

The History of Rock Cottage, Westfield Road, Horbury circa 1860-1960.

This is the history of a dwelling known in its day as Rock Cottage which was situated on Denton Lane (now Westfield Road) in Horbury Parish. Situated on Sowood Bend on the opposite side of the road to Sowood Farm (in Ossett Parish) there now remains very little evidence of the property's existence. The dwelling, built in the early 1860's and demolished in the late 1950's, is not to be confused with the nearby dwellings on Storrs Hill which are now known as Rock Cottages but which once went by the name of "The Rocks".

Whilst these dwellings were distinctly different they did have one thing in common in as much as they were built by the same family Marsden who had done so much to influence the 18th and 19th Century development of Sowood and Storrs Hill. There is much more about the Marsden family in the contemporary histories, *Sowood Farm*, *The Rocks* and *Matty Marsden Lane* which are available on the Ossett Heritage website <https://ossettheritage.co.uk/links/#section-2>

In so far as this history is concerned the following illustration shows the location of Rock Cottage and neighbouring properties built by the Marsden family at Storrs Hill and Sowood. Unlike most of the dwellings shown below, which were situated in Ossett, Rock Cottage was located in Horbury Parish. The property shown in the illustration as being in the occupation of Frank Marsden is the property now known as The Halfway House, Westfield Road, Horbury.

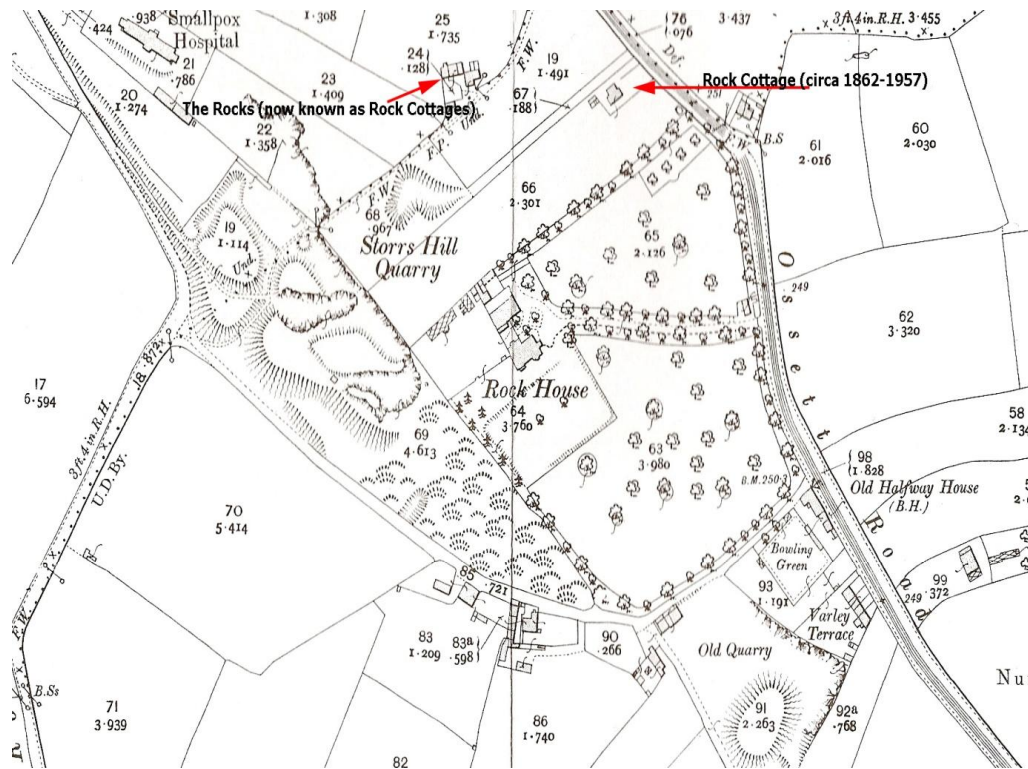


Rock Cottage was by no means a dwelling of architectural or historical interest or significance but it deserves to be recorded because it was another example of the influence of the Marsden family. It was also once occupied, but never owned, by Bennett Brook and his family who worked and later owned the nearby Sowood Farm situated just across the road, in Ossett Parish.

This may also be the only opportunity to write the history of the dwelling since, unlike most of the other Marsden homes, it no longer exists.

