

Other Mills

We also saw another belt-driven "portable mill" at Boland Museum in Worcester. I could not find a maker's plate on this neatly made, all-metal, machine. It had with a modern "silent feed" to the horizontally mounted stones inside. This particular mill is located near a slot in the wall of the relatively large building housing it, and is aligned with a horse engine outside. The other end of the same building houses a horse mill, which can take two animals. Our charming and most informative lady guide (dressed in costume of the early settlers) told us that the mill is sometimes set in motion using a horse and a donkey. In this mill the upright shaft carries a large great spur wheel, with its rim partly supported by diagonal struts from near the base of the upright shaft. This wheel drives a lantern pinion on the stone spindle beneath the stones, which are themselves on the upper floor of the building. Also at Worcester was an animal powered machine, a small donkey bucket pump.

We did see another horse mill at Swellendam. It was rope-driven from the rim of the great wheel on the upright shaft. (In his book, Walton records that usually rope-driven horse mills are over-drift, though at least one is underdrift. pp.172-3). The stone furniture for this horse mill is "robust", with a square topless tun and a very large hopper. Tentering is by "bedspanner". Last but, historically speaking, not the least was a hand quern set with what looked like the bottom section of an iron bound wooden cask.

Selected Bibliography

1. Walton J. "South African Mills" *Transactions of the Third Symposium of The International Molinological Society*, 1973.
2. Walton J. "Watermills, Windmills and Horse Mills of South Africa" C.Struik, Cape Town 1974.
3. Major J.K. "Animal Powered Engines." Batsford, London 1978.

A FOURTEENTH CENTURY MILLSTONE TRANSACTION

An awful warning about quoting secondary sources.

by Gordon Tucker

I recently published a major paper on millstone making in England [1], and although it was concerned almost entirely with the 18th and 19th centuries, I did include a little data on millstone costs in earlier centuries. One item was a 14th century transaction, which I quoted from Leslie Syson's well regarded book "British Water-Mills" published in 1965 [2]. The transaction was the purchase of five foreign millstones in London and their transport to Henley, boring holes in them, and then the transport of two stones to Cuxham in Oxfordshire and another two to Oxford. Syson gives the cost of the stones themselves as £3.3s.4d., and all the other costs he lists add up to £1.14s.10¹/₄d. He comments that "the transport adds almost 50 per cent to the original cost". The cost of the stones was so low that I commented in my paper that "these must have been very small stones". [3]

Just as my paper was about to be published - long after the proofs had been returned - Mr.W.A.Seaby discovered in a drawer at the Warwick Museum a sheet of paper containing a typed translation of the original Latin manuscript account of this transaction, and knowing my concern with millstones, sent a copy to me. This sheet showed the cost of the five millstones as £15.16s.8d., with 63s.4d. as the cost of **each one**. The other costs agreed with those quoted by Syson, so that, in fact the transport from London added almost 10 per cent - not 50 per cent - to the original cost. The discrepancy was so serious that I decided to investigate the matter, starting with the original manuscript, which is in the remarkable collection of the Cuxham manorial archives at Merton College, Oxford. A book containing a general discussion of these documents and their background, and transcriptions (not translations) of a large proportion of the collection, has been published by Professor P.D.A.Harvey of Durham [4], but this particular roll, which is identified by Merton College as MCR 3853, is not included. A slightly touched-up copy of the relevant section of this roll is reproduced here by courtesy of the Warden and Scholars of Merton College Oxford. No exact dates are given, but the year was 1330-31. Although the script is difficult to read, and the Latin words are much abbreviated, it is not too difficult to discern, in the first line, very near the beginning, "*v molis*" (5 millstones) [5], and about the middle of the line "*xv.L xvj.s viij.d*" (15L.16s.8d.), followed after two abbreviated words by "*Lxij.s iij.d*" (63s.4d.) as the price of each. So the translation found at Warwick was correct and Syson was wrong. The translation turned out to be a very old one by Professor Harvey, who has been kind enough to polish it up to his satisfaction; and with his permission it is set out below:-

"The same [i.e. Robert Oldman, reeve of Cuxham] accounts for five mill-stones from abroad (*de partibus transmarinis*) bought in London, £15.16s.8d., the price of each being 63s.4d. In God's

money (*in argento dei*) for the said stones 1d. In 5 gallons of wine bought for drink-money (*beveria*) for the same 2s.1d. In loading the said mill-stones on to the boat at London 5s. In wharf-dues (*warvagium*) there 7¹/₂d. In murage (*muragium* toll for the upkeep of town walls) there 10d. In carrying the said mill-stones from London to Henley-on-Thames (*Henle*) 11s. 2d. In murage at Maidenhead (*Meydenehuth*) 10d. In the expenses of the reeve, his boy and his horse for three days going and returning to buy the said mill-stones at London 3s.0¹/₄d. In the expenses of the same going there another time for four days to have the said mill-stones transported 4s. In the expenses of three men for three days at Henley boring (*penetrand*) the said mill-stones together with the expenses of two carters taking two of the stones to Cuxham (*Couxham*) 3s.9d. In iron bought for the mill-stones 2 1/2d. In steel bought for the implements (*biles*) for boring (*penetrand*) the said mill-stones 9d. In the smith's wages for making the said implements and sharpening them many times 2s. In four hoops (*in iiij hopis*) bought for two mill-stones taken to Oxford 6d."

The most probable explanation of the four hoops for two millstones is that they were iron hoops or bands shrunk on the stones to prevent shattering under stress - a practice very common in more recent times.

