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Notes and News

Autumn Event: Guided Tour of Wrest Park Gardens, 11 am, Saturday, 14 September 2013, lasting about 1½ hours, showing garden design fashions over 300 years: To attend contact Mike Turner, BLHA, 117 High Street, Clophill, Beds, MK45 4BJ. Tel 01525 862285.

Apology. We apologise to Richard Morgan for leaving off his name at the end of his very interesting article, 'The Rev Thomas Whitehead, Rector of Colmworth', in the Spring issue, though it did appear in the contents list.

BBC Radio 4 programme Punt PI. Curious historical ephemera are investigated in this programme and the producer, Neil George, at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01mtr36>, wants to hear from anyone who has a story to tell but thinks it might be thought ridiculous or would not be believed. Local stories, however strange or wild, are needed.

Books received: *The Village of Biddenham through the Ages* (Biddenham Historical Trust, £20) and *The Parish Church of St Thomas, Stopsley* (St Thomas's Church, £10). We hope to review these in the Autumn issue of HIB.

Papermaking in Bedfordshire: a forgotten craft

Bedfordshire is one of a handful of counties where the craft of papermaking made a brief appearance before departing for more lucrative regions. As such it is a topic that has been neglected; indeed, there exists no single publication dedicated to the subject, whilst references in Shorter¹ and Simmons,² two compendia of information on UK paper mills and papermaking, are woefully slight. This article draws together all that is currently available on the subject, correcting where possible any errors found in the two reference compilations quoted, and adds such new information as can be gleaned from archives, registers and published sources on the single site where the practice was performed, and on one other site where it is imputed.

Langford Mill

Langford Mill is situated on the River Ivel, to the west of St Andrew's Church, in the village of Langford.³ Shorter¹ places the paper manufacturing dates as 1746–1798, and so far no new information has come

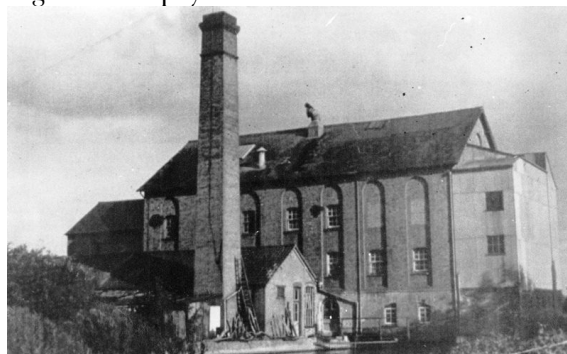
to light that increases this time period. However, Shorter only relates two families as having been involved in the craft – Dane and Finch – while the Langford Parish Register reveals three other families, and relates some of the tragedies that befell those at the mill.

The earliest known date of this place as a paper manufactory comes from Sun Fire Insurance policy No 105986, which lists Henry Dane as proprietor and describes the site as follows:

'On his dwelling house, workhouse, pantry and paper mill in his own tenure and corn mill under one roof £800. On his household goods, utensils and stock in trade in his said dwelling house, workhouse, pantry and paper mill £300. On his stable and raghouse over and leantoo adjoining only in the yard, timber and tiled £30. On stock therein, only hay, straw and flower [*sic*] £70.⁴

According to Shorter, Henry Dane was buried in 1750. Unfortunately, the Reverend Wise, who supplied this information, seems to have misread the register, for his actual (and accidental) death occurred nine years later.⁵ Evidently he had been successful at his craft because the register notes a fee of ten shillings 'rece'd mortuary' – this was the fee required if the deceased man's property was valued in excess of £40.

Between insuring the mill and dying, Henry Dane married Martha Baymant (or Bayment), in 1757.⁶ At the time of Henry's death Martha was pregnant, and she delivered a stillborn daughter almost seven months after Henry's interment.⁷ To seal this sad state of affairs, Martha followed the baby just a few days later, at which point another mortuary fee of ten shillings became payable.⁸



Langford Mill, c1980

In passing it is noteworthy that 1759 marked a high point in burials at Langford, with 29 interments; a number that would not be exceeded for another two decades. Whether some epidemic carried away

poor Martha, or whether it was the natural consequences of childbirth, with its inherent dangers at this time, is uncertain.

