

20 Corn Mill, Beddington Corner, Beddington

This mill was situated on the east bank of the River Wandle a short distance above Goat Bridge, Beddington Corner, and was adjacent to and on the north side of a drug mill. On the opposite bank, in Carshalton parish, was a leather mill.

The first miller to be associated with the mill so far found recorded was Joseph Bishe, who was rated for mills in Beddington in a list of those liable to pay a sewer rate dated 11 August 1763 [1]. The same entry occurs in a similar list drawn up on 24 July 1766 [2]. The connection of Bishe with this mill was made in 1769 when on 10 April of that year he insured it, together with the adjoining drug mill and a nearby dwelling house, and the utensils and goods in the mills, with the Sun insurance company [3]. The landowner at this period was Thomas Scawen, lord of the manor of Carshalton, who had probably acquired the land when he purchased the nearby leather mill in 1729.

On 24 May 1786 Robert Nettleton of Tooting insured his utensils and stock in the mill [4]. Soon afterwards he became the tenant of the Merton corn mill at Wimbledon. Presumably he had taken a short-term rental of the Beddington Mill from Joseph Bishe, who was still the lessee two years later when, in April 1788, he was declared bankrupt [5].

The following year the lease of the corn mill was held by Robert Lyon, who insured it, together with the drug mill, on 21 March 1789 [6]. Robert Lyon was a millwright, who was involved as leaseholder in several mills in Carshalton and elsewhere at various times, and he probably sub-leased the mill to a miller whose name has not been recorded.

The owner at this time was Foster Reynolds, who had in about 1780 purchased the mill as part of the Culvers estate in Carshalton, from the trustees of James Scawen, the son of Thomas Scawen, who had died in 1774. By 29 January 1791 the mill was under the management of his son, William Foster Reynolds, who then insured his utensils and stock therein [7]. Foster Reynolds insured the mill premises, together with the drug mill and some nearby buildings, on 13 May 1791 [8]. He insured the same property, with the machinery therein, again on 20 October 1797 [9].

Foster Reynolds died later in 1797, and by his will proved on 23 February 1798 he bequeathed the corn mill, the drug mill, and the nearby leather mill, to William Foster Reynolds [10]. Soon afterwards the latter's brother, Thomas Reynolds, took over the management of the corn mill and insured his stock and utensils therein on 13 June 1800 [11].

On 8 April 1813 he re-insured the mill and its machinery, and also the drug mill [12], and he renewed this policy on 21 May 1818 [13].

On the register record of this latter policy, the name George Chasemore had been added in pencil, so evidently he had taken over the management, presumably after Thomas Reynolds's death on 15 December 1819. At some time, George Chasemore entered into partnership with William Newton, but Newton resigned on 27 April 1824 [14], and Chasemore then carried on alone. He was named as the miller there in directory entries up to 1840, and in the schedule to the Beddington Tithe Map in 1841. Soon afterwards he moved to the Waddon corn mill at Croydon.

On the schedule to a Deposited Plan of November 1849 [15], Charles Bourne was named as the occupier of the mill, and he probably succeeded Chasemore in the early 1840s. He had previously worked at the corn mill at Wallington Bridge. The owner named on this schedule was Esther Reynolds. William Foster Reynolds had died on 19 November 1838, and by his will proved on 21 January 1839 he bequeathed most of his estate to his wife Esther, although his properties at Beddington Corner were to be held by his daughters Anna and Elizabeth equally as tenants in common [16]. Presumably their mother was acting as trustee.

In 1853 Braithwaite noted "Mr. Bourne's corn mill, using one water wheel equal to 14 H.P." [17], and Charles Bourne was named as the miller in directories up to 1863. By this date all three mills at Beddington Corner were in the ownership of Samuel Gurney, a partner in the London banking firm of Overend, Gurney and Company. He had, in August 1837, married William Foster Reynolds's daughter Ellen, and following Esther Reynolds's death in 1857, he purchased the Culvers estate, including the mills, from her sons Foster and Morris Reynolds.