The last full line of the reproduced piece of document refers to an unrelated transaction (a big rope bought for the Great Hall) costing xiiij.s iiij.d (13s.4d.), which when added to the total of £17.11s.6¹/₄d. of the millstone transaction, correctly comes to xviiij.L iiij.s x.dq (£18.4s.10¹/₄d.), as given at the bottom of the extract.

A much earlier translation was published by Rogers [6] in 1866 and in effect formed the basis of all subsequent published mention of the transaction. Roger's translation differs little from Harvey's in the reading of the script and the meaning of the words, and agrees exactly in all the figures of costs. So it may be taken as essentially correct. Yet when reproduced in summarised form in Bennett and Elton's highly respected treatise "History of Corn Milling" in 1900, [7] the cost of the five stones in London appears as £3.3s.5d. (although two pages earlier they correctly state £3.3s.4d. as the cost of each !). This mistake is inexplicable.

Harvey's book of 1965 on Cuxham [8] mentions the transaction but refers to Rogers for details. Syson, who so badly misled me, quotes as his own source a book by Hassall [9], but the latter author, who also refers to Rogers as his source, correctly gives the cost of the millstones as £3.3s.4d. each. Syson's error seems inexplicable too.

The details of the millstone transaction are in themselves very interesting, and they were discussed fascinatingly and at length by Rogers in his book [10], so will not be further discussed here

Handwritten Latin text, likely a transcription of the original document. The text is written in a cursive script and is difficult to read. It appears to be a list of items and their costs, similar to the typed text above.

Handwritten signature or name, possibly 'C. G. Tucker'.

Copy of a portion of Cuxham Manorial Roll (Merton College reference MCR 3853) dealing with the purchase and handling of five foreign millstones in 1330-31. The copy has been slightly touched-up by D.G. Tucker. Reproduced here by courtesy of the Warden and Scholars of Merton College Oxford.

It is hoped this note will have proved interesting anyway, but the lesson to be learnt is: quote from other authors at your peril: get back to the original source if you possibly can.

I am very grateful to Professor Harvey for his co-operation and permission to use his translation, to Mr.J.B.Burglass of Merton College Library for supplying a copy of the original document, Mr.R.A.Holt and Dr.B.S.Benedikz of the University of Birmingham for advice, and most of all to Mr.W.A.Seaby for finding, and thinking to send to me, the sheet containing Professor Harvey's early translation which started off this small investigation.

References and Notes.

1. D.G.Tucker, "Millstone making in England", *Indust. Archaeol. Rev.*,9, Spring 1987, pp.167-188.
2. L.Syson, "British Water-Mills", London, 1965, pp.113-4
3. Mr.R.A.Holt, who has studied medieval mills in depth, tells me that he does not consider this figure of cost exceptionally low, although in this particular case it does turn out to be wrong.
4. P.D.A.Harvey, "Manorial Records of Cuxham, Oxfordshire, circa 1200-1359", H.M.S.O., London, 1976.
5. Strictly "*mola*" (of which "*molis*" is presumably the the dative plural) means mill, and the word for millstone is "*molaris*", but it seems this usage is not unusual.
6. J.E.Thorold Rogers, "A History of Agriculture and Prices in England, 1259-1793", Vol.1, Oxford, 1866, p.505.
7. R.Bennett and J.Elton, "History of Corn Milling", Vol.3, "Feudal Laws and Customs", London, 1900, p.104.
8. P.D.A.Harvey, "A Medieval Oxfordshire Village: Cuxham 1240 to 1400", Oxford, 1965, p.103.
9. W.O.Hassall, "How They Lived", Oxford, 1962, pp.43-4.
10. Rogers, *op.cit.*, pp.505-8.

BIRKDALE OLD MILL

by Jo Roberts

Once there were many old wooden sunken peg mills on the Fylde and in the north west of England. Now only a lone wooden peg (post) remains at Warton on the Fylde (NGR SD416286) to remind us of this now extinct species of windmill. These old mills were of the sunk post type and many had "panniers" or protuberances added on to the back, sides and even the front of the buck. One such mill stood at Birkdale (better known for its golf rather than mills). It started off as a Fylde windmill being built at Kirkham (which still boasts a windmill tower, now a house). In 1780 [1] the mill was dismantled and shipped across the Ribble to be rebuilt at Birkdale.

Sylvia Harrop [2] sets the scene:-

"Crossing the boundary between North Meols and Birkdale one almost immediately came upon Birkdale Mill, standing on a high point with views all round. This mill had come to Birkdale second-hand. It originally stood on the Fylde, at Kirkham; but then around 1750 was dismantled, packed up, ferried across the Ribble and reassembled in Birkdale. It was a post or peg-mill with the main body of the mill and its sails constructed of wood, standing on a brick base, and with a wooden post or peg which turned the mill into the wind. It became a favourite subject for artists in the mid 19th century. The miller's cottage was across the road from the mill. Built in the early 1790s, it was of the usual local type with whitewashed walls of mud and timber, small windows and a thatched roof. The out-buildings were also thatched."

Unfortunately the mill was burnt down in 1868 [1]. It stood at what is now the corner of Mosley Street and Grove Street. There is now no remnant of the mill left, the area being totally built up. Today a school stands very close to where the mill would have been. Mill Lane is now part of Mosley Street. Birkdale Mill is shown on the Birkdale Manorial Map of 1809 with a little drawing of a postmill.

The mill was not overlooked by the relatives of the famous either, for Miss Hannah Jones[3] wrote in 1824:-

"In the course of our ramble we came to an old corn mill, built on a very different principle from those of modern architecture. The whole structure was movable, for the purpose of catching the wind from whatever point it might blow. The gentlemen of the party would explore the interior and they came out powdered in fine style the effect of the flour on their black coats being very imposing."