

Mills on the Congresbury Yeo and its Tributaries

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Introduction

The Congresbury Yeo rises some 320ft up at Compton Martin at the foot of Mendip and flows north west to the Bristol Channel at Woodspring Bay - a distance of about 16 miles by river.

The Yeo and its tributaries from Rickford, Langford, Butcombe, Wrington and Claverham have powered watermills in these villages and in Ubley, Burrington, Congresbury and Yatton since medieval times. A few survived into the twentieth century as Working mills. At Kingston Seymour it is thought there was once a tide mill.

Corn or grist milling was the prime function of the mills but Rickford and Compton Martin at the head of these streams suited small scale paper-making for a brief period in the nineteenth century. There is evidence of a fulling mill at Wrington in the fourteenth century. At Langford, a mill appears to have served the tanning industry.

Fourteen mills - excluding the tide mill - were worked by the Yeo and the smaller streams. None made history but rather served their local communities - over centuries, as did many long forgotten sites throughout the country.

Today the Yeo appears a placid river, with its water pumped away to serve Avon consumers. It was not always so and in 1968 Congresbury was flooded by its waters following torrential rains which washed away bridges on the neighbouring river Chew.

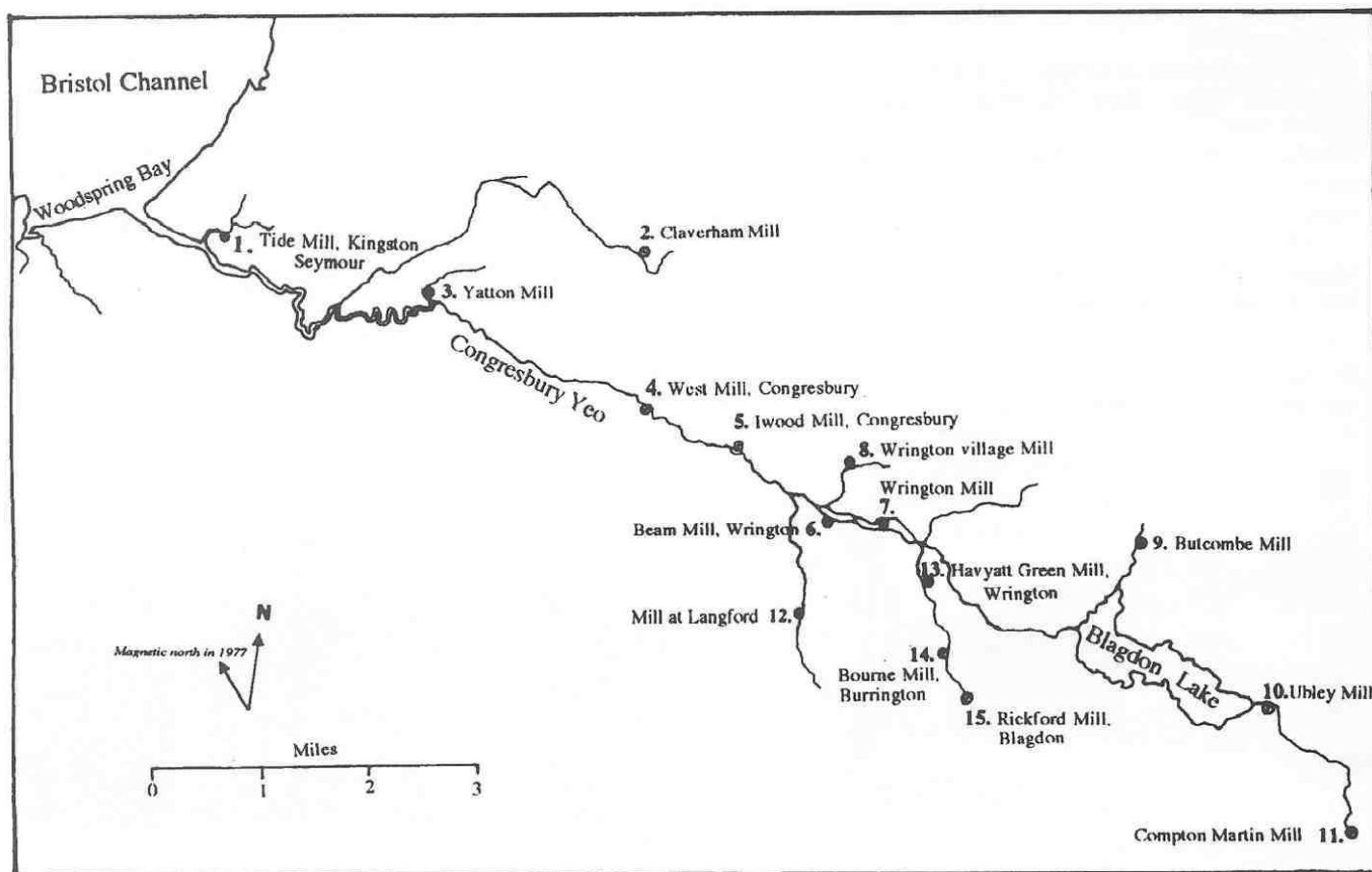
1. Tide Mill, Kingston Seymour (ST 378 663)

The site is not on the Yeo, but on the Broadstone Rhyne which drains much of the parish of Kingston Seymour and joins the Yeo a little to the south west.