Sarah Marsden's life and location before the construction of Rock Cottage

Rock Cottage was built in the early 1860's shortly before the much more substantial nearby Rock House which was built and occupied by Horbury Mill owner, George Harrop (1813-1892). Built in the Victorian style of the times, Rock Cottage took its name from the nearby outcrop known variously as Storrs or Storge Hill or The Rocks. Its location is shown in map form below



1907 map of North Horbury showing Ossett Road (formerly Denton Lane & latterly Westfield Road)¹

Rock Cottage was built in the early 1860's by Sarah Ann Mitchell (nee Marsden) and her husband, George Mitchell, on land left to her by her father, Benjamin Marsden (1800-1844), a fellmonger. Sarah Ann Marsden (1834-1882) and George Mitchell (1825-1902), Rag Merchant and one time farmer, were married by licence at South Ossett Parish Church on 11th February 1859. Both Sarah and George were described as being of "Full Age" although Sarah was only 25 and George was 34 years of age. Within a few years of their marriage Rock Cottage would become their new home but before her marriage she lived with her parents at a nearby dwelling on land known as Long Ing.

1859. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of South Ossett in the County of York							
No.	When Married	Name and Surname	Age	Condition	Rank or Profession	Residence at the Time of Marriage	Father's Name and Surname
38	10 Feb 1859	Geo. Mitchell	Full age	Bachelor	Rag Merchant	South Ossett	John Mitchell
		Sarah Ann Marsden	Full age	Spinster	—	South Ossett	Benjamin Marsden
Solemnized in the <u>Parish Church</u> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by <u>George Mitchell</u> Minister of the said Church, in the presence of us, <u>James Wilson</u> & <u>Henry James Fisher</u> Vicar of the said Church.							

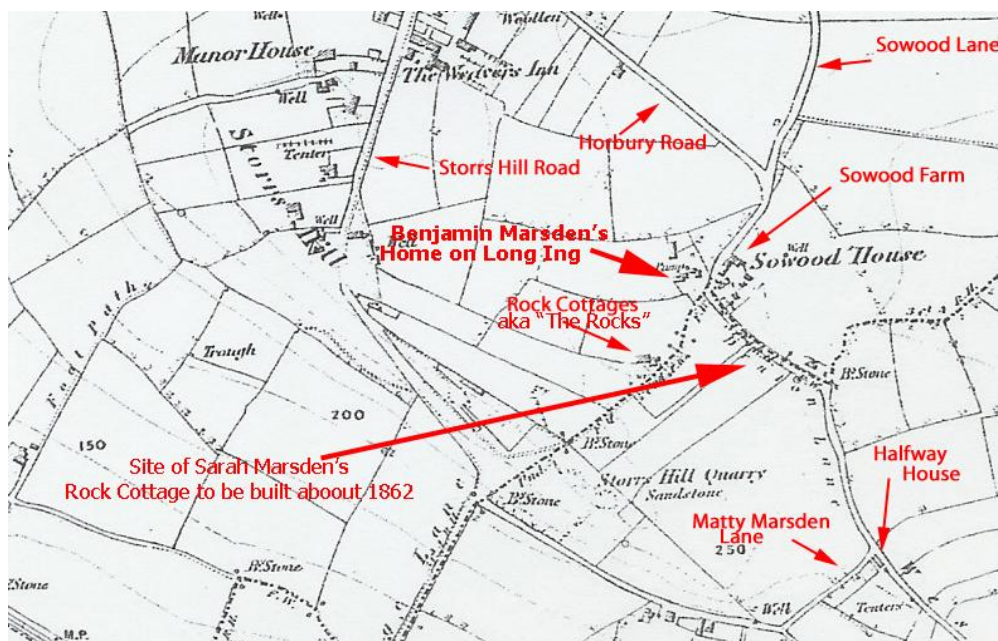
¹ The Godfrey Edition Reprints of Old Ordnance Survey Maps <http://www.alangodfrey.com/>

Sarah Marsden was the only daughter of Benjamin Marsden (1800-1844) and the 4x great grand daughter of Francisci Marsden who purchased the copyhold interest in Sowood Farm in 1676; in 1689, Francis re-built the farmhouse which still stands there today. After Penistone born Francisci (1651-1718) died, Sowood Farm and adjacent Marsden land and property ownerships passed down through five generations of Marsdens.

Those land holdings did not include the land on which Sarah and George would build Rock Cottage but it did include 2 acres 3 roods 8 perches² (just under 3 acres in total) known as Long Ing or Long Close and this is shown in the illustration on page 1, and below, as being in the occupation of Sarah's father Benjamin Marsden (1800-1844). Benjamin's father (also Benjamin Marsden 1765-1812) had been left the southern half and road frontage of this plot of land by his father, Thomas Marsden in 1802. Sarah's father or grandfather built a dwelling on this Long Ing land and it would be here that Sarah was born on 14th November 1833.

