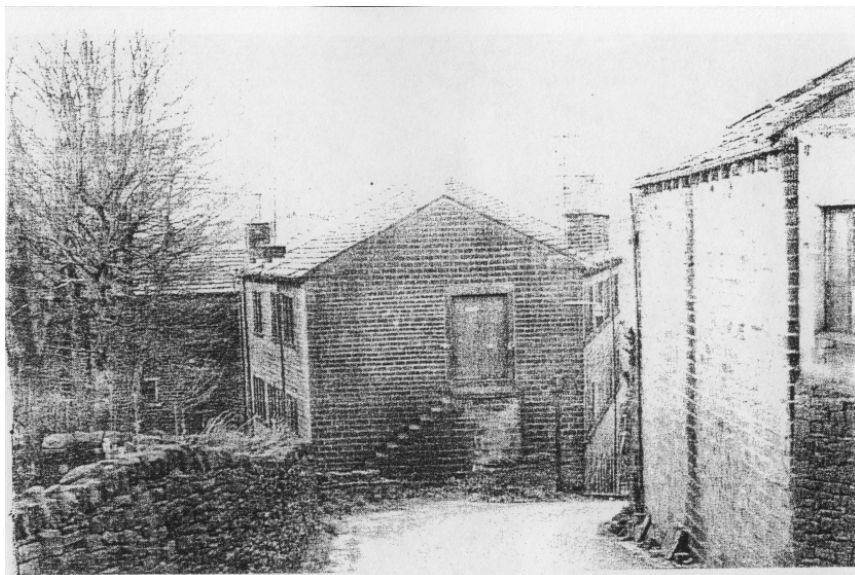
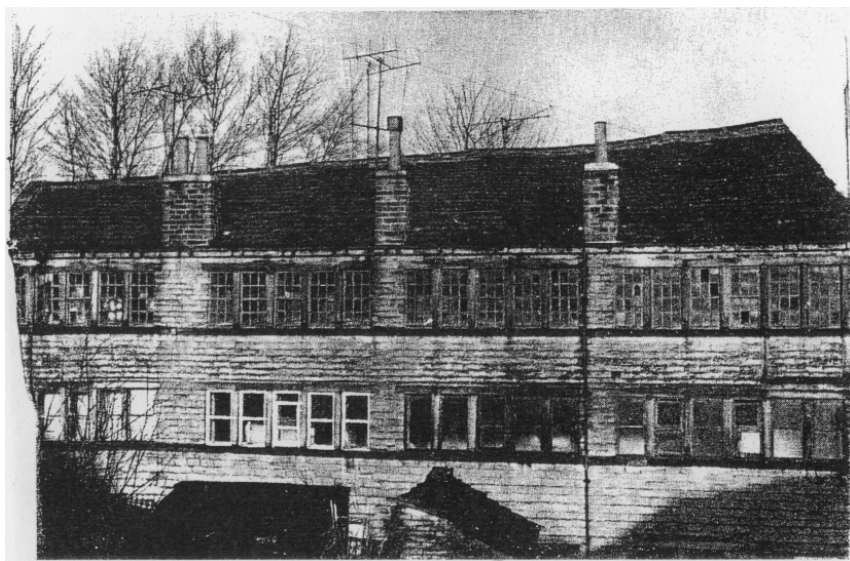




An end view of Coffin Row, showing the unusual shape. The outside stair and doors lead into the workshop. Prospect Place is behind the trees.



The south facing wall of Coffin Row, showing the weavers' windows, on the top and middle floors, the chimneys in the outside wall from the under dwellings.

Coffin Row, Linthwaite

The correct name for this mill is Upper Clough; a glance at the photograph on page 6 will explain why local people know it as Coffin Row. The building is on a hill with a gradient of approximately one in six, and is sand-wiched between the road called Upper Clough on one side and a field bound-ary on the other. Its history is closely woven into that of the adjoining houses, and the entire group is the subject of this article.

