

Calico Printing Works At Rushy Meadow, Wallington.

These works were situated on the east bank of the Wandle, about 250 yards below Hack Bridge, a little to the north of the confluence of the two streams enclosing the land on which The Culvers later stood, at Rushy Meadow. A lane ran from the works eastwards to a junction with London Road, the route of part of which survives as New Road.

The site was bought in 1781, at the same time as what later became known as the Culvers estate, by Foster Reynolds, from James Scawen's trustees. It was apparently leased soon afterwards to George Ansell of Carshalton, who probably established the works. On 16 June 1783 he sub-let the 22 acres of land called Rushy Meadow and a bleaching ground abutting the river, with the newly erected buildings, workshops and premises thereon, to the partnership of William Penny, William Baylis, Richard Garrett, and George Padmore, calico printers, for 201 years at the yearly rental of £22 [1]. The four partners took out a policy with the Sun insurance company on 10 January 1785, on a printing shop, and the stock and utensils therein [2].

George Padmore left the partnership on 30 June 1785 [3], and went to calico printing works below Merton Bridge in Wimbledon. William Penny died soon after, and apparently the remaining partners relinquished the

lease soon after that. On 1 January 1788 the remaining term of the lease was transferred to Joseph Peel of Cheapside, London [4].

Evidently it was this site that was noted by James Edwards in c.1789 as the "callico manufactory belonging to Messrs. Whitehead, Kenly and Haites" [5]. William Tagg apparently joined the concern at about this time, and he, with James Whitehead, William Kennerley, and William Hate took on an apprentice on 23 October 1789 [6]. William Kennerley left the partnership on 24 June 1793 [7]. and went to calico printing works at Beddington Corner.

Later James Whitehead must have left, and William Hate was in partnership with William Bennett and William Ancell before 24 June 1797 when William Bennett resigned [8].

Later William Hate left, and William Ancell went into partnership with his brothers George and Joseph Ancell, but he left the concern on 28 October 1805 [9]. The Ancells were the sons of Joseph Ancell, who had engaged in calico printing at Croydon Palace until his death in 1802.

Joseph and George Ancell were named as the occupiers in 1806, when the owner was Thomas Reynolds, the son of Foster Reynolds who had died in 1796 [10]. In Holden's directory for 1808, "Ancells and Lay" were named as calico printers at "Bushy Mead", Wallington. This "Lay" was Benjamin Lay who was recorded as being a calico printer at Croydon Palace from 1802. He must have been a partner only briefly, for in Holden's 1809-11 directory, the occupiers were again named as George and Joseph Ancell only, with Joseph being noted as resident at the premises.

In fact, George Ancell resigned from the partnership on 23 November 1810 [11]. In January 1812 Joseph Ancell, of "Bushy Mead", was declared bankrupt [12]. Following this, it was

announced that an auction of his printing plant and utensils, and household furniture and effects, would be held on the premises on 25 and 26 March 1812, "by order of the Assignees." [13] On 25 June 1812, George and Joseph Ancell were jointly declared bankrupt in respect of their former partnership [14].

Evidently the auction of Joseph Ancell's possessions did not result in any acceptable bids, for they were again advertised to be offered for sale, at an auction to be held on 14 and 15 November 1814 [15]. Later, it was announced that the "valuable stock in trade, plant, fixtures, and utensils" of George Ancell would be auctioned on 22 and 23 April 1816, "by direction of the assignees." [16]

Despite the apparent relinquishment of the premises by the Ancells, John Hassell in 1817 mentioned "Russia (sic) Meadow, the property of Messrs. Ansell (sic), calico-printers." [17] Also, there was a reference in February 1822 to "Ancells bleaching grounds" in a letter to Jacob Foster Reynolds [18], the then owner, the brother of Thomas Reynolds who had died in 1819. But it was about this time that Joseph Ancell took the lease of a calico printing works at Merton Abbey on the site later occupied by Liberty & Company, and the use of Rushy Meadow for calico printing probably ended then.

In about 1894 Louis Doerr established a patent leather factory on or near the site of the former calico printing works. It was probably built there in order to obtain a supply of water from the Wandle.

The earliest reference found to this factory is in a record of a meeting of the Public Health Committee of the Croydon Rural District Council, held on 3 September 1896. At this meeting it was reported that a complaint had been received relating to the nuisance caused by the "offensive vapours" arising from the heating of a material used in the patent leather making process, which spread around the neighbourhood. It was mentioned that the matter had already been raised with Doerr "some time ago", and that he had undertaken to deal with the nuisance [19].

In Pile's local directory for 1899, F. Jeffries, presumably the works manager, was named at "Doerr's Mills", and J. Oppitz was similarly recorded in 1901. However, Doerr himself was involved in the business, and lived for a time at nearby Culverside.

The business apparently closed down at Louis Doerr's death on 6 February 1927 at the age of 78. In that year the Mullard Radio Valve Company Limited moved onto the site. A large new factory was built in 1929, and later extended to cover a large area, and the firm became the largest employer of local labour.

Over the years the company engaged in the manufacture of other electrical and electronic components, especially connected with radar. It was at some time amalgamated with the Phillips group, but was always generally known as Mullards. The factory there closed down in 1994, and the buildings were then demolished to make way for the present housing development.

References

1. Surrey History Centre, 587/1/3a.
2. Guildhall Library, MS 11936/327 No.500264.
3. The London Gazette, 28 June-2 July 1785.

- 4.** Surrey History Centre, 5871/6.
- 5.** James Edwards, Companion from London to Brighthelmston, Part II,c.1789, p.21.
- 6.** Mitcham Settlement Examinations 1784-1814, Surrey Record Society, 1973, p.66.
- 7.** The London Gazette, 9-13 July 1793. **8.** Ibid. 4-8 July 1797.
- 9.** Ibid. 4 January 1806.
- 10.** Sutton Archive and Local Studies Library, Valuation of the Hamlet of Wallington, 1806.
- 11.** The London Gazette, 24-27 November 1810.
- 12.** Ibid. 28 January-1 February 1812.
- 13.** The Times, 24 March 1812.
- 14.** The London Gazette, 27-30 June 1812.
- 15.** The Times, 2 November 1814.
- 16.** Ibid. 1 April 1816.
- 17.** John Hassell, Picturesque Rides and Walks, Vol.I, 1817, p.113.
- 18.** Merton Heritage Centre, William Simpson's Letter Book.
- 19.** Croydon Local Studies Library, Croydon Rural District Council Minutes, 1896-97, p.171.