That this mill existed is implied by the field name 'Mill Lease' which survives today and was marked on the 1847 tithe map. The field was granted in a will of 1701 by Richard Baber of Blagdon to his grandson John.

In 1982, when sheet piling was being driven for a new sluice, the crane driver hit an obstruction near the course of the rhyne. Excavations proved the existence of massive hard dark-oak timbers, possibly the framework for the waterwheel or grinding stones. There is no evidence today for a tide pond, where seawater from the high tide would have been dammed back by the miller until there was a sufficient fall to operate the mill.

The mill, if such it was, existed at some time between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries and may well have been demolished after the great flood of 20 January 1607 which prompted major improvements in sea defences. The flood is commemo-



Mill Sites on the Yeo

rated by a brass plaque in the village church. Kingston Seymour's arable land appears to have given way to pasture in the first half of the seventeenth century and so the need for a local mill declined¹ - or perhaps the population moved away following the flood. It was another 200 years after the great flood that a windmill was established in the neighbouring village of Kenn.²

The river Yeo was tidal as far as Congresbury until the 1820s.

References

1. Evans, J., 'Discovery of a possible tide mill at Kingston Seymour', *Bristol & Avon Archaeology* 11, (1983), 40-44
2. Coulthard, A..T. and Watts M., *Windmills of Somerset and the Men who Worked Them*, (1978)

2. Mead Mill, Hunt's Lane, Claverham (ST 440 658)

There were no mills in Claverham or Yatton at the time of the Domesday survey.¹ Claverham was not served by the Yeo, but by small streams feeding it. A Watermill existed in 1598 and prior to 1653 at the end of Hunt's Lane. A deed compiled in the latter year referred to 'a watermill called MeadMill. . hereto fore a watermill.'²

The stream was too slight to power a Waterwheel by its direct flow, hence a millpond was necessary as a reservoir. Footpaths still converge here - sometimes a pointer to a vanished mill site.

References

1. Thorn, C. and F., ed, *Domesday Book: Somerset*, (Chichester, 1980)
2. Yatton Local History Society, *A History of Yatton*, (Yatton, 1991)

3. Mill at Wemberham Lane, Yatton (ST 406 653)

Yatton did not have a mill on the Congresbury Yeo, probably because the river was tidal as far as Congresbury until the early nineteenth century. Lands here were known as 'Millcroft Five Acres' and 'Mill Mead' in 1656.¹ The site was probably at the end of Wemberham Lane and was presumably powered by water now channelled in Wemberham Lane Rhyne unless, possibly, there was a tide mill here.

The Watermill was not the only source of power in Yatton as two windmills had been established in the manor prior to 1300.²

References

1. Yatton Local History Society, note 2.2
2. Holt, R., *The Mills of Medieval England*, (Oxford, 1988)

4. West Mill, Congresbury (ST 441 636)

West Mill worked until 1962 and was known in the village as Walter's Mill. John Henry Walter, the first of the family here, installed a beam engine soon after his arrival in 1889. Congresbury was served by railway from 1869 and it would have been relatively economic to import coal from pits at Bedminster. Later, grain was imported from Avonmouth docks. The old mill was destroyed by fire in May 1928 and was replaced by a steel structure with galvanised-iron cladding. The rebuilding saw the demise of the iron waterwheel, constructed by Gregory of Flax Bourton. A river pattern turbine was installed together with an oil engine of 75 bhp, the latter replacing a gas engine of 1916 which itself had superseded the

beam engine, also reputedly built by Gregory.

In the 1920s Hubert, Stanley and Walter Walter ran the concern employing 50 men here and at Wrington mill. Between the wars, a Clayton steam wagon and an ex-Army Austin lorry delivered to customers over a 20 mile radius. Horse-drawn transport was also used. After the first world war millstones were, curiously enough, imported from Czechoslovakia. Corn, barley and maize were ground. Following the second World war and the development of major roller mills at Avonmouth, West Mill ground animal feedstuffs. The Walters called a halt in 1962¹ and by 1989 the site was occupied by Elliot Medway Ltd.² The old mill was supplied by a wide, relatively short leat which is extant together with a rebuilt weir. The tail race ran largely in a culvert.

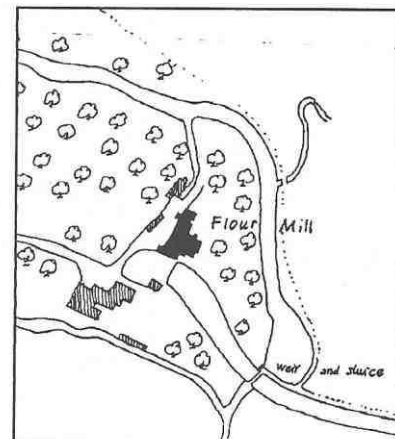
John Blewett was tenant of West Mill in 1567. Two hundred years later John Hipsley, a Congresbury baker, was in occupation. He sold the mill to the Naish family in 1790.³ Nineteenth-century millers include Mrs Palmer (c1807),⁴ Joseph Gundry (c 1840-1862), Samuel Ashby Scholl (1866-1875) and Francis Henry Tucker Couch, miller and corn merchant in 1880.⁵ Couch's business was in liquidation in 1882. In that year Edward West advertised the following:

