

Grove Mill Carshalton.

This mill was situated at approximately the end of the present Devonshire Road, on a diverted tributary of the Wandle which flowed north from the grounds of Carshalton Park, under the High Street, then east to Westcroft Road. Then it turned north again, where it was carried on a length of artificial embankment and known as the Westcroft Canal. It then flowed in a cutting through the hillside and into the Wandle about 70 yards above Butter Hill Bridge. The mill was built into the north side of the hill, about 30 yards south of the confluence of the streams. The works to the tributary stream were in order to reduce the fall until it reached the hill, to enable an overshot wheel to be provided. '

Carshalton Park had been acquired by Sir William Scawen, a wealthy City merchant, early in the 18th. century. After his death in October 1722 his properties passed to his nephew Thomas Scawen, who had much work carried out to Carshalton Park, including the formation of a garden feature known as the Grotto Canal. It may have been Thomas Scawen who was responsible for the construction of the Westcroft Canal and the Grove Mill, but more likely it was his son James Scawen, who inherited his father's estate after his death in 1774, and carried out further works.

The earliest reference to the mill so far found was on 16 January 1777, when George Marchant, snuff maker, insured his snuff mill and its machinery, utensils and stock, together with a nearby dwelling house, with the Sun insurance company [1]. Thus it appears that Marchant was already in occupation of the mill when James Scawen granted him a lease for 61 years on 7 March 1777, effective from 25 March, at the annual rent of £60[2]. George Marchant renewed the insurance policy on 16 February 1778[3], and evidently some extensive work had been carried out to the mill during the preceding year, for the new valuation of the mill was then £1000 as against £500 in 1777. He renewed the policy again on 8 April 1779, when the premises were said to be in the occupation of John Arnold[3].

William Bridges of Wallington brought a legal action against James Scawen which was heard at the Croydon Assizes on 8 August 1783, seeking compensation for damages he claimed to have suffered resulting from the "new course into which the water had been turned" for the working of the snuff mill. On 7 November 1783 the jury decided that no compensation should be paid, and that Bridges should pay Scawen's legal costs. The bringing of this action supports the supposition. that the Westcroft Canal and the snuff mill were constructed by James Scawen soon after 1774[5].

On 17 September 1785 James Scawen sold the "new erected Messuage or Tenement and Snuff Mill with the Lands and Tenements thereunto belonging and the water running to the same" to William Andrews of London for £1200[2]. The premises were then still in the tenure of George Marchant, and a few years later, in about 1789, James Edwards noticed that on "the eastmost stream are some snuff-mills belonging to Mr. Marchant"[6], who seems to have left Carshalton at about this time. On 19 May 1789 he insured the machinery of a corn mill at Isleworth in Middlesex[7]. John Arnold stayed on as sub-lessee.

On 21 March 1791, William Andrews granted the head lease of the mill to Allen Lambert, a local millwright[5]. Allen Lambert insured the snuff mill and its appurtenances and the utensils and stock therein with the Sun insurance company, on 29 March 1792, when the premises were still in the occupation of John Arnold as sub-lessee[5].

Lambert later assigned the head lease to Robert Tutt, a calico printer of Stoke Newington, and on 8 June 1801 William Andrews granted a new lease to Tutt for 36 years at the annual rent of £80-6s-3d.^[5] The premises were at that time in the occupation of George Cook, who was succeeded in about 1804 by William Heath. In 1813 Robert Tutt assigned the remaining term of his lease to John Bill, a wholesale ironmonger of London^[5].

William Heath died on 30 October 1820 at the age of 71, but it seems that he retired a few years earlier, and was followed by his son Joseph. Joseph had evidently worked with his father previously; he was described as a snuff maker in the parish register record of the baptism of his daughter Jane on 9 October 1814. He was last mentioned as the occupier in Pigot's directory for 1832-34.

In February 1837 it was advertised that a 21-year lease of the "Grove Mills" would be available from 25 March. The machinery, which included a 20-foot-diameter diameter overshot water wheel, was said to be in good order and currently at work for snuff milling, but the mill could be converted to other uses. The premises were then in the occupation of Charles Lambert^[9]. This may have been a son of the before mentioned Allen Lambert, but it is more likely to have been the Charles Lambert who was at this period working at the snuff mill at Beddington, and who had perhaps taken a short-term lease of the Carshalton mill.