During Dane's tenure we know the name of two other papermakers at the mill, thanks to the Parish Register. First, and most importantly, was William Flemming (or Flemman or Flemmans or Flemans) who appears between 1755 and 1796. The other papermaker, John Davies, makes a fleeting appearance; he was buried in 1760, just a month before Martha Dane succumbed.⁹

Although William Flemming was far and away the longest serving papermaker at the mill, upon the death of Henry Dane he did not assume responsibility for the manufactory – that went to Henry Finch, a well-connected man,¹⁰ whose family ran it for the remainder of its life as a paper mill.

Henry insured the mill soon after the death of Martha Dane, and in this policy the property is described thus:

'On their house, workhouse and Pantry, Paper Mill and Corn Mill, only under one roof £540. Stable and raghouse over with lean-to adjacent £30. Drying house opposite the stable £30.'¹¹

Over the 14-year period between these two insurance policies we see some major differences. Most notably, there was a significant downgrading of the worth of the entire property; goods within the buildings were not covered in the latter policy; but a Drying House appears to have been newly built. On the question of the total policy valuation, it may have been that the estate was in poor shape; equally it could reflect a new tenant who was unable to afford the full cost of insurance for the estate, and focused upon the main buildings at the expense of goods and chattels within.

Henry Finch reinsured the premises in 1783; the description of the paper mill at this time is as follows:

'On a Paper Mill adjoining and lofts over £500. On utensils and stock in trade therein £200. On the Drying Shop and Lofts over £100. On the utensils and stock in trade therein £100.'¹²

Compared to the last policy what a change has occurred! First, the total value of the property has more than doubled – with the rest of the estate (not shown) it amounted to £1,400. Secondly, the paper mill has become separated from the other buildings in the description. This fact, along with the description of 'lofts over', suggests more rebuilding had occurred. The significant increase in valuation of the Drying House ('Shop') gives further weight to this supposition.

Other documentation dating from the 1780s shows the property was assessed for land tax, which was charged at £6 16s 8d, the proprietors being noted as Henry Finch and Sarah Marshall, with Henry Finch as occupier.¹³ Another papermaker present at the mill at around this time was James Withall, who died in late 1787.¹⁴

Upon the death of Henry in 1790, his two sons assumed responsibility for the mill, along with one Elizabeth Finch – this was almost certainly Henry's widow, rather than the new wife of his son William.¹⁵

This partnership survived just seven years, until they descended into bankruptcy,¹⁶ at which point the utensils (consisting of 'two remarkable good presses, with stout wood and iron work, fit for business, a stout Engine, Spindle, two Fire Pots, a Ninety-gallon Copper, Tribbles, Roops [*sic*], etc.')

were ordered to be sold to cover unpaid Excise duty.¹⁷ However, the sale was subsequently rescinded.¹⁸ The reason for this change of mind is unclear. However, the list of equipment contains some interesting inclusions and omissions. The 'Engine' (a machine for macerating rags) and 'Tribbles' (ropes covered with horse- or cow-hair to prevent marking of wet sheets when hung in the drying loft), are two standard items of papermaking equipment. However, the vat (a large container used to hold the suspension of fibres in water), and the mould and deckle (the sieve and frame upon which the fibres form a sheet of paper) are missing. This lack of vital paper-specific equipment is still a mystery.

No further information on any papermaking activities can be found at this mill, although at least two of the Finch family stayed in the vicinity well after the bankruptcy: William and Elizabeth decamped to nearby Biggleswade where he was described as a 'Miller'¹⁹ and Joshua and Fanny started a family in Langford in 1801, after marrying there in 1800. By 1806 the site was offered for sale, freehold, where it was described as follows:

'A very improved freehold estate at Langford in Bedfordshire: comprises a powerful and regular head of water, upwards of seven feet fall, a spacious new building 88 feet by 33 and 36 feet high, with a capital stone wheel, furrows and sundry new wheel work and materials. The estate is capable of the greatest improvement and being converted into corn and paper mills.'²⁰

Evidently, sometime after the building was emptied of papermaking equipment a decision was made to refurbish and enlarge the property. It is interesting that papermaking was again suggested as a suitable occupation for the new mill; however, the craft was never again practised. Instead, the site worked as a water corn mill well into the twentieth century, after which it was stripped of machinery and used for the production of seed grain.²¹ The building is still in existence, but has been converted into apartments.²²