*'The Mills, Congresbury, Somerset. sale of horses, implements, household furniture and effects, the property of Mr Edward West, who is quitting the above mills. ...capital bay cart mare, four years old, good worker... grey hackney mare, bay ditto ditto (in foal), strong cob, all good in harness; yearling nag colt...miller's spring wagon and cart, nearly new, hay cart, spring trap,'*⁶

A mill existed in the village in 1342,⁷ although this is believed to have been sited a little downstream, possibly on the site of an eleventh-century mill. A mill in the village and a second, probably at Iwood, were worth 17s 6d in 1086.⁸

References

1. Weston Mercury, 14 September 1979
2. Congresbury History Group, *Congresbury Trades*, (Congresbury, 1988)
3. Cran, A., *The Story of Congresbury*, (Bristol, 1983)
4. *Bristol Mirror*, 20 June 1807
5. Science Museum Library, H.E.S. Simmons collection, Somerset Watermills, including directory entries and *London Gazette*, 1 January 1883
6. *Bristol Mercury*, 25 March 1882
7. British Library, Additional charters, 7663/4
8. Thorn, note 2.1



West Mill, Congresbury drawn from OS 25in plan of 1886

5. Iwood Mill, Congresbury (ST 453 630)

Iwood Mill appears as a picturesque old building with thatched roof in nineteenth-century photographs. Its end came in 1892 when fire struck. The mill had been at work between 3 and 6 am and the miller was away. At 6:30am the alarm was raised but by the time the miller had returned the fire was too far advanced and the mill was burnt to the ground.¹

The mill belonged to Thomas Henry Sheppy, one of a family established here, by 1861. Sheppys relocated in Congresbury, off Kent road, where they ran a steam mill well into this century.² The steam mill site is now occupied by a housing estate near the Bell Inn.

In 1228 Iwood mill was presented by the Bishop of Bath to his chamberlain, Stephen. It was then known as Ywood. The fact that the mill existed early in the thirteenth century suggests that this was possibly a Domesday site: Congresbury had two mills in 1086.³ The mill is sited at the extreme eastern end of the parish, away from the present village.

In 1608 the mill was owned by John Allett, a son of a Lord Mayor of London and in 1701 it was the property of Humphrey Hellier of Ston Easton.⁴

The mill is indicated on Donn's 1769 map.⁵ In 1829 Mr Norman of Iwood House put the estate, including the mill, on the market.⁶ It was again for sale in 1838.⁷ The mill was occupied by Reuben Organ in 1839.⁸ John Thomas was miller in 1840. In 1845 the tenant was George Virgo when the mill was offered to let.⁹ Virgo or his son moved to Wrington mill which he ran in 1861.¹⁰

The mill made a profit of £112 in 1872; expenses included £210 for sacks and £150 for horse-keeping. It was then worked by three men and a boy.¹¹

Iwood was powered by a cast-iron undershot waterwheel of about 12ft diameter. The wheel was recently *in situ*. In 1988 the ruined walls were demolished as they were unsafe but water still runs down the short leat from a weir on the Yeo. As the fall of water is slight here, only an undershot waterwheel could function. This again suggests an early mill site, requiring limited engineering works.

From the available records it appears that Iwood was always a flour or grist mill.

References

1. *Weston Gazette*, 2 July 1892
2. Congresbury History Group, note 4.2
3. Thorn, note 2.1
4. Cran, note 4.3
5. City of Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, Donn's Map of 11 Miles Around the City of Bristol, 1769
6. *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 9 May 1829
7. *Bristol Mirror*, 2 June 1838
8. Somerset County Record Office, Congresbury Tithe Map and Apportionment, 1839, D/D/Rt 97 and 97A
9. *Bristol Mirror*, 18 January 1845
10. *Kelly's Directory for Somersetshire*, (1861)
11. Congresbury History Group, note 4.2

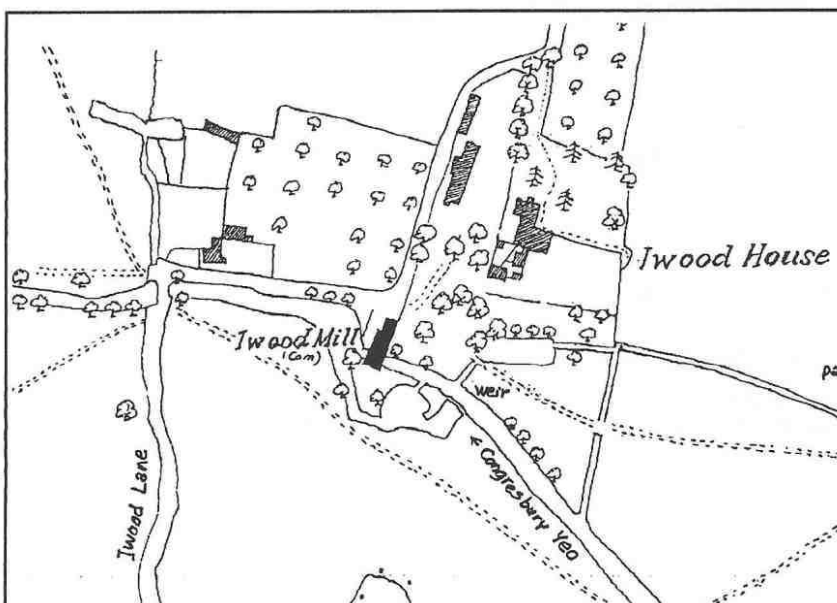
6. Beam Mill, Wrington (ST 467 620)