The firm of Overend, Gurney and Company failed in May 1866, was put into liquidation, and Samuel Gurney suffered financial disaster. The Culvers estate and other of his properties, including the mills, were, "by direction of the liquidators", offered for sale at an auction held on 31 October 1866. In the sale catalogue, the corn mill was said to be timber-built and slated, of three floors, and to have one breast-shot water wheel about 14 feet in diameter. It was then in the occupation of Henry and Charles Collis, as yearly tenants, at an annual rent of £102-10s. [18].

Some of the lots, including the Beddington Corner mills, were then purchased by the Croydon Local Board of Health. The sale was completed on 15 August 1867 [19]. It is not clear why the Croydon Board acquired these properties, and indeed, less than three months later, on 1 March 1870, a delegation of the Board members was appointed to enquire of neighbouring landowners their interest in purchasing the various lots. The landowners evidently had no interest [20].

"Messrs. Collis" were still the tenants in April 1869, when the Croydon Local Board of Health agreed to extend their lease for a further year [20]. However, on 25 March 1871, the mill, together with the leather mill opposite, was leased to James and George McRae, leather dressers, for 21 years, and they converted the corn mill to leather dressing. This lease was referred to in the sale catalogue of all three mills, in connection with the auction, "by direction of the Croydon Local Board of Health", of the freeholds of all the premises they had purchased in 1867, held on 21 June 1880. The former corn mill was described therein as "substantially built of brick, timber and slated, comprising four floors, with doors on the First Floor opening with steps into the yard ... Connected with this mill is a range of capital timber and slated workshop and storage, and a 2-stall stable with loft over." [21] It had evidently been rebuilt since 1866, no doubt following the fire which destroyed the adjacent drug mill in 1870.



*The mill C. 1895.
[72.8kb]*

No acceptable bids were received at this auction, and all the mills remained in the ownership of the Croydon Local Board of Health. The subsequent history of the former corn mill is linked with that of the leather mill, the two mills continuing to be worked as one concern.

James and George McRae were still there in 1882, but by 1885 Henry David Roberts was the tenant of the two mills. On 25 March 1899 the

Corporation of Croydon, which had taken over the functions of the Local Board of Health in 1883, renewed the lease to Roberts of the leather mill in Carshalton, and the mill in Beddington "lately used as Leather Mill, formerly used as Flour Mill", for 21 years [22].

Following the death of Henry David Roberts on 25 March 1902, at the age of 56, the lease passed to his son Daniel Monteith Roberts, who carried on trading under the name H. D. Roberts and Son until about 1920. The two leather mills were then worked successively by the Pavlova Leather Company, the Wattle Leather Company, the Hackbridge Chamois Leather Company, and the Carmarthen Leather Company, until they closed down in the early 1950s, when leather working on the site ceased.

The original leather mill building was then put to other purposes, but it would seem that the use of the former corn mill had been discontinued a little earlier. Hillier, in 1951, reported that that mill "has gone though the sluice gate and the wheel-race were pointed out to me" [23].

References

- 1.** London Metropolitan Archives, SKCS 46.
- 2.** Ibid. SKCS 47.
- 3.** Guildhall Library, MS 11936/189 No. 268824.
- 4.** Ibid. MS 11936/336 No. 518653.
- 5.** The London Gazette, 1-5 April 1788.
- 6.** Guildhall Library, MS 11936/359 No. 555381.
- 7.** Ibid. MS 11936/375 No. 579381.
- 8.** Ibid. MS 11936/376 No. 583816.
- 9.** Ibid. MS 11937/19 No. 671895.
- 10.** National Archives, PROB 11/1302 q133.
- 11.**
- 12.** Ibid. MS 11937/101 No. 880993.
- 13.** Ibid. MS 11937/113 No. 916493.
- 14.** The London Gazette, 1 May 1824.
- 15.** Surrey History Centre, QS 6/8/411.
- 16.** National Archives, PROB 11/1906 q57.
- 17.** Frederick Braithwaite, "On the Rise and Fall of the Wandle ... ", in Institution of Civil Engineers Proceedings, vol. 20 (1861).
- 18.** Sutton Archive and Local Studies Library, SBC 728.
- 19.** Croydon Local Studies Library, HEA/1/6.
- 20.** Ibid. HEA/1/7.
- 21.** Sutton Archive and Local Studies Library, 48/28/7.
- 22.** Croydon Local Studies Library, D.S. 70.
- 23.** J. Hillier, Old Surrey Water Mills (1951), p. 174.