

Wallington Bridge Mill, Beddington.

This mill was situated on the River Wandle a short distance east of Wallington Bridge where London Road, Wallington, crosses the river.

It was probably one of the two corn mills which Sir Francis Carew of Beddington is said to have owned in 1610 [1]. The earliest specific reference found to a mill here is on John Seller's map of Surrey of 1690, whereon it is named Wallington Mill.

A new mill was built here in 1725 [2], and it is likely that it was then used for logwood grinding. The earliest reference found to it as such was in a list of those liable to pay a sewer rate, dated 25 March 1756, when it was occupied by "Widow Phillips" [3]. On a similar list, drawn up on 11 August 1763, the tenant was named as John Filby [3].

On the schedule to a plan of William Bridges's estate in the Manor of Wallington, drawn in 1771, John Filby's holding was described as "House and Logwood Mill together with Barn, Stable, Granary, Warehouse, Yard, Garden and Mill Pond", and he also held the lease of two adjoining closes of meadow land on the north side of the river [4]. William Bridges had inherited the Manor of Wallington from his cousin Brydges Baldwin in 1765.

On 7 January 1777 William Bridges granted a new lease of the mill premises to John Filby [2]. James Edwards in about 1789 mentioned "Filbey's (sic) mill for grinding of logwood" [5], but in December 1791 Filby agreed to sell the lease to William Kilburn for £1500 [2]. Filby may have retired from business due to ill-health, for he died in 1793.

William Kilburn, a renowned calico printer, had occupied printing works and grounds a little further down the river, beyond Wallington Bridge, since about 1779, initially with partners, but from 1785 on his own account. His intention was to convert the logwood mill to cotton making. His arrangements for taking the lease were completed on 24 March 1792, but he found that the mill was "very much decayed" and too small for his purpose, and at the beginning of April he began to demolish it preparatory to building a new one. He claimed to have already spent £4,000 on the work when, soon afterwards, William Bridges sought an injunction to prevent the rebuilding [2]. Evidently his action was not successful, as the new mill was completed and put to work.

In April 1802 it was announced that the lease of the premises at Wallington, "lately occupied as a Cotton Works", together with outbuildings and five acres of adjoining land, and a nearby dwelling house and a messuage with five acres of land, all "late the property of Mr. Wm. Kilburn, cotton-spinner and calico-printer", would be offered for sale at an auction to be held on 13 May 1802 [6]. It was later announced that the sale was postponed [7], and no further reference to it has been found.

However, the plant, utensils and implements of the cotton mill including spinning frames, carding, drawing and roving machines, and spinning jennies and billies, together with the plant and utensils of Kilburn's nearby calico printing works, were advertised to be sold by auction on the premises on 24 May 1802 and following days [8].

The following year it was announced that an auction would be held on 7 and 8 February 1803, of the building materials contained in the workshops and other buildings at Kilburn's calico printing works, which were to be demolished [9].

Despite the implication in the above notices that William Kilburn had ceased working at both the cotton mill and the printing works in about 1802, there are later references which indicate that he continued at work in the cotton mill, and possibly at the printing works, until his death in 1818. He was certainly at the cotton mill in 1806, when a rate assessment valuation for the hamlet of Wallington included cotton mill, warehouses, house, cottages, offices and bleaching grounds in the tenancy of "W. Kilburn." [10] The owner at this period was Brook Allen Bridges, a distant relative of William Bridges, who had died in 1805.

William Kilburn was also listed in Holden's directories from 1802 until 1811, variously described as calico printer or bleacher. In 1805 James Malcolm included in his list of Wandle mills the "very extensive calico and printing grounds of Mr.W.Kilburn at Wallington". [11] John Hassell noted in 1817 that at Wallington, "Mr.Kilburn has here cotton mills and bleaching grounds." [12]

William Kilburn died on 3 December 1818 at the age of 73. At some time he had gone into partnership with a Mr.Clarkson, and after Kilburn's death his son Thomas inherited his half-share. The business was discontinued soon afterwards, and in November 1819 it was announced that, "by order of Messrs.Kilburn and Clarkson, bleachers, retiring from business", their plant and utensils would be offered for sale at an auction to be held on 25 November 1819 [13].