The mill took its name from the beam or plank bridge which once crossed the river nearby. At Domesday, Wrington had three mills worth 14s 6d.¹ In the middle ages it was known as 'Bememyll'. In 1238 the Lord of the Manor was the Abbot of Glastonbury and he leased Beam Mill to Stephen Chamberlain for 20s a year.² This may have been the new mill built in Wrington by the Abbey after 1189.³

The mill was a corn or grist mill throughout the medieval period. In 1491 William Triwbody, reeve and bailiff of Wrington, worked the mill.² Following the dissolution of the monasteries and Glastonbury Abbey's long reign over the village, the mill was for a time owned by the Earls of Essex.⁴

In 1839 Reuben Organ leased the mill and Long Ham-the large field between the river and the leat - from the Duke of Cumberland.⁵ The Organ family converted Beam Mill to a fulling or flock mill, producing mill puff and bed flock. The mill functioned as such from at least 1861⁶ to 1895 when the Duke of Cumberland sold the Wrington Estate. Beam Mill was described in the sale catalogue as:

*'the fulling mill and premises. All stone built and tiled... consisting of a drying floor with stove outside and coal house. Drying floor over with perforated iron flooring and fire-proof ceiling... Mill floor: 12ft iron breast wheel in wheel house..Let to Messrs Organ Bros on a yearly tenancy, at £40-10s per annum...'*⁴

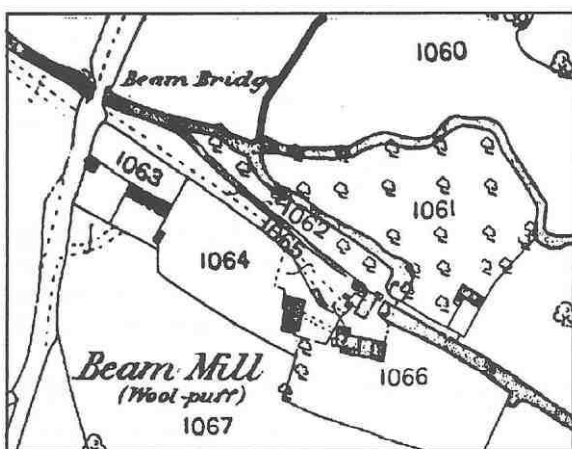


Iwood Mill c1880 from the OS 25in plan

Beam Mill was supplied by a very long leat from Tumbling Weir, half a mile upstream. The leat is still full of water which now overflows through a hatch immediately upstream of the mill. The tail race is dry. The mill has largely been rebuilt as a private residence. Cottages close to the mill indicate this was a small industrial complex in the nineteenth century. A pleasant footpath leads from Tumbling Weir, alongside the leat and past the mill to the present day Beam Bridge.

References

1. Thorn, note 2.1
2. Somerset Record Society, *The Glastonbury Chartulary*, folio 36, citing *Wrington Village Records*, (Bristol, 1969)
3. Holt, note 3.2
4. Weston-super-Mare Reference Library, *Wrington Estate Sale Catalogue*, 1895.
5. Somerset County Record Office, *Wrington Tithe Map and Apportionment*, 1839, D/D/Rt 97 and 97A
6. *Kelly's Directory for Somersetshire*, (1861)



Beam Mill c1880 (OS 25in plan)

7. Wrington Mill, Wrington (ST 475 613)

This is believed to be an ancient mill site and one source claims a mill as having been established here for over 700 years.¹ However, it is possible to confuse this site in Mill Lane with a medieval mill site, now vanished, in the village. Beam Mill, downstream, was in operation by 1238 so it is quite possible Wrington Mill was also functioning at that time. In the late-medieval period all three mills were owned by Glastonbury Abbey.

The present building is a large three-storey structure, white-washed with a tile roof. It was converted to a private residence in 1963 when virtually derelict.

Wrington has always been a flour mill and was owned by the Dukes of Cleveland from c 1800 - 1895.² Benjamin Vowles was the Dukes of Cleveland's tenant in 1839.³ George Virgo was miller from at least 1861⁴ to 1895. He leased the mill on a yearly tenancy for £65. In 1895, when the Duke put Wrington estate on the market, Wrington Mill was described as a 'Water corn mill', with three floors, a storage floor, a grinding floor with two pairs of stones and a mill floor⁴. 'There is also a 12 foot iron undershot waterwheel.'² The mill was purchased by a member of the Virgo family for £900 and later sold to John Henry Walter in 1907.

