

Calico Printing Works Off Mill Green, Beddington Corner.

These works were situated about 50 yards south of the right-angle bend in Mill Green Road, some 250 yards from London Road. They were on a meandering side stream of the Wandle, the northern course of which can be seen flowing across Mill Green.

The first man who can be certainly associated with the site was John Cookson, a bleacher, "of Beddington Corner (sic)". On 15 April 1782 he took out a policy with the Sun insurance company on his dwelling house, brown warehouse, boiling house, water mill house, water mill, drying room, starching room and other buildings, and the utensils and goods contained in all of these [1].

Cookson's association with the site was described by James Edwards in c.1789: "On the south side of this common (i.e. Mill Green) about one furlong to the right of the road, Mr.Cookson has a genteel house, at which he carries on an extensive trade in a branch of the callico manufactory called whitsterring ..." [2].

Then, or later, he was in partnership with John Collinson and Thomas Gataker, which was dissolved on 29 February 1792 [3]. A few months later, in June 1792, John Cookson was declared bankrupt [4].

These circumstances led to the publication of a notice in January 1793, informing that the lease of the premises, "late in the occupation of Messrs.Cookson and Co." would be offered for sale at an auction to be held in February next [5]. This was followed by another advertisement, giving the date of the auction as 25 February 1793. This gave the following description of the accommodation:

"The valuable improved Leasehold Premises, comprising a genteel Brick Dwelling House, four rooms on a floor, with internal and external Offices, a Shrubbery, Pleasure and Kitchen Gardens, Orchard and Field; a small Dwelling House, with Garden, which at a small expense may be converted into a respectable Residence, a large Yard, with Horizontal Wind and Water Mill, on an entire new construction, Stabling for 8 horses, Wagon-House, Copperhouse, Smoothing-house, Sour-house, Framing-room, a large Warehouse, Starching-house, Granary and various other accommodations for the above Business. The whole occupying about 111/2 Acres ..." "The valuable Plant and Utensils" were included with the premises [6].

Evidently no acceptable bids were made at this auction, and another advertisement was published in July 1793, giving notice of a further auction to be held on 1 August 1793 [7]. A copy of the auctioneer's sales particulars in connection with this has been preserved, and gives a description of the premises similar to that quoted above. It also gives a detailed inventory of the plant, which included an 18 feet diameter water wheel in an "old mill house", and the horizontal wind and water wheel in a "new mill house." [8]

As previously described, the mill stood on a side stream and not on the main river, and this situation presumably led to a shortage of water at times, and resulted in the installation of the combined wind and water mill. This was probably that said, according to Farries and Mason, "to have stood near Mitcham", and illustrated by a sketch [9]:

Following the auction on 1 August 1793, it seems likely that the 'lease was taken by Robert Reynolds and Thomas Chesson, calico printers, "late of Beddington Corner", who were declared bankrupt in April 1799 [10]. Chesson was back soon afterwards, and Holden's directory for 1802-04. named Ansell, Chesson and Stevens as the calico printers at the works. However, this partnership, of William Ansell, Thomas Chesson and Stephen Stevens, was dissolved on 5 August 1802 [11].



*The mill site in
c.1895. [78.5kb]*

Apparently William Ansell left, and was replaced, for in 1806 the tenants were named as Dudding, Chesson and Stevens [12], and also in Holden's directory for 1808. These men were Edward Barr Dudding, Thomas Chesson, and Stephen Stevens, whose partnership was dissolved in September 1809, to the extent that Stephen Stevens left [13].

There had been a complete change of partners by 21 January 1813, when it was announced that the concern would in future be carried on by George Savage James and David Dickson, following the departure of William Thwaites [14]. Four years later, on 11 January 1817, George Savage James resigned, leaving David Dickson to carry on alone [15].

Dickson later went into partnership with Woolfrey Middleditch, who resigned on 5 July 1825 [16]. Subsequently, the partnership consisted of David Dickson, Stephen Stevens (making a return to the site), and James Burkitt, but the latter two departed on 24 July 1833, and David Dickson again carried on alone [17].

