

## **Balderstone Hall Estate** by H.M.Haynes

Back to the beginning

Croft, hall, fold and mill play their part in the history of many a Rochdale hamlet. Records of Balderstone begin with a croft mentioned in AD 1240 in the Towneley Manuscripts. The croft was a small piece of arable land adjoining a dwelling occupied by the de Balderstone family. Today this area is Balderstone Park. Between Balderstone and Buersil was Saltergate, a name of Norse origin meaning "salt – summer –pasture hut road". As the name Balderstone is also thought to be of Norse origin the settlement could date back to the tenth or eleventh century.

Balderstone was in the Manor of Castleton, in the larger Manor or Rochdale, which was itself subject to the Great Manor of Clitheroe. Land owning families took their names from the area where they lived and they often gave land to the church. Rights to the land went to Stanlan Abbey and later Whalley. In 1290 John, son of Hugh de Balderstone, released to the monks of Stanlan his rights in the service of Richard son of Andrew de Haworth. Other records of the de Balderstone family also appear in Coucher Book of Whalley but they end with Henry de Balderstone who released land on Buersil Moor to the Byron family in the fourteenth century.

The Estate is divided

Land passed from the de Balder stones to the Holt, Garside and Heywood families. Henry Holt of Balderstone lived in a Hall of some pretensions but he died without issue in 1520. Later James Garside was to die without heir and lawsuits and subdivision of the Estate followed. Peter Heywood sold most of his land in 1582 and the Hall passed to the Holts of Stubley.

The Open Field

By this time Slack, Kirkholt, Cripplegate and Bradshaws were already established. They were small units of settlement each like an oasis in a waste of over four hundred acres of turbury and moss. Tenants cultivated small strips of open field around them, turning their cattle out onto the stubble when the crop of wheat corn was gathered and exercising their rights of pasturage on common meadow, pasture and waste.

Enclosure of the Commons

In 1626 the Manor of Rochdale was held by the King and a detailed survey of it was made, with a view to selling it. There were nine freeholders in Castleton of whom Charles Holt of Balderstone Hall was one. The Holts were farmer's weavers and Charles farmed thirty acres around the Hall, which included the Kitchen Meadow, Crofts, Rye fields, orchards, barns and stables.

Close by the Hall and its demesne was a fold in the area where Balderstone Road now joins Oldham Road. During the sixteenth century common land was enclosed, usually by agreement. The Fold was the unit to which had been appropriated recently divided

common meadows, pasture and tracks of waste and between whose group of occupiers the 'fold' itself was divided.

In Balderstone Fold five copy holders held closed recently improved out of Castleton Moor and surrendered by Charles Holt. The closes were of about two acres each and they were a mixture of strips of arable meadow and pasture. They were smaller than the closes taken out of Buersil Moor, where enclosure was accomplished after many bitter struggles. Charles Holt also improved land off the 'King's Waste' for himself. He built a water-powered corn mill before 1628. It was by the fold in the Tenterfield just below the site of the present Balderstone Mill. A cloth maker, James Scofield, was working in the Fold, as was John Stock who was a yeoman to John Halliwell of Pyke House, Buersil Moor.

Farming and waving went hand in hand in Hall and fold and soon handlooms would be in virtually every home in Balderstone.

## Mansion for Sale

### Three Flashbacks in History

No. 1 1827 "To be Sold by Private Contract – Balderstone Hall in occupation of William Hassal, together with seventeen acres or thereabouts in occupation of John Tweedale as tenant at will. Premises free from land tax and tithes and it having been ascertained by boring for coal, near adjoining there is no doubt entertained of a valuable bed of coal, being under this estate.

.... Also the farming stock – five excellent Milch cows, one mow of good hay. Also one pair of Broad Looms, Twining Mill, Seventy Spindles, Jenny, Healds, Reeds, Skips, Bobbins .... Harpsichord, furniture and all the kitchen and Dairy utensils."  
(Rochdale Records 20<sup>th</sup> January and 4<sup>th</sup> August 1827)

This was the Balderstone Hall built in the early 1780's by Whitehead family, wool staples from Lidgate, Saddleworth. It was brick built and of a "genteel appearance."