The Walters ran this mill and West-Mill, Congresbury in the 1920s employing no fewer than 50 men.⁵ According to H.E.S. Simmons, Wrington Mill relied solely on steam power in

1919,⁶ but this could be merely a mistake in a directory. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this site is the complex leat system, no doubt developed over the years. A long leat runs from a weir east of the A38 Trunk Road, beyond Perry Bridge (ST 482 615). Here a system of weirs and sluices at one time provided water from the Yeo and also streams from Lye Cross and Rickford. The Rickford stream no longer runs into the mill leat.

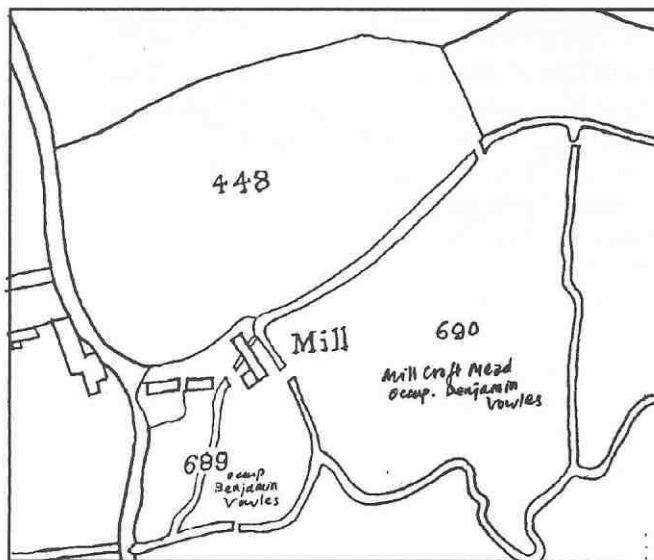
After completion of the Blagdon reservoir, Bristol Water was obliged to maintain a constant flow of water in the river. The mill race is still full of water and water is released through a hatch built into a retaining wall to the rear of the mill.

The running gear was removed in the 1960s - it is believed the mill last powered an electric generator in 1962-63 - but the internal mill wheel remains. It is a high-breast type of 12ft 3in diameter and 6ft 8in wide. This is clearly a different waterwheel from that on site in 1895 and suggests significant remodelling of the mill's layout and the leat since that date.

A recent owner, Dr Tricks, at one time planned to install his own electric generator. Had he done so, he would have restored the watercourses above Perry Bridge, to gain use of the stream from Rickford.⁷

References

1. *Wrington Village Records*, note 6.2
2. *Wrington Estate Sale Catalogue*, note 6.4
3. Somerset County Record Office, *Wrington Tithe Map and Apportionment*, 1839, D/D/Rt 97 and 97A
4. *Kelly's Directory*, (1861)
5. Congresbury History Group, note 4.2
6. Science Museum Library, note 4.5
7. Correspondence, Dr N. Tricks, 15 August 1988



Wrington Mill in 1839 from the Tithe map

8. Wrington Mill, Wrington Village

At one time there was a watermill in Wrington village. It existed in 1514, when it was mentioned in Abbot Beer of Glastonbury's terrier. The nineteenth-century rectory garden was once the millpond, with the mill lying to the south. In the same terrier, reference was made to the river Yeo being anciently known as the Wring- hence Wrington. The village is, however sited on a small stream and tributary of the Yeo.¹

Reference

1. Scarth, Rev. Preb., 'A Sketch of Parochial History', *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society*, (1887)

9. Butcombe Mill, Butcombe (ST 513 614)

The Mill Inn stands on the site of the old mill, which was powered by a tributary of the Yeo which rises in the village. By 1906 the New Mill public house had been built here yet the watermill was still in operation.¹ The mound to the north, now a garden, was once the site of the millpond. The waterwheel was probably internal.² The Moulton family ran Butcombe Mill from at least 1861 to 1906. In the latter year John Wilkins Moulton ran the watermill and inn. The mill may have been known as Regilbury Mill earlier in the nineteenth century.¹ Butcombe Mill was indicated on Donn's map.³ There was a watermill at 'Butcome' in 1086, when the manor was owned by the Bishop of Coutances.⁴ It was worth 20d which suggests it was only a small mill.

Butcombe did not rely solely on water power in medieval times. Professor Rahtz has discovered the site of a sunk post windmill 500ft up above the village (ST 517 628). Fragments of mill stones were found during the excavation and Rahtz has suggested that the windmill belonged to a Cistercian cell based at Butcombe Court during the thirteenth century.³

References

1. *Kelly's Directories of Somersetshire*, (1861), (1883), (1889), (1906)
2. OS 25in plan, 1885
3. City of Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, note 5.5
4. Thorn, note 2.1
6. Coulthard & Watts, note 1.2

10. Ubley Mill, Ubley (ST 531590)

The mill house remains, of random stone, four bays long and two stories high. The mill has been demolished but near to the site, close to the lane and the house, stands a part stone-built, part brick chimney suggesting steam power was also employed during the nineteenth century.

