.

An interesting document survives entitled 'Measurement of Land in the Township of Werneth' dated 1816, which seems to be an early tithe apportionment. Here is an extract relating to the property occupied by Joseph Redfern: -

Spout House – Joseph Redferns

Field at Back Door	1	2	14
Brick Kiln Field	1	2	10
Higher Cow Hey	1	0	10
Lower Cow Hey	1	0	38
Higher Pasture		3	11
Lower Pasture	1	3	25
Meadow	1	3	19
Yard and Gardens			11
Garden in the Bottoms			39
	=====		
Total Joseph Redferns	10	1	15
	=====		

Joseph Redfern and his wife Sarah had a very large family of twelve children. The first seven were baptised at Stockport Highstreet Presbyterian Chapel, and the remaining five at Hyde Gee Cross Unitarian Chapel.

In 1838 we have evidence that Joseph's fourth child, a daughter Amy baptised 14 September 1797 has taken over the farm from her father's executors. There is an entry in Pigot's Trade Directory of 1838, which shows Amy Redfern as a Shopkeeper at Gee Cross.

She is also found on the Tithe Apportionments of 1843 and the Tithe Map of 1841 where the field names have hardly changed since 1816.

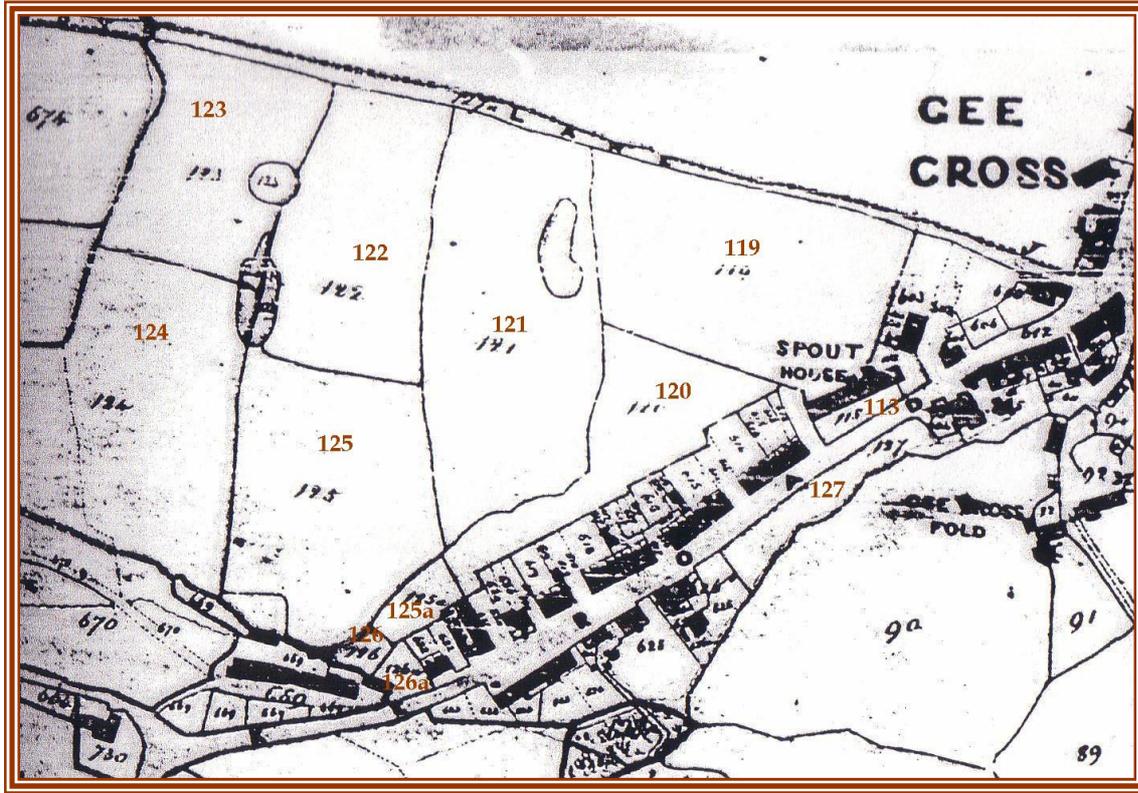
Amy Redfern

Spout House Tithe Apportionment 1843

Landowner: William Tatton Esquire Occupier: Amy Redfern

113 Farm Outbuilding & Garden	Homestead	1	13
119 Field at Back Door	Pasture	2	5 33
120 Meadow	Meadow	1	1 15
121 Brick Kiln Field	Pasture	5	2 12
122 Higher Cow Hey	Meadow	3	1 99
123 Higher Pasture	Meadow	1	3 26
124 Lower Pasture	Meadow (Part Arable)	11	1 13
125 Lower Cow Hey & Garden	Pasture	2	3 22
125a Part of Lower Cow Hey	Gardens		35