It may be best, however, to begin with some general remarks about the surrounding area. Linthwaite is one of the four townships in the Colne Valley, the others being Golcar, Marsden and Slaithwaite. Each township has a number of outlying hamlets, and Upper Clough was originally one of them. The whole valley is nowadays overshadowed by Huddersfield, but Huddersfield's rapid expansion only dates from the advent of steam power at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Before that, the Colne Valley and Huddersfield were similar in size and occupational structure.

The valley's industrial past and present is dominated by textiles. In particular, woollen cloth has been the mainstay of production, though cotton, silk and linen have been processed at times, and worsted goods and man-made fibres are now important. The valley bottom is filled with multi-storey mills and tall chimneys, the latter no longer belching black smoke as steam power has almost been abandoned. On the hillsides are reminders of older methods. Both sides of the valley, but especially the north side, have large numbers of weavers' cottages, characterised by long rows of continuous windows. The oldest date from the seventeenth century, and these early houses are two-storey. The hand looms were erected on the top floor (the bed could be collapsed during the day), and other processes were conducted down-stairs or outside. The only mill involved was the fulling mill. Such mills were sited on the river, as fulling was the only process in making woollen cloth which had to be done by water-power. Fulling at the manorial mill at Slaithwaite cost sixpence a piece in the 1670s, a piece then being about 30 yards long.

The rapid increase in the population in the second half of the eighteenth century was more than usually apparent in the Colne Valley and Huddersfield, as there was steady migration from other areas. Urban development accelerated in the nineteenth century, and led to the rapid expansion of Huddersfield. The valley townships also expanded. Since the farming in the valley was hard and only marginally profitable, economic expansion was directed into enlarging premises suitable for textile production. Some two-storey houses had a third storey added; more commonly, new houses were built of three storeys. In either case, the top floor was a weaving workshop, normally with access only from outside, not from below. The steepness of the hillsides made this arrangement easy, as it was possible to provide a door on to a road at both the bottom and the top of the house. In flatter areas, an outside staircase gave access to the workshop, a practice more commonly seen over the Pennine ridge in Saddleworth. The most active period of building and rebuilding of weavers' cottages seems to have been 1795-1825, but such cottages were still being built in the 1840s. (The cottages preserved as the Colne Valley Museum were built 1840-45).

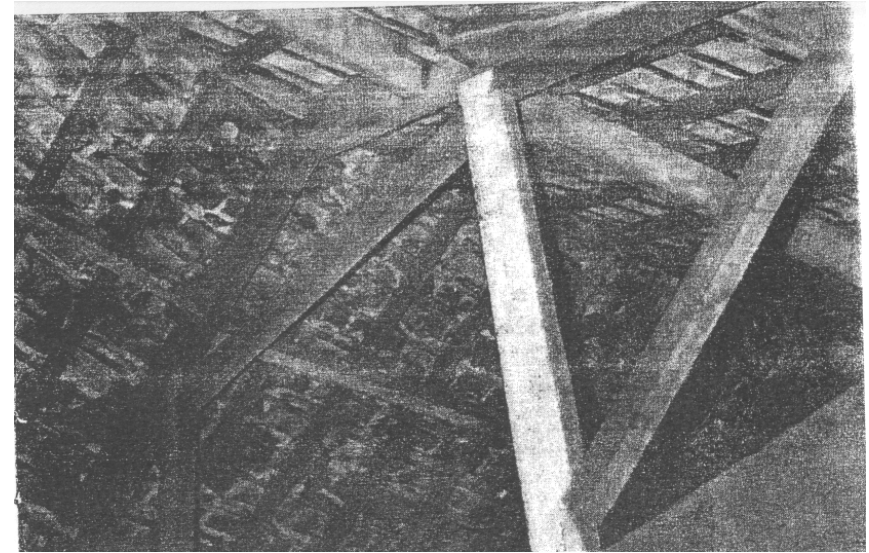
The late date at which weavers' cottages were being built in the valley is explained by the dominance of hand-loom weaving in the woollen industry. Power looms were adopted in the worsted industry from the early 1830s on-