The last mill here was constructed at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was advertised for sale in 1811 as:

*'... A ll that capital new-built overshot GristMill at Ubley in Somersetshire, with the weir and watercourses belonging thereto; together with the Dwelling House and piece of Ground adjoining; now in the occupation of Mr W[illiam] Curtis, the proprietor, situate 11 miles from Bristol and 10 from Wells.... The above mill is built to carry two pair of stones, but one pair only is now worked. It has good custom and is particularly well adapted for the baking business or flour trade, there being no other mill or Baker within nearly 3 miles. ..or with a little alteration could be converted into a Paper Mill, there being a great supply of water.. '*¹

From 1812 to 1820 William Candy was miller and his wife, Ann Candy, followed. The mill was offered for sale in 1827, together with Heriot's Mill at West Harptree.² Joseph Gado was miller in 1830. Ubley was again on the market in 1835.³ In 1838 the mill was owned by John Harding and occupied by William Baker.⁴ William George was miller and farmer in 1889.⁵ It appears that the site was subsequently taken over by

Bristol Waterworks for the development of Ubley hatchery. The leat by the old weir has been filled in and the mill house is now just another private residence.

Ubley had a small mill worth 30d in 1086.⁶ Those listed as occupying the mill over the centuries include Henry atte Mulle in 1371, Nicholas atte Mulle in 1402 and Isabel atte Mulle, who was paying 11s rent in 1432. In 1492 John Raulyn, the miller, unlawfully felled an oak and failed to repair a bridge or scour ditches. The mill and mill house were also in need of repair. In 1523 Raulyn's wife died and the mill passed to Edward Loxton under a reversionary grant. Loxton repaired the mill roof in 1524 but was fined in 1529 for not repairing the bridge and floodgates. William Bussh was miller in 1587 and was succeeded by John Busshe in 1604. Late in the eighteenth century the mill was owned by Mr Dorey.^{7,8} Both this site and a possible earlier mill site in Tuckers Lane, where streams converge, fall just within the parish boundary.

References

1. *Bristol Mirror*, 13 April 1811
2. *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 22 September 1827
3. *Bristol Mirror*, 14 February 1835
4. Somerset County Record Office, Ubley Tithe Map & Apportionment, 1838, D/D/Rt 115 and 115A
5. *Kelly's Directory of Somersetshire*, (1889)
6. Thorn, note 2.1
7. Somerset County Record Office, Court Rolls and account rolls, DD/S/HY
8. Woodspring Museum, Weston-super-Mare, Copy of a letter from the County Archivist, Somerset, 22 August 1985, ref RJE/EP/4

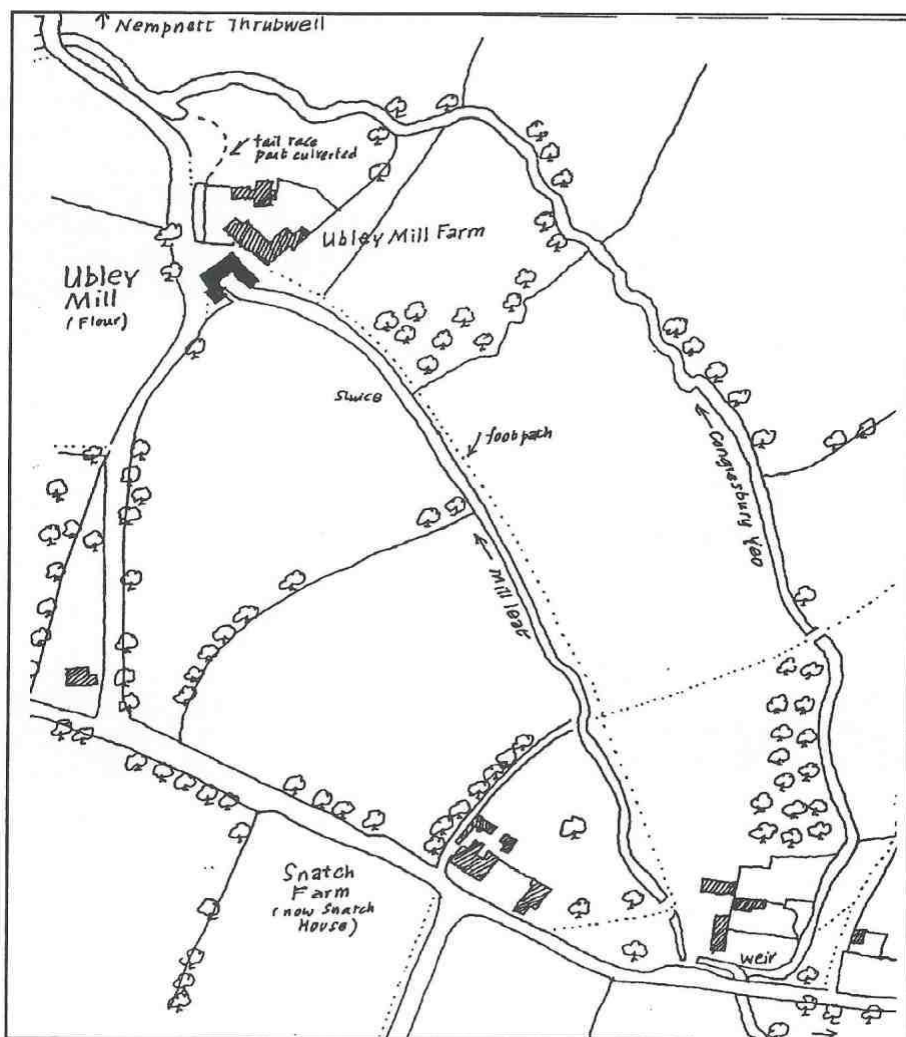
11. Compton Martin Mill (ST 544 571)

A small mill house remains, just below the source of the Congresbury Yeo. The Yeo rises in the millpond, pleasantly situated below Compton Martin church.