Langford Mill, August 2012

Other sites

Though Langford is the only definite example of a papermaking site known to have existed in Bedfordshire, the Simmons archive makes the suggestion that Shefford Mill, on the River Flit,²³ may have been involved in paper manufacture around 1814–1819. This is based upon information from the *London Gazette* relating to Edward Baker, a paper-

maker who had practised his trade at Headley Mill in Hampshire before being made bankrupt.²⁴ He moved from Hampshire to Bedfordshire and was quoted in the *London Gazette* as being present at Shefford Mill where he was described as a 'paper maker and farmer'.

First, there is no evidence he undertook the trade of papermaker at Shefford in any of these reports; secondly, the time period stretches into the region when paper mills came to be catalogued and numbered by the Excise authorities. There is no evidence of Shefford Mill in the 1816 Excise listing,²⁵ or in any subsequent revisions. Overall we must conclude the site almost certainly continued to work as a water corn mill during the tenure of Edward Baker – the use it had prior to his arrival, and subsequent to his departure.

Finally, one other property in the county was considered suitable for conversion to the trade – Holme Mill on the River Ivel, situated geographically between Shefford and Langford. An advertisement of 1829 states:

'To be sold by auction. The capital and complete Water Corn mill, called Holme Mill, situate upon the River Ivel, near Biggleswade, Beds, possessing two water wheels 16 feet in diameter, one seven feet wide, the other four feet and a half, four pairs of stones, machines etc. The premises are situated a short distance from the road from Biggleswade to Hitchin and immediately contiguous to the high road from Biggleswade to Shefford and Ampthill, well situated for a Paper Mill.'²⁶

Needless to relate, no such conversion ever took place, and the mill remained as a working water corn mill until the mid-twentieth century.

In conclusion, all evidence available at the time of writing points to Langford Mill having been the only paper manufactory in Bedfordshire. Information provided in this article increases the number of names associated with its papermaking history, and brings together all current knowledge on the papermaking activities in this county.

Notes

1. A H Shorter, *Paper Mills and Paper Makers in England 1495–1800* (Paper Publications Society, Hilversum, 1957), p. 123.

2. H E S Simmons, *The Simmons Collection of Records Relating to British Windmills and Watermills*, an unpublished series of scrapbooks housed in the Science Museum Library.

3. Grid Reference TL183413.

4. Sun Fire Insurance Policy (SFIP), Vol 77, No 105986, 12 Sept 1746. 5. Langford Parish Register (LPR), 25 Nov 1759.

6. LPR, 10 Feb 1757.

7. LPR, 11 May 1760.

8. LPR, 19 May 1760.

9. LPR, 17 or 20 Apr 1760.

10. LPR shows Henry Finch was a Church Warden from 1772–1774.

11. SFIP, Vol 135, No 178795, 4 Nov 1760: taken in partnership with Sarah Mask, wife of Thomas Mask (alias Maskell).

12. Royal Exchange Fire Insurance Policy, Vol 8, 2 Oct 1783. This policy is incorrectly quoted as No 87545 in Simmons, whereas it is actually unnumbered, and sits between No 87545 (John Brown of Biggleswade) and No 87546 (Mrs Purnell of Crayford). This explains why in the same volume occurs No 87606, 10 Oct 1783, which notes: 'Henry Finch of Parish of Langford in the County of Bedford, Miller and Paper Maker. On buildings and goods more particularly expressed in folio 36.'

13. Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Record Service (BLARS), DD/HA14/5/2. Langford, p. 10.

14. LPR, 6 Dec 1787.

15. BLARS, PB/M62 and M63 – Marriage Bonds between William Finch of Langford and Elizabeth Pope of Biggleswade.

16. *London Gazette*, 27 June 1797, p. 621; *Northampton Mercury*, 8 July 1797, last page.

17. *Northampton Mercury*, 27 Jan 1798, p. 2.

18. *Ibid.*, 3 Feb 1798, p. 3.

19. Biggleswade Parish Register, 1 Jan 1802: Baptism of Sarah, d.o. [daughter of] William and Elizabeth Finch, Miller.

20. *Stamford Mercury*, 4 July 1806.