Sarah (born 1833) suffered much family misfortune in her early life losing her mother, Jane (nee Johnson), in 1840 at the age of 28 which explains why, unusually for the time, Sarah was an only child. Her father, Benjamin, died four years later in 1844 at the age of 44 leaving Sarah an orphan at the age of only 10 years but she remained living at the Long Ing house built by her father or grandfather and left in trust to her in her father's Will dated 27 March 1844. She was recorded at this dwelling in the 1851 Census when she was living there with her spinster Aunt Hannah and her Uncle Joseph, and his wife Ellen. It seems probable that she remained here until her 1859 marriage to George Mitchell.

Probate was obtained by Benjamin's brother John (1798-1849) on 14 August 1844 and 10 year old Sarah inherited household goods linen plate china etc whilst Benjamin's land and property were left to his Trustees (brothers John and Joseph) so that Sarah received income therefrom until the age of 21 or marriage when she inherited the land and property. The Long Ing dwelling **comprised his dwellinghouse, shops, stable, garden, barn and the adjacent Long Ing**. This dwelling does not appear on a 1790 Estate Map of the area but is shown on the 1843 Tithe Award map and the 1850 OS map (below) suggesting that it was built between about 1790 and 1840. The dwelling appears to be there in 1894 but has been replaced by the Tram Sheds on the 1907 map.



1850 Map showing Benjamin's dwelling on Long Ing which was Sarah's childhood home before moving the short distance to her new home, Rock Cottage (also shown)

² 4 roods in an acre and 40 perches in a rood

As indicated above, the land on which Sarah and George were to build Rock Cottage appears not to have been part of the Marsden land holdings handed down through several generations in the 18th Century. However Benjamin Marsden's Executors are recorded in the Horbury Tithe Award of 1848 as being in possession of Denton Lane Field (part), field 238, an area of 2A 1R 0P which is the opposite side of Ossett Road/Denton Lane/Ossett Lane to Sowood Farm. Benjamin's Will informs that this land was "bought recently" from Mary Wood and James Wadsworth. Amongst other holdings this land was left to Benjamin's only daughter Sarah and is the site on which *Rock Cottage* was constructed.

Sarah Marsden at Rock Cottage from the early 1860's

Sarah Marsden married George Mitchell on 11 February 1859 and by 1861 the Ossett Census records the couple living and working the nearby Sowood Farm where George was described as a Rag merchant and farmer of 50 acres. It seems unlikely that their stay there was very long and by 1871 the Horbury Census records them living at the last property, nearest Ossett, on Westfield Road. This property is Rock Cottage.

Sarah remained living at Rock Cottage until her early death in late Summer 1882 at the age of 49 leaving her husband and three children, Arthur, Jane and Eliza. Her husband, George, lived at Rock Cottage for another 20 years when, aged 76, he died on 4 January 1902. Probate was granted at Wakefield on 11 Apr 1902 to Benjamin and John Thomas Marsden, Mungo Manufacturers, and Arthur Mitchell, Farmer. George's estate amounted to £17500.

By this time George's son Arthur was farming at Woodhouse Farm at Emley and it seems probable that he rented out Rock Cottage. Certainly the 1911 Census records the six roomed Rock Cottage, Westfield Road, Horbury occupied by 64 year old retired police inspector William Robinson, his wife and son. It is uncertain how long the Robinson family occupied the house but Arthur Mitchell of Woodhouse Farm, Emley, died on 19th December 1933. Probate was granted at London to his son, George Arthur, on 6th July 1934 and the value of the estate was £5412.10s. 8d.

The occupants of Rock Cottage between 1911 and 1935 are unknown but the death of Arthur Mitchell in 1933 and the subsequent probate in 1934 may have been the catalyst for action to be taken to let or re-let Rock Cottage. In any event by 1935 Rock Cottage had new occupants when Bennet Brook moved into the property with his wife Mabel and four young children Dora, Bessie, Joyce and David.

Bennet Brook was the son of Fredrick Brook who had rented and worked Sowood Farm since the 1890's. From being a very young boy, Bennet had assisted his father in working the farm and his involvement increased significantly as he and his father grew older. Fredrick had been ill for a few years before his death in 1936 and Bennet's 1935 move to Rock Cottage, close to Sowood Farm may have been connected to his father's failing health even though the family only moved from nearby Horbury Road.