It is not known when Compton Martin first had a water mill but it seems reasonable to suppose a flour mill existed here in late medieval times. Certainly, there was a grist mill in operation in 1774.¹ At some time between 1774 and 1810 the mill was converted to paper production. It was an ideal location - clear, unpolluted Mendip water was very suitable for the production of hand-made papers. James Bryant was paper-maker from 1810 until 1821, leasing the mill from Lord Henniker.² He was in difficulties in 1821 and church-wardens' accounts for that year refer to paper-makers in distress.³ The mill was advertised for sale, subject to a mortgage of £800² and Thomas Holder was the occupier in 1822. The mill was advertised for sale in 1823 as:

*'All that Dwelling House, with the Garden and Orchard, Paper Mill, Mill Pond and buildings thereto belonging; situate and being in the parish of Compton Martin... lately occupied by Mr Thomas Holder... The premises are held by lease under Lord Henniker...to be sold by public auction.. '*⁴

Paper-making had probably ceased by 1830 and the mill was rebuilt to grind grist, for it was advertised to let in this form in 1844.⁵ Compton Martin's mill had ceased work by the 1880s;⁶ indeed it may well have languished unused from the 1840s. Local sources claim that it was subsequently used as a rag store, barn and cider mill.



Ubley Mill c1880 from the OS 25in plan

References

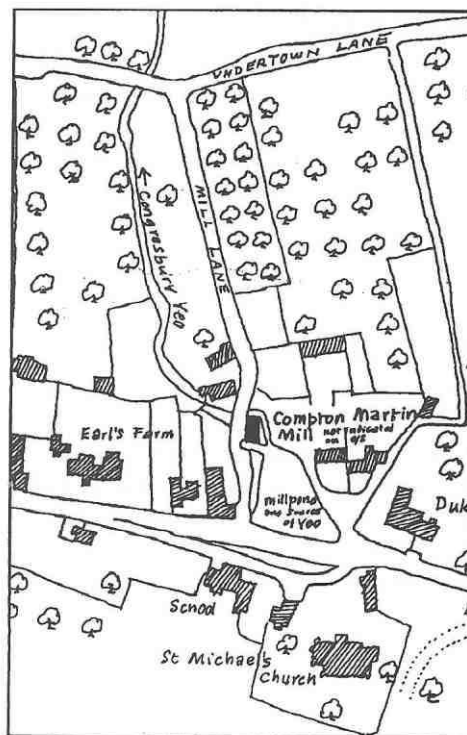
1. Somerset County Record Office, DD/FS Bx9
2. *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 16 June 1821
3. Athill R., *Old Mendip*, (Newton Abbot, 1971)
4. *Bristol Mirror*, 10 May 1823
5. *Bristol Mirror*, 6 July 1844
6. OS 25in Plan, 1886

12. Langford Tannery

The Langford Brook, a tributary of the Land yeo, rises at Springhead Farm in Upper Langford. In 1840 it appears to have powered a mill to the west of the Langford Inn and on the south side of the old Bristol - Bridgwater turnpike which passes through Lower Langford and was the main road until the new A38 bypass was constructed.¹

On the other side of the turnpike, on the lane to Wrington, was a tannery. It existed in 1793 when its tanner, John Moon, was declared bankrupt.² It was for sale by auction in 1802, when Mr Joseph Willmott was tanner. He rented the premises for £42 per annum.³ The tannery was again on the market in 1811 as:

'All those extensive premises, in the occupation of Mr Joseph Willmott, tanner, situate at Langford,...consisting of a Messuage or Dwelling-House and Garden, Tan-Yard, Pits &c, Cottages, Mill-House and out houses of various



Compton Martin Mill c1880 from the OS 25in plan

descriptions, together with a prime young orchard, the whole...3 acres.

The above premises are on the right hand side of the road leading from Bristol to Bridgewater and are well adapted for the business of a tanner.⁴

Was the water mill part of the tannery at a later date? Was the mill-house on the other side of the turnpike a water powered mill? For the present, these questions have no ready answers. There is nothing visible on the site today.

References

1. Somerset County Record Office, Langford Tithe Map, 1840.
2. *Bristol Gazette*, 23 May 1793
- 3, *Bristol Gazette*, 29 July 1802
4. *Bristol Mirror*, 15 June 1811

13. Havyatt Green Mill, Wrington (ST 430 610)

The mill site, for the mill here is long gone, is just inside the present Wrington parish boundary and may have been one of the four mills at work in the manor in the thirteenth century. It was powered by the brook which once also turned waterwheels at Bourne and Rickford.