wards; 2,768 were in use in the West Riding in 1836, 11,458 in 1841.² The woollen industry, by contrast, had little or nothing to gain by adopting the power loom. The softer woollen weft broke easily if the looms were worked at full speed; instead of the looms working at 160 picks a minute, as they could weaving worsted stuff, the fastest they could be worked with woollen cloth was 40-48 picks a minute. A hand-loom weaver could equal that. Another difficulty was the width of the woollen cloth - broad cloth was 9 feet wide before fulling, which would have required very different looms from those used in worsted production.³ For these reasons, the woollen industry became scattered between the hand-loom weavers on the hillsides and the fulling mills on the river banks. The fulling mills gradually extended their activities to include carding, scribbling and spinning, so that by 1840 if not before, only weaving was still outside the mills. There, however, it stubbornly remained, and did not begin to become a mill operation until the late 1850s.

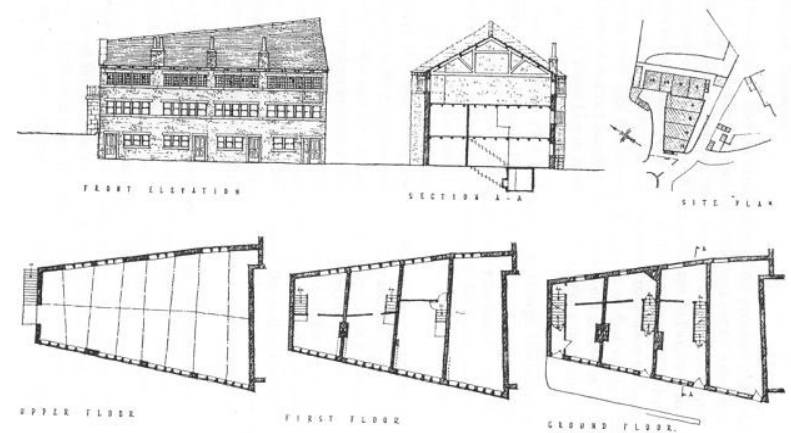
The buildings that are the subject of this article illustrate trends being worked out in the valley as a whole, though with one major exception to which reference will be made later. Four separate stages of development can be traced on this site, the evidence for which is almost entirely from archaeological observations.

The first building on the site of which any traces remain was a cottage, or perhaps a pair built end-on to each other. This was on part of the site of numbers 6 and 8 Upper Clough (see plan on p 9). The main piece of evidence for this was a random stone wall 22 feet long and rising to a ridge 14 feet from present floor level. (At this point it is appropriate to congratulate the present owners of Prospect House who, while adapting their building in advance of Coffin Row being demolished, noted and measured anything that seemed unusual.) This wall was as thick as the wall of Prospect House, averaging 20 inches. Above the wall were the remains of flagstone tiles, common in the valley before the coming of Welsh slates. These also ran through the wall, which at a later date had bulged and sagged. The deeper hollows had been filled with broken flagstones, and the whole plastered. This activity obscured the remains of joist holes, if any were to be seen. Below present ground-floor level was a cellar at the front of the house, parallel with the road. This extended back about 8 feet from the front wall.

It seems probable that this house, or pair of houses, was built by the middle of the eighteenth century. The use of random stone construction for outside walls was replaced in the valley about the 1750s by proper courses of dressed sandstone from local quarries, and bulging takes many years of settlement, for if it happens quickly, the house is abandoned as unsafe. The height of the roof ridge poses a problem. The outside ground level may have risen slightly, so that there could have been room for two storeys. The fact that the cellar lies under only half the house argues against this, however, and a more probable building would have been a farmhouse, barn, and cow byre built as a continuous unit. This part of Linthwaite is still farmed and has some of the better land of the area, and farmhouses of this kind were built in other parts of the township.⁴ If this was the kind of building there, it would have been single-storey, with a hay loft and attic sleeping accommodation over. Such an explanation would agree with a vertical height of 14 feet. A farm would also explain the random stone wall, since stone removed from fields was used for building for centuries up to the eighteenth century, at the end of which stone quarries were being developed in Linthwaite.