Early in 1820, the lease of the calico printing works was taken by the partnership of William Simpson, his brother Robert Simpson and James Newton, who were then operating at printing works at Merton Abbey. They began to erect new buildings at Wallington, and as these were completed moved their printing facilities there. They left Merton Abbey in December 1821. At about the same time, they took the lease of the cotton mill and, most likely, converted that to calico printing also.

The firm prospered during their first years at Wallington. In Pigot's directory for 1823-24 it was recorded that, "There are also situated at Wallington, the very extensive print works of Messrs.Simpson, Newton and Co. where some of the finest work is finished in admirable style." James Newton left the firm on 30 June 1823 [14], and William and Robert Simpson carried on until they relinquished the business in about October 1830.

The schedule to a Deposited Plan dated November 1834 indicates that the former cotton mill was then in use by Benjamin Brown as a print works, and that another mill had been built to the east of it on the north bank of the river, and was being used as a flock mill by Mr.Ansell (probably James Ansell who was named as a "flock grinder" in Pigot's directories from 1826 to 1829), as undertenant of John Davidson [15].

The book of reference to the Beddington Tithe Map of 1841 shows that a further building had been erected on the site, not by the river but between the flock mill and London Road, and identified as a hair factory. Benjamin Brown at that time held the head lease of all three buildings from John Bridges, nephew of Brook Allen Bridges who had died in 1815. The former print works had by then been converted to corn milling and sub-let the Charles Bourne, and the flock mill and hair factory were both occupied by Thomas Holloway.

Charles Bourne later moved to a corn mill at Beddington Corner, and the schedule to a Deposited Plan dated November 1849 recorded that all three buildings (the hair factory now referred to as a brush factory) were occupied by Thomas and James Holloway, as undertenants of Benjamin Brown [16]. In the Beddington census returns for 1851 Thomas Holloway was described as a flock manufacturer employing 18 men, and James Holloway as a brush manufacturer employing 21 men.

Frederick Braithwaite in 1853 noted the "corn mill belonging to Mr.Holloway, driving one wheel of 12 H.P." and wrote of the flock mill that "These works consume about 40,000 gallons of water daily, which, after having been used for washing the dust from the flock, is returned into the river." Evidently the flock mill was not powered by the river [17]. In the late 1850s the corn mill was converted to paper making. The first paper maker there was William Frederick Butler [18]. He attended a meeting of the Croydon Local Board of Health on 27 September 1859, to complain of "the Sewage from Croydon having passed into his Mill Head." This followed several letters sent to the Croydon Local Board by the landowner, John Bridges, making the same complaint [19].

Butler was soon afterwards succeeded by Edward Smith Manico, who found the situation unaltered. On 8 January 1861 it was recorded that the Croydon Local Board had received a letter from him, "complaining of injury done to the paper making at his mill", due to the "foul matter" running into the river [19].

It was probably around this time that the use of the flock mill was discontinued. By 1861 Thomas Holloway and his son Robert were operating a flock making works a short distance to the north off London Road at Brewers Green, in a building formerly part of the calico printing works of Simpson and Company.

The flock mill and the brush factory near the bridge were probably demolished soon afterwards. When in 1872 Alfred Smee wrote about his garden, which occupied the north side of the Wandle extending to London Road, and from near Wallington Bridge to the boundary of Beddington Park, it was obviously then well-established, with planted areas on the sites of the flock mill and the factory [20].

Edward Smith Manico operated the paper mill, under the name Royal Paper Mills, until July 1886, when he found himself in financial difficulties. He did not become bankrupt, but he surrendered all his assets to his creditors and retired from business [21]. He died at Beckenham on 26 May 1898.

His creditors evidently came to an arrangement with William Reuben Brown, whereby he took over the business. Brown had worked there with Manico for many years, first as a machine man and later as manager of the works [22]. He went on to work the mill for several years, and was said to be producing six tons of paper weekly in 1890, but on 22 March 1893 he was declared bankrupt [23].



The Paper Mill in c 1868.
[114kb]

Information relating to the mill after Brown's departure is fragmentary. The Ordnance Survey maps of c.1896 identify it as a disused paper mill, and it is said to have remained unoccupied until about 1914 when it was put to use as a corn mill by Brindley & Sons [24]. in demolished were premises the and 1960, until there They Limited. H.Turner F. of Works

Chocolate Helm by 1932 from finally, Limited, then confectioners, manufacturing Company, French occupied 1930 1924 that appears- it directories, local later entries From>

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