In response to this advertisement, the lease was evidently taken up by Richard Clark and Francis Phillips, "snuff grinders", who dissolved their partnership on 31 December 1838^[10]. Phillips then carried on alone, and was still there in 1850 when Brayley named him as the occupier of "A snuff-grinding mill, very powerful at times."^[11] Brayley also stated that the owner was Jonah Cressingham, who lived at Stone Court in Carshalton, but it would seem that he owned only a half-share of the freehold.

John Bill had purchased the mill, of which he held the lease, from William Andrews, at some time before his death in 1831. By his will, proved on 10 September 1831, John Bill bequeathed his properties in Shropshire and Surrey to his daughter Sarah Ann Bill. Other properties in Montgomeryshire were bequeathed to his daughter Mary Eliza, wife of William Cother^[12].

In 1836 Sarah Ann Bill was married to Jonah Cressingham, who thus acquired an interest in the snuff mills probably as part of a marriage settlement. This interest seems to have been a moiety, the other half being retained by his wife in her own right. After Sarah Ann Cressingham's death on 28 March 1838, her share apparently passed to her sister Mary Eliza, and William Cother, whilst Jonah Cressingham retained his share, as a lifetime interest.

By 1853, when Frederick Braithwaite made his survey of the Wandle and noted that the snuff mill had an overshot water wheel of 9 h. p. and a steam engine of 8 h.p., John Hedgecock was the occupier^[13]. In fact, Hedgecock had evidently previously worked at the mill for Francis Phillips. In the Carshalton census returns for 1841, he was recorded as a snuff miller at "Westcroft Mill". and as a snuff grinder in those for 1851. It is not known for how long Hedgecock occupied the mill.

It is said that in 1864 the lease was taken by John Smith and Frederick Brownsmith, engineers and millwrights ^[14], who



Grove Iron Works in c 1867 [111kb]

since 1851 and possibly earlier. He continued to work there until his death on 21 December 1883 at the age of 64, and was followed as manager by his son-in-law Thomas Andrews.

On 5 November 1886 the mill was partially destroyed by a fire which started in the drying shed [47]. Reconstruction work commenced soon afterwards and "the most modern appliances" were installed, including a new steam engine. A "noticeable feature" was that electric lighting was installed throughout the premises. The rebuilding works were completed in August 1887 [48].

James Stanley Muggeridge was named as the proprietor in Kelly's directory for 1890 but in April 1893 it was reported that the "old established business" had been acquired by Andrew Cornwallis Miller [49]! The following year the output was described as "Hand made writing and account book papers, Banks and Loans," and amounted to six tons per week [40]. At about the same date, Barrett described the premises as "a noted paper mill - noted because here they make the finest handmade foolscap in the Kingdom." [50]

Miller was there for only a few years, and in January 1899 it was reported that the business had been taken over by Edward Prentice and

Arthur Monekton, as the C.Ansell Paper Company Limited, "with the object of carrying on the old-established business at Carshalton Tills for the manufacture of 'C.Ansell' and other special watermarked handmade papers."n [51]

Soon afterwards Guiseppi wrote that:

"The business now consists of the manufacture of the finest hand-made paper, well known in the trade with the watermark 'C.Ansell', and ledger paper, writing, drawing, and loan papers are made. There are five vats in use on the premises, and the Carshalton mills are now the only ones in the county for hand-made paper." [52]

The mill closed down in 1905, and on 12 April of that year the lease was offered for sale by auction. No sale was then effected, as the highest bid was below the reserve price of X10,000 [53]. In June 1905 the plant and machinery were auctioned, and apparently much of it was sold [54]. The company, however, continued in existence in premises in Upper Thames Street, London, presumably as retail stationers, until it went into voluntary liquidation on 17 July 192q. [55].

In 1908 the premises were taken over by W. & G.Tulloch, cocoa and chocolate makers, who were there until they stopped production during the First World War. They were followed by the British Pencil Company Limited, who were named as the occupiers in a 1920 directory, but who would have seemed to have stopped pencil making after a fire on 8 Jun 1918, which damaged the buildings facing Mill Lane. They were succeeded in about 1922 by the Carshalton Chemical Company, which carried out various distilling processes, in rehabilitated buildings [56].

In 1927 the premises were bought by the Metbylating Company, a subsidiary of the Distillers Company Limited, which extended the site and introduced new processes mainly connected with producing materials for car body finishes [56]. During the Second World War the

factory was taken over by a department of the Ministry of Supply, and subsequently handed back to the Distillers Company Limited, which in 1967 sold it to British Petroleum Chemicals Limited. They were there until December 1991, after which the site and adjoining areas was developed for housing accommodation.

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