21. H Howes, *Bedfordshire Mills* (1983), p. 69.

22. H Howes, *The Windmills and Watermills of Bedfordshire* (2009), p. 93.

23. Grid Reference TL150395; the mill was destroyed by a flood in 1957 – Howes, 1983, Ref 21, p. 66.

24. *London Gazette*: 21 May 1814, p. 1072; 11 June 1814, p. 1218; 9 July 1814, p. 1406; 12 Mar 1816, p. 495; 14 May 1816, p. 920; 23 Feb 1819, p. 363.

25. R L Hills, 'Excise Office List, London, 8 October 1816' (2008) 66 *The Quarterly (Journal of the British Association of Paper Historians)*, April, 17–22.

26. *Stamford Mercury*, 20 Mar 1829.

DAVEN CHAMBERLAIN

Bedfordshire milestones

Bedfordshire, has the least number of mile markers of any county in the British Isles – this means that news of them is merely sporadic. This is the first report from Milestone Society county representative, Michael Knight.

I became a member of the Milestone Society at its inaugural meeting in the Black Country Museum, I have endeavoured since to record all surviving mile markers within the modern county boundaries. Regrettably, while Linslade, formerly in Buckinghamshire, was 'won' for Leighton Buzzard, Eaton Socon was 'lost' to St Neots. Boundary changes, as far back as 1888, have effectively deprived our county of some of its surviving milestones.

Currently, milestones resulting from Parliamentary turnpike legislation amount to only 15; one of these is cast-iron, properly known as a milepost. Ordnance Survey always differentiated MPs (mileposts) from MSs (milestones).

Most milestones are in east Bedfordshire where, in recent years, several have been unearthed and returned to or near their original sites.

As a county with a small area, thereby possessing few turnpike routes, Bedfordshire never had as many milestones as, for example, the West Riding of Yorkshire, Norfolk or Devon. Unfortunately, past County Council policies have permanently deprived us of most way markers; even Jersey has more!

So, what *does* the county have? The two *obelisks* in Dean parish and Ampthill are not related to Turnpike Acts. Elsewhere, in Pertenhall and north Luton, modern markers of the present century result from local initiatives. At Bedford and at Luton, *boundary posts*, now part of our Society's remit, have been identified from the first half of the 20th century. Old-fashioned *finger posts* are not known anywhere, having been removed in 1940 from the county's highways, never to be returned after the Second World War. One chequered concreted signpost has recently been discovered in Eaton Socon (rural) parish. Finger boards point to Eaton, Wyboston and Colmworth. Restoration is planned when weather conditions allow. A few *toll houses* have survived and all are now in private ownership and an 1846 Toll Board for Stagsden Bar survives in Bedford Museum. *Plaques* delineating church or military zones, or commemorative events, have been recorded, the most

recent being in High Street, Riseley, in May 2002. Of especial interest are the four tablets attached to Bedford Bridge, which make for a good read – although at pavement level!

In lieu of busily locating, returning and lime-washing county roadside furniture, I have, quite by accident, developed a circuit-speaking regime and since 2002 have given between 12 and 20 talks per annum, in 11 counties! Not infrequently, useful advice and information leading to fresh discoveries comes from those who attend. One such was regarding an 18th century milestone which had been excavated at Sutton along the B1040, and shortly afterwards, another found buried at a farm in south Bedfordshire. Curiously, both were 46 miles from London, and were eventually returned to their rightful sites, the latter at Lower Caldecote on the Great North Road. For our efforts we had some media coverage! Another dimension to this activity is requests to write articles for publication in local history journals, and to report formally in our Society's *On The Ground* and *Milestones & Waymarkers*.

Some communities are more willing than others to be involved; likewise with road agencies and district councils. I commend the assistance, freely given, by trunk road Agency URS-Carillion, and separately by personnel from Biggleswade Town. Other than lucky finds, the only reliable source of information is held in the Historic Environment Record based in the Borough Hall archives, Cauldwell Street, Bedford.

