

Cotgrave Mills and Millers

There have probably been numerous mills in and around Cotgrave but in recent times there were three – the largest being the ‘Gozen’s’ Mill, situated on Mill Hill, while two others were situated at Wolds Hill and at the village outskirts just off Plumtree Road. Wolds Mill belonged to the White family who owned the Manor House at the corner of Risegate and Owthorpe Road, while Gozen’s Mill belonged to the Pierreponts. According to Estate maps, the Plumtree Road mill had gone by 1731 and the Wolds Mill had also disappeared by the time of Enclosure in 1790, while the Gozen’s Mill had to be rebuilt in 1795 (or thenabouts). This new mill, a Post Mill, seems to have survived until it was blown down in a fierce gale in 1916. During a survey of the Mill Hill site undertaken by the Rushcliffe Archaeological Society in 1973, four foundation stones were unearthed but that is all that remains of it.

What of the various millers? The earliest miller that we know of was a William Hert, who, in 1476, was sued for trespass by John Barowe. He was first outlawed for not appearing in court, then pardoned – no further details are available. Much later we hear of a Timothy Hives (‘Hives’ being a well-known Cotgrave name) who was famous for his strength – he was reputed to carry an 18 stone bag of corn from a barn next to the Church (where it was flailed) to the Gozen’s Mill, an uphill task, to say the least. In 1740, a Timothy Hives (there were several!) was tenant of both the Gozen’s and the Wolds Mills and the Hives family was extremely prosperous, as illustrated by the inventory of one of the Timothys. It is indicative of his standing that he was referred to as ‘Mr’. When Timothy died in 1791, his wife Mary became tenant and it was in her name that the new mill was built, at a cost of some £200. In 1796 she re-married and her new husband became tenant. His name was George Hickling – yet another well-respected Cotgrave name. He was, however, not well respected as a miller, apparently failing in his responsibility for proper maintenance of the mill. Then, in 1807 a tragic accident occurred when a young employee approached too closely to the sails and was killed instantly by a blow to his head.

All this pre-dates the available census returns, from which we can hope to learn something more of the later millers. What we find out from the various census returns can be laid out as follows:

1841 George Hickling (aged 72) ‘Miller’, and Sarah (40) – probably his daughter?

Thomas Hickling (45) ‘Miller’, married to Sarah (45) – George’s son?

John Hives (54) ‘Flour Miller’, married to Elizabeth (55)

Did they all work at the same mill, one wonders? (NB no addresses are provided so we don’t know where they all lived. Also, there is no information concerning marital status – the ‘married’ bits are just guesses.)

- 1851 John **Levers** (?) (32) 'Miller', married to Mary (34) – Steam Mill Houses
John Dixon (49) 'Butcher and Miller', married to Elizabeth (50)
James Dixon (19), Butcher & Miller Apprentice'
Joseph **Falconbridge** (24) 'Miller's Labourer'
Thomas Hickling (54) 'Annuitant' and his wife Sarah (55). One wonders how he came by his 'annuity' to allow him to retire from milling in his 50's!
- 1861 Sarah Hickling (65) 'Retired Miller's Wife' (Obviously the Sarah married to Thomas Hickling in 1841)
George Tillson (35) 'Miller', married to Harriett (45) – The Gripps
James Dixon (29) 'Master Miller', married to Mary A. (29) – Gripps Steam Mill
(James is the son of John Dixon, above.)
Emma Berkett (26) 'Miller's Wife' (perhaps her husband was away on Census night?)

NB Sarah Hickling was born in Cotgrave, George Tillson was from Surfleet, Lincolnshire, James Dixon was born in Cotgrave and Emma Berkett was from Costock. Emma Berkett was recorder as a 'Lodger', married, but no sign of her husband.

- 1871 William Tinker (55) '**Journeyman** Miller', married to Elizabeth (55) – The Gripps
James Dixon (39) 'Butcher & Miller', married to Mary A (39) – The Gripps
Samuel Crampton (48) 'Miller's Carter', married to Sarah (46) – The Gripps

NB William Tinker, James Dixon and Samuel Crampton were all born in Cotgrave.

In the 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911 Census Returns there is no mention of any Miller! James Dixon continued living in Cotgrave and in the 1881, '91, '01 and 1911 censuses is recorded as a Butcher, so he clearly gave up milling between 1871 and 1881, but we don't know if this was due to the destruction of his mill or whether he was simply not making enough money as a miller.

The Gripps is an area of Cotgrave part way up Owthorpe Road which would have been fairly Close to the Wolds Mill – but that Mill had long since gone! Intriguingly, just what is this 'Steam Mill' which is twice referred to (in 1851 and 1861)? Presumably, *not* a windmill!

NB Google makes clear that Steam Mills were in widespread use for grinding corn from about 1830 onwards and that they were usually brick-built. The Cotgrave brickworks was still active in 1861, as shown by a Census entry for John Warham (60), married to Mattilda (60). He was a 'Brick Maker' and they lived at the Brick Yards. Could the Dixon family have built

a small steam mill to grind corn in competition with the Gozen's Mill? One wonders if there might be any evidence of such a structure remaining. PS: In the Census Return for 1881 there is an entry: Joseph Jimson (aged 32) 'Engine Driver Brickyard'. Could this be the man who drove the Steam Mill?

Sources:

"Cotgrave – Aspects of life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" Jocelyne Wood (Ed), 1987.

"Cotgrave – Settlement, Village, Town", William Grantham, 2000.

"Gozen's Hill Mill, Cotgrave", Rushcliffe Archaeology Group, 1973.

Ancestry, Census Returns for Cotgrave.

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