126 Gardens	Gardens	16
126a Vacant Land	Waste	19
127 Gardens in the Bottoms	Gardens	2 4
127a Knott Lane Land from J-K	Land	2 22
		=====
	TOTAL	21 1 29



Amy Redfern is still found living at Gee Cross in 1850 trading as a corn dealer.

Samuel Shepley

On the 1851 Census we find the following family living at Spout House, but not farming the land:

Samuel Shepley aged 71 a Hatter born in Hyde.
 Easter his wife aged 57 a Washerwoman born Yorkshire.
 Daughter Ellen Boggart aged 23 a Power Loom Weaver born in Hadfield.
 Granddaughter Sarah Ann Boggart aged 23 months born Werneth.

I couldn't find Spout House on the 1861 Census.

Nancy Lewis

In 1871 Nancy Lewis is living in the house a widow aged 77 with no occupation, born Yorkshire with her daughter Mary aged 49 a housewife and son James aged 38 a hatter, both were born in Hyde. There is still no mention of anyone living in the house actually farming the land.

Joshua and Jane Swindells

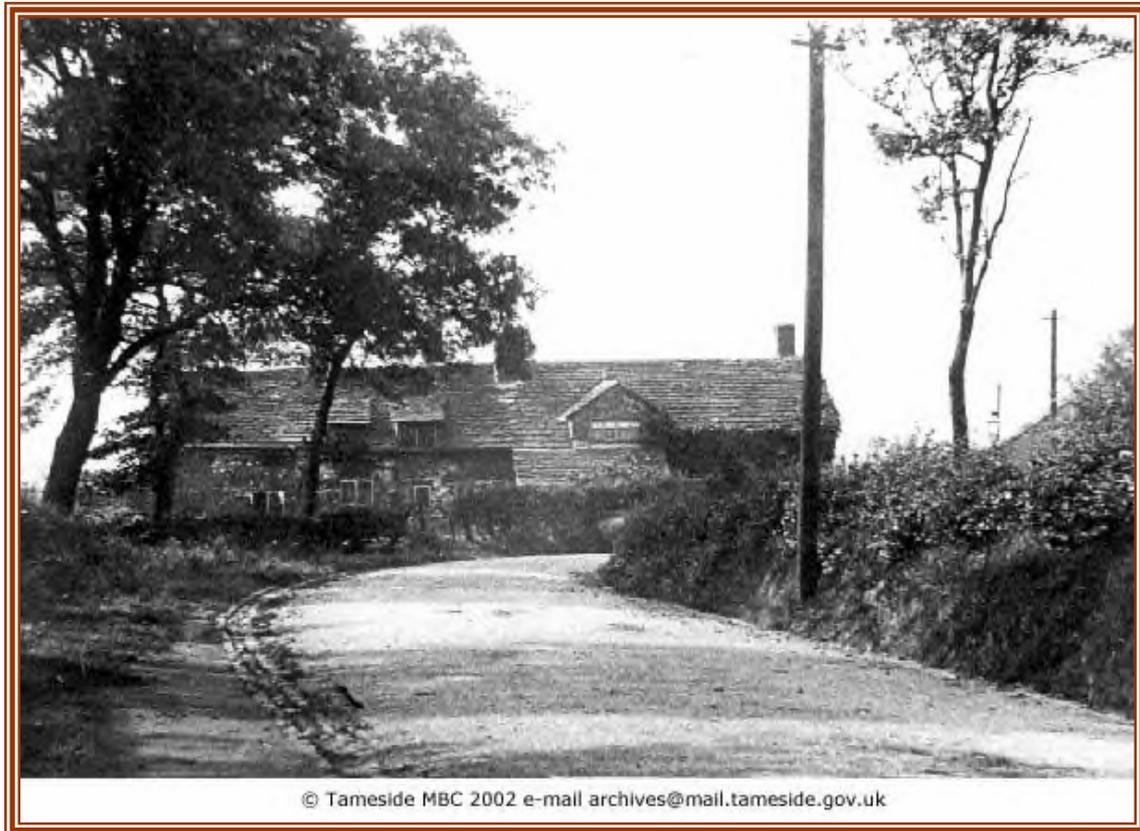
A clue to what happened to the farm appears in Thomas Middleton's *History of Hyde* page 121.

