



WATERMILLS IN RH7

There is evidence, if you know where to look, that there have been as many as six watermills operating over the centuries in the RH7 area. Two are still standing today although they have found new uses. Because of the low-lying nature of the ground around Lingfield there are no windmills. The nearest were sited on the surrounding higher ground for example in East Grinstead, at Copthorne and Outwood. This fact sheet therefore deals just with watermills.

Harnessing both wind and water power for industrial and agricultural use was dependent on the invention of a system of gears which enabled power to be transferred from the horizontal to the vertical. There is evidence that the Saxons achieved this. The Ancients had water powered mills but used a horizontal vaned waterwheel connected to a pair of millstones set above it.

In medieval times landowners enjoyed a monopoly over the construction and operation of watermills. Tenants were obliged to bring their grain to their lord's mill for grinding. The miller on behalf of the lord of the manor would keep back a proportion of the flour, usually a sixteenth. This was an effective system of 'taxation' but it did nothing to enhance the popularity of the miller. The mills of the manorial system were small scale brick and timber structures. Their ruins are difficult to trace once they fell into disuse. The demands of the Wealden iron industry and later the growth of big cities such as London led to technical innovations which allowed millers to increase their capacity and to serve much wider markets than the local manor. Derek Sidder in his book 'The Watermills of Surrey' describes in great detail how mills were developed.

The mills in our area were, and indeed two still are, sited on the quite modest streams which flow through our part of the Eden Valley. Two are to be found on the Eden River and its tributary, Gibbs Brook, as it flows south from Oxted – Crowhurst Mill and Haxted Mill; two more were sited on the Eden Brook flowing East from Crawley Down – Wire Mill and Neylondes Mylles (near Lingfield Station); and two on the head streams of the Eden Brook which flow north from the East Grinstead ridge around Dormans Park – Clarcks Mill and Ware Mill.

Haxted Mill

Haxted Mill is located on the Lingfield-Edenbridge Road. The first mention we have of a mill at Haxted is in 1361 when Reginald de Cobham (the third Lord Cobham, who is buried in Lingfield church) left it to his wife, Joan. It has always been a corn mill.

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The building as seen today was constructed in two phases, the western half built in 1680 on the 14th century foundations, while the eastern section was built in 1794. It is unusual in that its storage pond is quite small. Presumably the flow of the Eden throughout the year was sufficient for continuous operation. The overshot waterwheel (where the water is passed over the top of the waterwheel) is externally mounted and linked to an internal iron pit wheel which, via a gearing mechanism, drives a vertical wooden shaft through to the upper floors.

The overshot waterwheel was the type most favoured in Surrey. Water is fed over the top of the wheel into buckets. The weight of the water sets the wheel in motion using 'potential energy' as opposed to 'kinetic energy'; ie efficiency is maximised by the wheel being gravity-assisted. An embankment and millpond had to be built to supply the water to the top of the wheel, as well as a means of returning excess water to the river to avoid flooding the mill buildings.

Haxted mill had three sets of millstones and was capable of dealing with over 25 bushels (1000 litres) of corn per hour. It is a fine example of the extent to which mills could be developed using essentially timber technology. It ceased commercial operations at the end of the second world war and is now a working watermill museum.

The Stanford family were the major tenants of the mill during 18th/19th centuries:

1700	George Stanford	(leaseholder)
1752	John Stanford	
1818	Easter Stanford	(born at the Mill)
1876	Joseph Stanford	(freehold purchased)
1918	Thomas Stanford	(mill renovated to cater for higher quality flour)
1944	Tom/Jack Stanford	(sold Mill to Charles Dares)

The Wire Mill

The Wire Mill is located near the A22 just south of Newchapel. There is some debate about what if anything was first built on the site but by 1561 a hammer mill had been constructed which was known as the Woodcock Hammer or Woodcock Forge. The construction of the forge taken together with the furnace located at Myllwood (Furnace Wood), later known as Warren Wood to the west of Felbridge, marks the beginning of a thriving iron industry in the area that lasted until the 1780s. The mill was equipped with a hammer and a bellows which processed cast or pig iron produced at the furnace. The pig iron was 'hammered' to produce bar or wrought iron. The mill had two overshot wheels, one for the hammer and the other for the bellows. A measure of the value of the production is that in 1718 the output of the forge was 40 tons and that between 1760 and 1775 the iron working firm of Raby & Rogers did over £40,000 worth of trade, mostly in ordnance: mortars and cannon for Woolwich, and guns and shot for London. Some time between 1787 and 1800 the mill was converted to a wire mill. This required the building to be enlarged in order to accommodate the drawing equipment. The alterations left the building much as it is today.

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In 1817 the mill was sold to James Jenner who was a corn miller who converted it to a flour mill, grinding trefoil seed and corn. It had two pairs of mill stones driven by the two external overshot water wheels. It remained a flour mill until 1912. The building, which is of three floors, has since been used as a hotel and a country club. It is now a pub with a terrace overlooking the large mill pond.