Interior view of Coffin Row showing the Queen posts of one truss and the uneven pattern of the stone roof.



The next development of the site was the building of Prospect House (now numbers 2 and 4). This is a substantial building, built on proper footings and three storeys high. The windows along the front of the building, facing east, were weavers' windows. The west wall had no windows in it and was built to include the end of the farmhouse referred to above. The walls were built of dressed stone, and the west wall simply straddles over the roof of the farm. There were only two small windows in the south wall, but the north wall had windows on the second and third storeys looking out over the valley. It is thought locally that this was at one time all one house. A doorway in the dividing wall has a stone lintel similar in style to the external doorways of the house, which gives some support to the belief. The house has been divided into two for many years.

The third stage of building was the construction of Prospect Place (numbers 14 and 16). These are similar in appearance to Prospect House; the weavers' windows run almost the whole length of the east wall. The entrance doors, however, are on the other side. These houses have a common front with Prospect House, though the walls lack the solid footings of that house. The houses are about 2 feet narrower than Prospect House. They lean up against Prospect House, ie, there is no end wall to number 14 - the walls abut against number 2. In doing so they have blocked the windows 'looking across the valley'.

The west wall of these houses has a number of blocked entrances.

There is a blocked doorway near the present door of number 16, for example, but 2 feet lower in the wall. Since this leaves an impossibly low lintel, there is a strong possibility that the levels of ground have risen relative to the walls. This need be no surprise. The natural flow of erosion runs against this wall, which completely blocks it. Inside the house, a dirt floor would be superseded by flagstones, in turn giving way to boards laid on fillets. A square opening higher up the wall, also blocked up, is similar in size, shape and position to the taking-in door of a hay loft. It is not at the top of the wall, which has had about 3 feet added to it at some time. This addition allowed a window of three lights to be inserted in the wall of number 14, which is also now filled in.

It is hard to say when these houses and Prospect House were built. It does seem that no great length of time separated them - such details as there are on such functional buildings are matching. The doorways, for example, are equally plain, and the corbels below the eaves are alike. They also look similar to the complex of weavers' cottages on the other side of Upper Clough, the corner of which appears on the plan. There was a date stone on these houses dated '175-' It might be safer to suggest that Prospect House and Prospect Place were built at intervals sometime between then and 1800. Unfortunately, no maps of the area troubled to include such houses before the Ordnance Survey began.

The final development came with the construction of Coffin Row, a building that has puzzled people for many years past. Its shape has had a lot to do with that. A pre-condition of construction was the demolition of the farmhouse mentioned before. It is impossible to say whether this had already been done or was done just before Coffin Row was built. It is a common practice in the valley to use former houses as barns and workshops, but equally the place could have collapsed before.

Coffin Row looks a haphazard notion, but there are signs that in fact it was thought out with some care. In part, its wedge shape could be expected

as it is similar to the shape of the site. There is more to it than that, however. The front wall is straight, but instead of abutting on to the corner of Prospect House, it is a yard farther out. A short piece of walling fills the gap. The rear wall similarly ends 4 feet from the corner of Prospect House. The wall is straight along the backs of numbers 12, 10 and 8, then makes a slight inward swing to meet the wall of number 14 almost at right angles, blocking the three-light window in the process. This leaves a nook approximately 4 ft. x 2 ft. 6 in. on all three floors of Coffin Row. The way both long walls miss the corners of Prospect House appears almost careless at first glance. The end wall of the house forms the end of Coffin Row, except for the extensions on each side. The wall had to be extended upwards to form the gable end of the roof, and formerly there was a window in the extension to light the long room. The wisdom of designing the walls to miss Prospect House will be obvious when the gradient of Upper Clough is recalled. The thrust of the walls is powerful and continuous, and has resulted in the yard of extension wall being pushed 3 in out of the vertical. Numbers 14 and 16 have had to be braced with girders for the past fifty years and look none too safe even with them. Prospect House, on the other hand, is sound and trouble free, bearing none of the thrust of the walls.