Less than two years later it was announced that the "valuable plant, machinery, utensils, blocks, plates, &c:" of "Mr.D.Dixon (sic)", who was "retiring from the business", would be offered for sale at an auction to be held on the premises on 7 and 8 April 1835. The machinery included a 4 horse-power steam engine [18]. In September 1835, the lease of the premises, "long in the occupation of Calico Printers", but "adapted to any Manufacturing purpose", was offered for sale by private contract. Particulars could be obtained from Mr. David Dickson at Water Side, Wandsworth [19].

The outcome has not been ascertained, and the next reference to the site found comes some 30 years later, in 1866.

During all the period of its use for bleaching and calico printing, the property was in the ownership of successive members of the Bridges family of Beddington. On 22 August 1860 the incumbent owner, John Bridges, sold some property at Beddington Corner, including the former calico printing works, to Samuel Gurney, a partner in the London banking firm of Overend, Gurney and Company [20]. Gurney at this time also owned the corn mill, the drug mill and the leather mill nearby.

Overend, Gurney and Company failed in May 1866 and was put into liquidation, and Gurney faced financial ruin. Soon afterwards it was announced that all his Carshalton and Wallington properties would be offered for sale at an auction to be held on 31 October 1866.

In the auctioneer's sale catalogue, the site of the old printing works, as Lot 26, was said to comprise three dwelling houses, a builder's premises and appurtenances, and a "Saw Mill, timber and tiled, driven by an undershot wheel ... Held by John Buck", who had a lease determinable in 1872 [21].

Much of the property at Beddington Corner was then purchased by the Croydon Local Board of Health, but not, it seems, Lot 26, and there follows another long gap in the records of its history.



*The mill site in c.1895.
[112.3kb]*

At some later date, which has not been ascertained, but probably in the 1890s, the site was taken over for use as a lavender and peppermint distillery by J. & G. Miller. This firm had been established by James Miller at Market Deeping in 1840, and when they moved to Surrey they cultivated peppermint and lavender on the site of the present St.Helier housing estate. James Miller had probably died before the move, and the business was then conducted by his son George Miller. He died on 13 June 1922, and the firm continued to operate under the direction of J.P.Madden.

The premises were subsequently taken over by Holland's Distillery (Essential Oils) Ltd., who worked on the site until the late 1960s. It is said that the mill wheel and machinery were not removed until 1965 [22].

References

- 1.** Guildhall Library, MS 11936/300 No.458992.
- 2.** James Edwards, Companion from London to Brighthelmston, Part II, c.1789, p.21.
- 3.** The London Gazette, 28 February-3 March 1792.
- 4.** Ibid. 21-23 June 1792.
- 5.** The Times, 15 January 1793.
- 6.** Ibid. 9 February 1793.
- 7.** Ibid. 26 July 1793.
- 8.** Sutton Archive and Local Studies Library, 48/20/1.
- 9.** K.G.Farries and M.T.Mason, The Windmills of Surrey and Inner London, 1966, plate 70.
- 10.** The London Gazette, 30 April-4 May 1799.
- 11.** Ibid. 3-7 August 1802.
- 12.** Sutton Archive and Local Studies Library, A Valuation of the Hamlet of Wallington ... (1806
- 13.** The London Gazette, 16-19 September 1809.
- 14.** Ibid. 23-26 January 1813.
- 15.** Ibid. 14 January 1817.
- 16.** Ibid. 9 July 1825.
- 17.** Ibid. 26 July 1833.
- 18.** The Times, 3 April 1835.
- 19.** The County Chronicle, 15 September 1835.
- 20.** The Croydon Advertiser, 8 August 1885. Report of case Bidder v. Bridges. ,
- 21.** Sutton Archive and Local Studies Library, SBC 728.
- 22.** Ibid. SB 63.