No. 2 1906 "Indenture between Edith Mary, Vincent, Caroline Maud and Clifford Herbert Radcliffe (lessors) and Walter Pilling (lessee).  
Lease of Balderstone Hall ... 15 rooms, billiard room, attics, cellars and harness brackets, coachman's cottage, Greenhouse, Fernery and Peach house, containing 4 peach trees, 1 apricot tree, 3 wall camellias and 7 vines."  
(Balderstone Hall Estate Deeds)

We have now moved to the Ha;; illustrated on page 10, which many of us remember. The Whites Hall with stable block behind was demolished in 1851, but its carriageway from Oldham Road was retained and another Hall was built in brick on the same site for the Radcliffe family.

No. 3 1919 "The Balderstone Hall Estate persevered in perpetuity for the people. The hall and grounds converted into a public resort approaching to the continental style,

with open-air café, with reading and educative books, an aviary , a band playing in the summer time, a children's playground, hill-side terraces, a large open air swimming bath, fountains playing here and there, groups of detached houses on garden city lines among the trees ... but above all the preservation of farmsteads on this pretty estate. This was the enticing picture painted in words by Mr John Hamer, the manager of Balderstone Mill, who recently secured the Balderstone Hall Estate, one of Rochdale's beauty spots, and these are the lines on which he intends to develop it. He also stated he did not want the corporation to undertake the slightest responsibility." (Rochdale Household Almanack 1919)

Well what about that? We never quite arrived at the "public resort approaching the continental style" did we? The playground and educative books are there though!

## **The Old Mill By the Stream**

Balderstone's old Mill is first mentioned in the will of Charles Holt of Balderstone Hall in 1628. It was a watermill or cornmill with a corn-drying kiln, and it was situated in the ancient croft referred to in 1240. Close by were cottages , barns for the wheat and a tenter field. The Holt family were farmer-weavers and wool may have been fulled by hand (or rather feet) and stretched out on tenter frames to dry. The car park of the much more recent Balderstone Cotton Mill covers the site of the corn mill and tenterfield.

### The Old Damstead

The Stream was Sudden Brook and a tributary the rises above the Yew Trees, and they flowed into the old Damstead in the close named Hollins Lee. Weirs and fenders were constructed near Badger Lane and Water from Sudden Brook diverted across what is now Oldham Road via a goit. From the Damstead it flowed to the wheelrace. Nearby were two ancient cottages. Melbourne Close now covers Hollins Lee. Badger Lane may have taken its name from the corn mill as badgers were itinerant traders dealing with corn. (Forget about the furry ones!)

Grind your corn here!

The Holts farmer the arable land around Balderstone Hall and as freeholders had certain rights over the tenants in the Fold which developed between Hall and Mill. One of these rights was the obligation of tenants to grind their corn at the Holt's Mill. In 1713 the Holts sold the Mill along with their Estate to Timothy Whitehead a wool stapler or trader of Saddleworth. It continued as a corn mill until at least 1740. By 1784 it was a fulling mill, leased by Timothy Whitehead (grandson of the first Timothy) to James Heaward , a fuller of Oakenrod and other mills.

Move over Please!

Water mills were easily adapted and people could full wool alongside other grinding corn. This was the case at Milnrow in 1820 "much to the great inconvenience of those who wished to grind corn". There may well have been a transitional period at

Balderstone .The corn-drying kiln remained until at least 1775 and deeds as late as 1843 suggest that the corn-grinding stones had not been removed.

#### Take it home

Around 1820 the mill was adapted for wool carding. It prepared slubbings that could be taken into the cottages in the fold and woven into flannel on hand-loom. (Carding had taken place in the Fold from the 1770s.) The mill was small with only a handful of operatives but in this way it provided work for many a local family, keeping them out of the workhouse at Calf Hey, Lower Place. (Timothy Whitehead was an overseer of the Poor in the 1770s). The carding was additional to fulling, necessitating a second water wheel. The tenters, going gear, fulling stocks and tackling rights remained until at least 1843.

#### Steam Power Too

By 1846 the Old Mill had a steam engine and it consisted of boiler house, dry house and main building with upper and lower floors. The water wheel remained. In 1854 Richard Walker built Balderstone Cotton Mill, which was later sold to the Radcliffes, in the close Hollin Lee. By then the Old Mill was a woollen worsted mill and it took on a secondary role.

The old Mill and wheel remained until the beginning of this century. Surprisingly one row of hand-loom weavers cottages connected with it survives. Built in 1793 by Robert Chadwick a clothier of Buersil Bridge on land leased from the fuller James Heaward. The four two-storey cottages adjoin the dog and partridge.

Deeds of Balderstone Mill dating back to 1688 can be seen at Preston Records Office.