Coffin Row is basically a workshop with four under-dwellings. The workshop is free of all walls and chimneys, and there are no supporting pillars. The roof is supported on beams a foot thick, with queen posts above. Since no angle can be a right angle, the underside of the roof looks more precarious than it is. The floor is of the wide 9 in boards. Who built it, when, and exactly for what remains a mystery. A will made in 1884 refers to the whole row as 'Robert Walker's Place', but nothing else is known of this person. Any attempt at solving the mysteries has to be by parallels and reflecting backwards, always doubtful expedients. The style of the building is similar in construction, in the use of sawn timbers for the roof (except for one bay where branches were used), and in the style of mullions and other details to the weavers' cottages erected in the valley between 1800 and 1840. This is rather a long span. **George Mallinson**, a woollen manufacturer, rented the building in 1840 for £5 per annum.⁶ This was the beginning of his business success (he was 22 at the time) which led to his employing 280 people in 1884 at larger mills lower down in Linthwaite.⁷ As he was able to rent it, either the original builder had built it as a speculation or he had no further use for it. Speculative building was not common in the valley. In the neighbouring township of Slaithwaite which was owned by the Dartmouth family in 1800, there were ten mills in 1805. These were let at annual rents ranging from £5 to £160 7s. These mills all belonged to Lord Dartmouth and he had helped in building many of them; the family had not, though, built any and then tried to let them. It is unlikely that anyone would do it in Linthwaite where the site in question was a small freehold plot. It would seem more likely that the owner had built Coffin Row and for some reason had no further use for it. This would require the row to have been built for some years before **George Mallinson** was able to rent it. The long rows of windows on the south wall admitted plenty of light - the only process for which daylight was provided so lavishly early in the nineteenth century was weaving. It is estimated that forty hand looms could be set up in the workshop. No gas or electric lighting has ever been installed and the only evidence of artificial light was a circular iron bracket fixed to the central beam. This could have held an oil lamp, but the amount of light given in such a large room would have been negligible.

More is known about the use of the building when **George Mallinson** rented it. At first he dealt in the wool waste from the scribbling mills, which was still frequently thrown away at that time. Out of it he made

fancy woollens of medium and low quality.⁸ Coffin Row suited him well for these activities. There was a large door at the end - reached by external steps - and possibly another at the other end of the front wall for taking in the raw materials; there was room to sort and blend the shoddy, and room for the looms. Fancy woollens are patterned cloths - it was better to have the cloth woven on the premises where the new patterns could not be seen than to put the work out for weavers to work up in their homes. Business was later extended to weaving plain and fancy doeskins.⁹ Secrecy was still an advantage, but a greater advantage was the better control that could be maintained by having the weavers under the eye of the owner than letting them work at home. There is every sign that **George Mallinson** worked among those he employed. A portrait hanging in the boardroom of **George Mallinson & Sons Ltd.** shows him in working clothes, with a long churchwarden pipe in his hand.

A lease made in 1858 indicated that **George Mallinson** owned Prospect House, Prospect Place and Coffin Row. A stream ran through the garden and the lease was emphatic in saying that this could be used for domestic and agricultural purposes only. No power could be taken from it.¹⁰ This was the lease by which the site was obtained for the large mills that now contain the firm.

George Mallinson's will, made in 1884, referred to a barn near to Coffin Row 'with the engine house adjoining and the engine boiler and shafting therein and the corn grinding machine loose boxes cart sheds pig places and outbuildings'. The outbuildings shown on the plan may well be part of this complex but there are no visible signs of engine mountings, etc. There is no sign of any power ever having been used in the workshop of Coffin Row; indeed the will refers to it as a warehouse being used by the family firm.¹¹ This is the last mention of it in use industrially, and it changed hands several times whenever the houses were sold.