An old Yeoman Family named Swindells farmed 'Thistley Fields' in 1750, and they farmed in the township either here or at 'Apethorn' or 'Spout House Farm' for two centuries.

The Werneth Land Tax Returns 1797 does show Henry Swindells at 'Apethorn Farm' and a George Booth at 'Cicely Fields', which I think is meant to be 'Thistley Fields'

From this I am speculating that the Swindells Family were farming at Spout House Farm, but not living there and renting the farmhouse out, until:

The 1881 Census shows Joshua Swindells aged 72 born at Apethorn as a farmer of ten acres, living at 88 Stockport Road, and employing one farm labourer. His young wife Jane aged 45 was born at Worksop.



Apethorn Farm – another historic Gee Cross farmhouse built on a style developed from the old mediaeval cruck framed longhouse. It was here, in the lane, that Thomas Ashton was murdered in 1831.

Joshua Swindells must have died shortly after the 1881 Census because Worrall's Trade Directory of 1882, shows Jane Swindells is listed as a farmer at Spout House.

Charles Lee

The 1891 Census now shows Charles Lee aged 36 farming at 88 Stockport Road, with his wife Betty aged 49 and two children Ellen aged 14 a cotton winder and Sarah Ann aged 12. I found the same family living at 150, Gerrards ten years earlier in the 1881 Census.

Aaron Daniels

Kelly's 1896 Directory for Cheshire shows that Aaron Daniels is now farming the land, who changes the name of the farm to 'Fernbank'. He appears at 88 Stockport Road in the 1901 Census aged 60 with his wife Mary. Twenty years previously Aaron Daniels and his wife and three infant children are listed at 'Jobils Farm', Hyde as a farmer of 28 acres. He was born at Rainow, Cheshire. He is still there according to Kelly's 1902 Directory, but by 1906 he is gone and the house numbers on Stockport Road have been changed.

Levi Hadfield and Alfred Darbyshire

The 1911 census cleared any lingering doubt for me that that Spout House at 310 Stockport Road was at number 88 prior to renumbering. The census schedule for 88 Stockport Road has Levi Hadfield living there and he completes his address as Spout House Farm, Gerrards, Gee Cross.

Levi Hadfield aged 37 Farmer born in Hyde
Sarah Hadfield aged 27 housewife born Hyde
Levi Hadfield aged 7 born Hyde
Mary Johnson aged 26 Domestic Maid born Borough hill, Daventry
John Sidebotham aged 23 Teams Man born Hollingworth

Also renting four rooms at the property is

Frank Wilson aged 32 Bookkeeper at the Hat Works born Gee Cross
Nancy Wilson aged 38 born at Greave fold in Romiley
John Wilson aged 6 months born at Gee Cross

The next directory I could find was for 1923, where Levi Hadfield is listed as a farmer at 310 Stockport Road, and Alfred Darbyshire as a Wheelwright and Blacksmith at 314 Stockport Road. These entries are still exactly the same in 1934 and 1939.

In the 1881 census I found a seven-year-old Levi living with his parents Levi and Hannah Hadfield and three brothers John, Frederick and Joseph living at 7, Woodfield Farm. Levi's parents were originally from Hope in Derbyshire.

Lynda and Jack Shufflebotham told me that Florence Shakeshaft came into the property via Alfred Darbyshire, but they can't remember the exact date and details. Jack and Lynda also told me that about six or seven years previously, they visited Stalybridge Local Studies library to find out if they held any records of SPOUT HOUSE in their archives. They were shown several small account books, with details of farm expenditure e.g. 'seven roof tiles repaired – charge a penny farthing'. I have spent a considerable amount of time in the library myself trying to find these account books, but no luck so far.

Acknowledgments:

Special thanks to Jack and Lynda Shufflebotham for letting me visit and take photographs, and for some of the background information they provided.

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