Specifically, east Bedfordshire's share of surviving milestones line the A1 between Holme and Roxton, and along the B1040, Stratton to Potton. Two milestones, recently discovered in Wardown Park, Luton, have been restored and resited for public view: one, formerly on the A6 London Road opposite Stockwood Park, showing 'Luton 1, St Albans 9'; the other, formerly on the A5, 'Dunstable 1, Markyate 3'. One milestone stands in Stotfold and the sole county milepost at Sharnbrook is safely housed in a private garden.

On the former line of the Great North Road, south of Sandy, is the Memorial Garden to Victorian racing-cyclist, Frederick Thomas Bidlake, who died in a road accident in 1933. In front of the Garden is a personal milestone dedicated in 1934, recording, 'Few Have Known The Road Better'. This was the year when Bedford Borough extended its urban boundary into adjacent parishes where four surviving iron markers, then new, can still be found. They are on main roads bordering Biddenham, Cardington, Clapham and Kempston. A stone plaque built into the structure of Turvey Bridge is inscribed with an arrow and 'County of Bedford'.

The ancient county had turnpike routes established by 19 Acts of Parliament between 1707 and 1826 (see HIB, 6.2), which developed in most cases into the present trunk road network. Rail competition, falling investment in coaching roads, led to services withering and from 1867 to 1879, all the county's roads were 'disturnpiked'. This led to an era of highway neglect fought only by the emerging bicycling fraternity, but that is another tale.

MICHAEL KNIGHT*

*The author has some collectable books, and Acts assenting to the developing turnpike routes (originals and copies). He also has a few Enclosure Awards for north Beds parishes and can acquire original Acts at modest cost: 2 Brooklands Road, Riseley, Beds MK44 1EE, Tel 01234 708518.

The Milestone Society, established in 2001, campaigns for the conservation of milestones and way markers. Hon Sec John Atkinson, Hollywell House, Hollywell Lane, Clows Top, Kidderminster, DY14 9NR, Tel 01299 832338. www.milestonesociety.co.uk and www.facebook.com/#!/groups/MilestoneSociety

Book review

The Accounts of the Guild of the Holy Trinity, Luton, 1526/7–1546/7. Edited by Barbara Teale. The Boydell Press for the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society (Publications, Vol 91), 2012. Hardback. ISBN 978–0–85155–078–7. lxxvi (prelims and Introduction) + 296 pp. (incl Glossary 18pp., Bibliography 6 pp. and indexes 31 pp.). Boydell & Brewer Ltd, PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, £25.

There were very many guilds and fraternities in England until the dissolution of the monasteries at the end of the 1540s, but not many records survived. But, the last 21 years of the accounts of the Luton Guild of the Holy Trinity are extant and, until now, have never been published in full. The book gives a full transcription of the accounts and the editor, Barbara Tearle, provides a 62-page introduction to give an overview of the Guild's activities.

Many hundreds of transactions are recorded for each year, including rents for the guild's properties, the payment of the priests' and clerks' wages and for the dirges sung for deceased members. There was an annual feast and the accounts show, by the costs of hiring cooks and helpers, utensils and entertainment, the lavish expenditure on this. Building materials for Guild properties were also a significant item, suggesting repairs and modernisation.

The Guild was prosperous, active and had influential connections. Most of its 'brothers' and 'sisters' came from a radius of 25 miles of Luton, but there were some from London, Canterbury, Boston and Kendal.

The interest for students of local history will probably be the connections of the Guild with their area. Indeed, on p. 10 of the (strangely unnumbered) prelim pages there is a map showing the places in Bedfordshire and surrounding counties where the homes of people for whom dirges were sung or from which goods were supplied to the Guild were situated, with a similar map for Luton on p. 11. My own village of Langford has four references in the Index. There is a very useful Glossary of 18 pages dealing with place names and unusual or Latin words and spellings. The book is impressively indexed: indexes of personal names (many related to their town or village – useful for family research); of places (indexed under the modern name except where the ancient name was different); and a subject index.

It is very well produced on good paper and well bound with a jacket reproducing a detail of the magnificent frontispiece of the Guild Register. There are 8 colour plates and 1 mono plate in a separate section in the book. It is good that these historical documents have been preserved and with so much interpretation and annotation – even the general reader will find much of interest and the BHRS and Barbara Teale are to be congratulated on their efforts.

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