One Wrington Corn Mill, not owned by Glastonbury Abbey, had a fulling mill annexed to it in 1325. The latter was worth a mere 6d rent from 1325-1365. The mill may have been sited here, at Havyatt Green, or on the Lye Hale Stream.¹

Havyatt Green Mill was probably at work in 1769 when it was shown on Benjamin Donn's map.² Its short leat was still indicated in 1885.³ The mill and leat stood to the right of the stream from Rickford. Nothing, not even the leat, remains now.

References

1. Holt, note 3.1
2. City of Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, note 5.5
3. OS 25in plan, 1885

14. Bourne Mill, Burrington (ST 485 598)

This is the only known mill site in the parish of Burrington. The mill was at work in the eighteenth century but disappeared in the nineteenth, probably when Bourne House was built as the site now lies within its grounds. The mill appears to have been supplied by a millpond which later became an ornamental feature in the grounds of the house. This was probably a late-medieval grist and flour mill serving the needs of Burrington village.

15. Rickford Mill, Blagdon (ST 488 593)

According to one authority this was a Domesday mill site.¹ Very possibly it was - in 1086 Blagdon had two mills together worth 5s, although their locations are not known.²

In the seventeenth century Rickford operated as a grist and tucking, or fulling, mill.³ At some point in the eighteenth century, Rickford was converted to a paper mill. As at Wookey, Banwell and Compton Martin, the fresh spring water was ideal for paper-making.

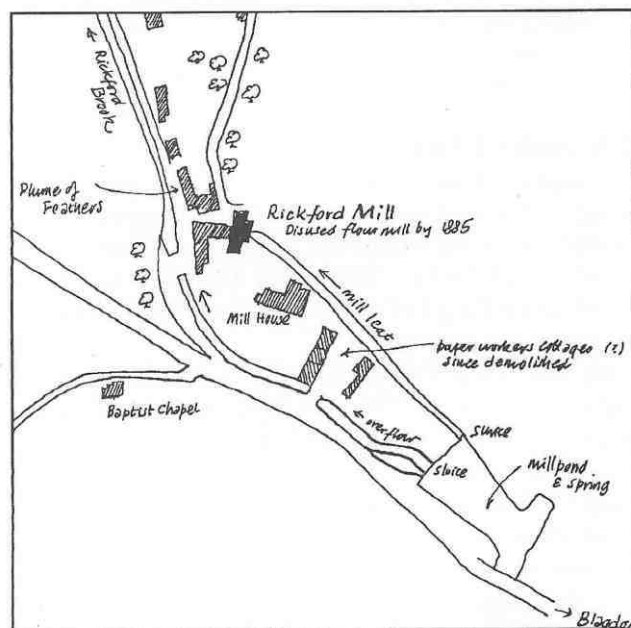
The mill's history during the nineteenth century is well documented. By 1800 Charles Gumm or Gunn was paper-maker. He may be the Charles Gunn who leased the paper mill at Banwell from the Emery family in 1798. His apprentice at Rickford was Thomas Curtiss Who, in 1809, insured the mill in the name of

Thomas Curtiss & Co, Paper-makers.⁴ Four years later the paper-maker was James Carpenter. His stay was brief as by 1816 Giles Hall was established here. The Hall family ran the mill until 1850 when William Hall offered the freehold for sale.⁵ Rickford was for sale by auction in 1851.⁶ According to Brian Attwood the Halls of Rickford were related to Joseph Hall of St Catherine, Stanton Drew and Bye Mills.⁷ In 1832 fifteen reams of paper were stolen from Rickford.⁸ The thieves were caught and eleven reams of paper later recovered. By 1860 John Blatchford was producing superfine hand-made book papers at the mill.⁹

In 1850 the mill possessed two vats, a rag loft, a rag cutting room, engine room, vat room, glazing room, sizing room and a drying loft. The waterwheel had been recently installed and had a diameter of 24ft. The mill was offered for sale or to let with a mill house, 5 acres of orchard, 8 acres of arable and with workmens' cottages and outbuildings, together with stables.⁵ After the departure of Blatchford, the mill was converted to grind wheat, but had ceased work by 1885.¹⁰ The site was subsequently taken over by Bristol Waterworks and water from Rickford springs piped to Blagdon Lake.¹ The springs yield an average of 2,000,000 gallons of water a day.¹¹ The millpond is now an ornamental lake. The mill house remains with the old leat channel running at high level at the back. The mill buildings are now used as workshops.

References

1. Coysh, A.W., Mason, E.J. and Waite, V., *The Mendips*, (1954)
2. Thom, note 2.1
3. Somerset County Record Office, DD/GB/43
4. Shorter, A.H., 'Paper and Board Mills in Somerset', *Somerset & Dorset Notes & Queries* XXV, (March 1950) 245-257
5. *Bristol Mirror*, 19 January 1850
6. *Bristol Mirror*, 31 May 1851
7. Attwood, B., 'The BIAS Paper Mills Survey', *Journal of the Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society* 3, (1970), II-19
8. *Bristol Mirror*, 26 May and 2 June 1832
9. *Directory of Paper-makers*
10. OS 25in plan, 1885



Rickford Mill c1880 from the OS 25in plan



Mills on the Congresbury Yeo: Cast-iron waterwheel at Iwood Mill

[NOTE; This photo appears on page 38 of the printed journal and not page 15, as shown here]