Bennet's widowed mother, Lilly, continued to live at Sowood Farm after her husband's death in 1936 until she died in 1957. In 1955 Bennet moved to Manor Villa/House on Manor Lane built by Mill owner Mark Wilby in the 1860's thus completing a move from one 1860's Victorian home to another. There is little doubt however that the move was from a house which had been neglected by its owners to one which had remained in much better condition. Within two years Rock Cottage had been demolished whilst Manor Villa/House still remains to this day albeit divided into apartments.

Few photographs of Rock Cottage are known to have survived and two of these were taken almost 100 years after its construction and just before its subsequent demolition in 1956/57³



Rock Cottage, Horbury, 1956

The dwelling appears to be derelict and surrounded by demolition rubble and waste ground. Above the door is a stone carved lion's head.

I am indebted to Eric Walker and the Brook family, in particular Dora Brook and Bessie Walker (nee Brook), for the following notes which they have kindly provided to me to record as their memories of Rock Cottage which was Dora's home for 20 years between 1935 and 1955 and was home to Bessie between 1935 and her marriage in 1953.

One of the reasons for Bennet's move from Rock Cottage was an apparent unwillingness by the Mitchell owners to undertake repairs to the property. The dwelling relied upon gas lighting until the 1950's when electricity was finally installed. The large house was heated by coal fires and a fire-back boiler heated the water although this did not supply the attached wash-house which contained a manual washer and mangle together with its own gas operated boiler.

Rock Cottage had no flushing toilets and neither was there any mains drainage to the house which relied on a cesspit located in the garden and a dry closet brick building to the rear of the house which was emptied by the Council's dustbin men. The brick building also incorporated a coalhouse.

³ Courtesy of Wakefield Libraries original image by Mr W Fowler. <http://www.twixtaireandcalder.org.uk/default.htm>

To the rear of the house there were several outbuildings which, at various times provided homes for hens, goats, geese, rabbits, budgies, fan tailed doves and other animals. In the adjacent field to the rear of the property stood an orchard with apple, pear and crab apple trees.