A feature of the mill is its pond, a body of water originally of some 26 acres. A large pond was necessary to produce a sufficient head of water for iron working. Further upstream, just outside our area, is one of the largest mill ponds in the south-east, Hedgecourt Lake or millpond. This covers 42 acres. The pond was constructed principally as a storage or pen pond for the Woodcock Hammer but a small mill dating from the Elizabethan period was sited on the embankment.

Ware Mill

Ware Mill was located on Mill Lane, a bridle path, which runs between Racecourse Road and Station Road adjacent to what is now Lingfield racecourse. The first mention we have of Ware Mill is in a sale document dated 1700. In 1838 the miller was William Laker who was followed by James Laker. In 1878 William Stanford took it over, followed by Albert Stanford in 1885. In a sale document of that year the mill is described as having an overshot waterwheel, driving two pairs of stones. It was principally a corn mill but it did mill oak bark for the local tannery.

The 1870 Ordnance Survey maps shows that the mill house was sited below the western bank of the millpond. You can still see the brickwork which formed part of the headrace which channelled the water over the wheel. The remains of the weir and a sluice, which governed the water level in the pond and permitted the removal of excess water so as to avoid flooding the mill, can also be seen. The mill pond covered some four acres. Upstream from the mill was Clarks Pond, a body of water of some six and a half acres which was the pen pond for Ware Mill. It had an elaborate arrangement of sluices and a dam which failed in a storm in 1958.

In 1886 the Mansel estates, of which Ware Farm and Mill together with Clarks pond were a part, were sold following the bankruptcy of Sir Richard Mansel. Ware Farm and Ware Mill were sold to developers who built the racecourse. Ware Mill was demolished, its millpond drained and the mill stream re-routed. If you look at the 17th fairway of the Lingfield Park Golf Course you can still see where the millpond was. The site of the mill house is occupied by racecourse employees' housing.

Clarcks Mill

The Rocque Map of 1768 shows a mill upstream from Clarks Pond but below Cooks Pond and the railway viaduct. Its precise whereabouts is uncertain but it lies somewhere south of Furzefield Chase in Dormans Park. It is possible that it was sited on a predecessor body of water to Cooks Pond but so far we have no information about it.

Neylondes Mylles

A 'Licence to Assign' dated 1st March 1452 includes the sale of 2 watermills called Neylondes Mylles in Lingfield 'held of the Manor of Croweham'. This was the sale of land of the College of St Peter & St Paul, in the Manor of Bylystershe (Billshurst) Lingfield, to Sir Reginald de Cobham. It is not clear where these mills were located.

The Billshurst map of 1607 (a copy of which is in the Hayward Memorial Local History Centre map collection held in Lingfield Library) shows a mill sited downstream from the confluence of the Eden Brook and the Ware Mill stream along the footpath running east from the southern end of Lingfield Railway Station. A marshy area on the west of the stream suggests the site of the millpond. The remains of the mill race can be seen by the footbridge. The mill is not shown on the 1768 Rocque map nor on the 1846 Lingfield Tithe map. We do not know what happened to it. Peter Gray refers to the mill as 'New Mill' which suggests it replaced an earlier building.

Crowhurst Mill

There is mention of a watermill in the Parish of Crowhurst in 1241 when 'Stephen the miller' held it on behalf of William d'Adburton for an annual rent of 11 shillings (55 pence in today's money). In 1406 William Attehurst 'grant the mill called Crowherst Melle which he obtained from the family Marchant to John Gainsford'. The 1679 estate map of Crowhurst Manor prepared for an ancestor of Gainsford, also John, lists his various properties including a watermill, mill pond, the pond head and the 'backside' in Crowhurst Parish. These were rented to a George Holmden at £1.0s.6d p.a.

The position of the mill is difficult to determine from the Gainsford map but a mill existed near Chellows Farm, at the confluence of Gibbs Brook and the River Eden, which at least one authority says was Gainsford's Crowhurst Mill. Little remains today except a weir, some masonry and a few mounds.

Local folklore has it that another mill also called Crowhurst Mill was sited further upstream on Gibbs Brook near Foyle Farm which was included in Crowhurst Parish before the railway was built in the 1840s.

Reconciling the Gainsford map with the ground at Chellows is difficult but on the other hand there is little to see at the Foyle Farm site either. It is surprising that Crowhurst mill is not shown on the Rocque map of East Surrey of 1768 given the antiquity of the references above, but 100 years later it could have fallen into disrepair.

The answer is probably that there were two mills in the parish. A feature of the tributaries of the Eden is the number of corn mills which were operating in East Surrey at one time or another.

In summary, a fruitful area for further research.

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Millers

The 19th Century census returns for Lingfield and Crowhurst illustrate the decline of milling in our area: in 1851 10 millers were recorded, in 1881 just four and in 1901 none.

Future Work

More research is needed on the Clarcks, Neylondes and Crowhurst mills.

Sources:

- i) *The Watermills of Surrey* by Derek Sidder, Barracuda books Ltd.
ISBN 0 86023 480 0
- ii) *Wiremill*, Felbridge & District History Group Handout No 72 (March 2006).
- iii) *Lingfield Heritage*, Revised Edition 2003, by Peter Gray, Restoration Publishing Co.
- iv) *Buildings of Historic interest - Oxted and Crowhurst* P J Gray 1999.

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