The under-dwellings are best described by the drawings. Numbers 8, 10 and 12 are all similar in the layout of rooms, even though each is a different size. The walls are in corresponding places. Number 6 is the smallest of the group but the same general pattern has been followed, as far as could be seen. (Some demolition had already taken place at the time the survey was made.) The section to the rear of number 6 was built as an extension of number 2. The ground-floor room has late nineteenth-century moulding around the ceiling and is thought to have been **George Mallinson's** drawing-room. The upper room was a bedroom. If numbers 2 and 4 were in fact one house when **George Mallinson** had it, the whole would have been a typical Victorian family house.

The other four houses were just as typical workers' dwellings. The ground floor of number 12 had little direct light and number 10 only a little more. No running water was laid on, and the communal toilet was the isolated block opposite number 12. Cooking was by Yorkshire ranges, so that lighting must have been provided by candles and oil lamps. There was no sign that gas was ever available. Ground-floor rooms had flag floors, and rising damp reached to the middle floor. The bedrooms had the flues from the ranges going at an angle to the outside wall, making the workshop free of chimney stacks.

This building is an unusual example of a half-way stage in industrial development. On the one hand, it is only a larger version of the workshop above any clothier's house early in the nineteenth century. A clothier

normally had room for four looms, Coffin Row had room for forty. They were the same hand looms, however, and the clothier worked as one of the weavers, as was usual. On the other hand, the row has some of the advantages to be expected in a mill, such as the secrecy of designs and close supervision ensuring quality control. It may be guessed that punctuality was also required of the employed weavers. The building is a transitional stage between the workshop customarily found above the weaver's home and a mill where people came to work.

It seems strange that so few such mills have survived and that nothing can be traced of the builder and his industrial activities. Could it be that the builder made a mistake? Did he, early in the nineteenth century (or even before), realise that the market for cloths was going to expand and that larger units of production would help him to pluck the profits? Did he fail to realise that it would be just as necessary to have access to power if he was not to be dependent on other scribbling mills? It looks as if the builder looked a little way into the future and saw the economic possibilities of a larger weaving workshop, but failed to realise the impossibility of further expansion on the same site. In that case he would have been overtaken by the pace of technical change. There could, of course, be other explanations of a more dramatic nature. He could have been a victim of the 1825-6 trade depression; he could have died before completing his plans, and so forth. Of all the explanations, a short-sighted venture looks the most probable. In the bottom of the valley are mills that developed where expansion was possible, and their growth is clearly seen in successive additions. Such expansion was impossible on the site of Coffin Row.

A full set of photographs and drawings is kept in the Colne Valley Museum. In addition, a film has been made of the building and the author keeps a set of slides. Coffin Row was demolished in January 1971, but Prospect House and Prospect Place are still standing.

Notes

- 1 W.B. Crump and G. Ghorbal, *History of the Huddersfield Woollen Industry*, Huddersfield (1935), 48.
- 2 E.M. Sigsworth, *Black Dyke Mills*, Liverpool (1958), 35.
- 3 T. Baines, *Yorkshire Past and Present* (1871-7), 631.
- 4 Colne Valley Museum 259/2, photograph of Nields Farm, Linthwaite, c 1890.
- 5 Will of George Mallinson, in possession of Mr. and Mrs. Bob Mills, Prospect House.
- 6 D.F.E. Sykes, *The History of the Colne Valley*, Slaithwaite (1906), 453.
- 7 E. Lockwood, *Caine Valley Folk* (1936), 37.
- 8 Sykes, op cit. 453.
- 9 Ibid. 454.
- 10 Indenture drawn up 13 March 1885, in possession of Mr. and Mrs. Bob Mills.
- 11 George Mallinson's will.

Research by the IHHA Research Group, and drawings by Mr. M.R. Hallas. This essay first appeared in *Industrial Archaeology*, vol. 8, no. 4, and is reproduced by kind permission of the Publishers, David and Charles.