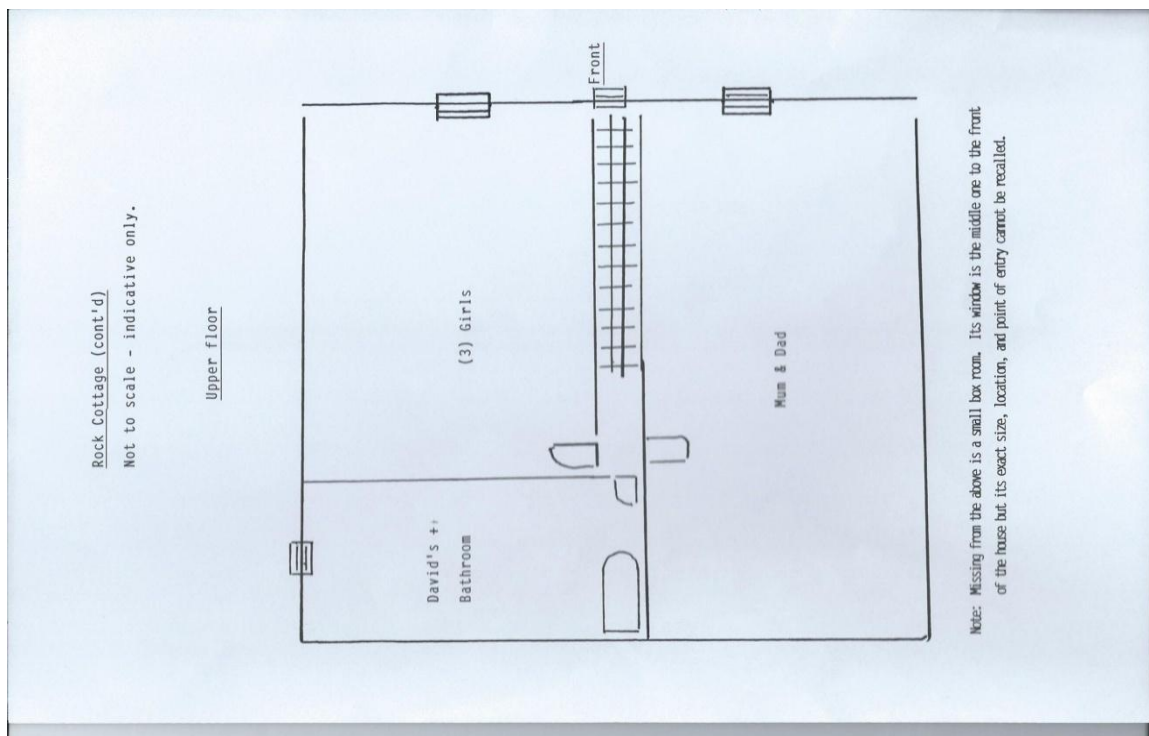
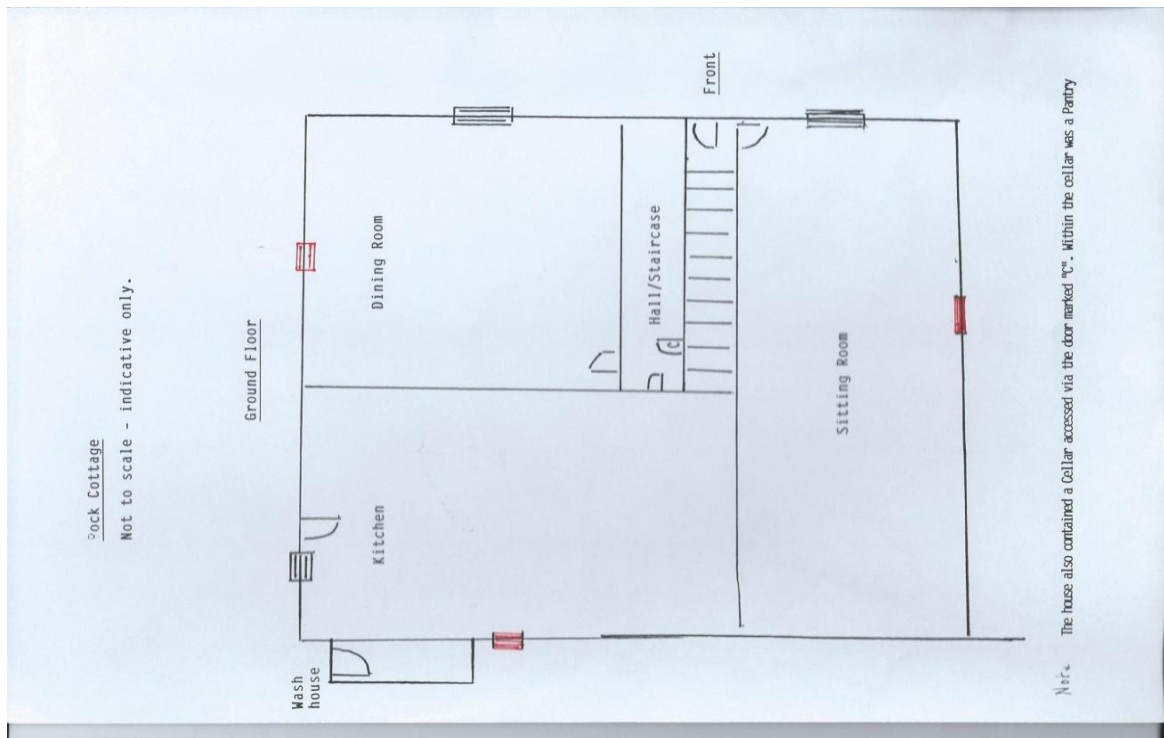


Rock Cottage, Horbury, 1956



Photograph showing 1Tram Shed; 2 Sowood Farm; 3 Sowood Bend; 4 Rock Cottage (annotation by Neville Ashby)

The above photographs tell us something about the dwelling albeit towards the end of its life. In addition to the notes provided by Dora and Bessie Brook they, and Bessie's husband, Eric Walker, have provided floor plans, not to scale, which provides a glimpse of the interior of the house. These are reproduced below.



Summary

Rock Cottage was the house built by Sarah Ann Mitchell (nee Marsden) in the early 1860's. Sarah and her husband, George, were the first occupants of the dwelling. Sarah (1833-1882) was the 4x great grandchild of Francis Marsden, who purchased nearby Sowood Farm in 1676 and re-built the Grade II Listed Farmhouse in 1689.

In 1935 Rock Cottage became the rented home of Bennet Brook (1891-1980) who worked nearby Sowood Farm for most of his life. He moved from the dwelling in 1955 and it was demolished shortly afterwards. Consequently the Brook family were the last occupiers of Rock Cottage. Bennett too was related to Francis Marsden being his the 6x great grandchild.

As such Sarah Ann Marsden and Bennett Brook were cousins although it is not known if Bennett was aware of this relationship or of his relationship to Francis Marsden, the 1676 owner of Sowood Farm.

Alan Howe

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