

# BIAS JOURNAL No 27 1994

## Mills on the Winford Brook

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### Introduction

This article has its foundations in an undergraduate dissertation prepared by A.J. Spence over a decade ago.

This is not a definitive study - rather a compilation of research to date, broadened where possible, with material from newspapers.

This river, the largest tributary of the river Chew, has a steeper gradient than its parent - 1 in 100 between Snuff Mill and the stream's confluence with the Chew at Chew Magna, whereas the latter falls at 1 in 250 from Litton Mill to its confluence with the river Avon at Keynsham. The steeper fall encouraged the use of overshot waterwheels, whereas undershot waterwheels were typical on the Chew.

Proximity to Bristol and powerful, reliable water power led to a diversity of use: grist, snuff, colour, cloth, iron and gunpowder manufacture all saw activity on this stream. No fewer than nine mill sites were established over its three mile length.

### 1. Chew Magna Mill, Chew Magna (ST 577 633)

The two rivers at Chew Magna, according to Collinson, 'make the town a sort of peninsula.'<sup>1</sup> It is indeed the topography which has made the village a successful parish for several centuries. Not every village is blessed with two powerful streams of water. Chew Magna developed along the high street

which forms the spine running between the river Chew and the

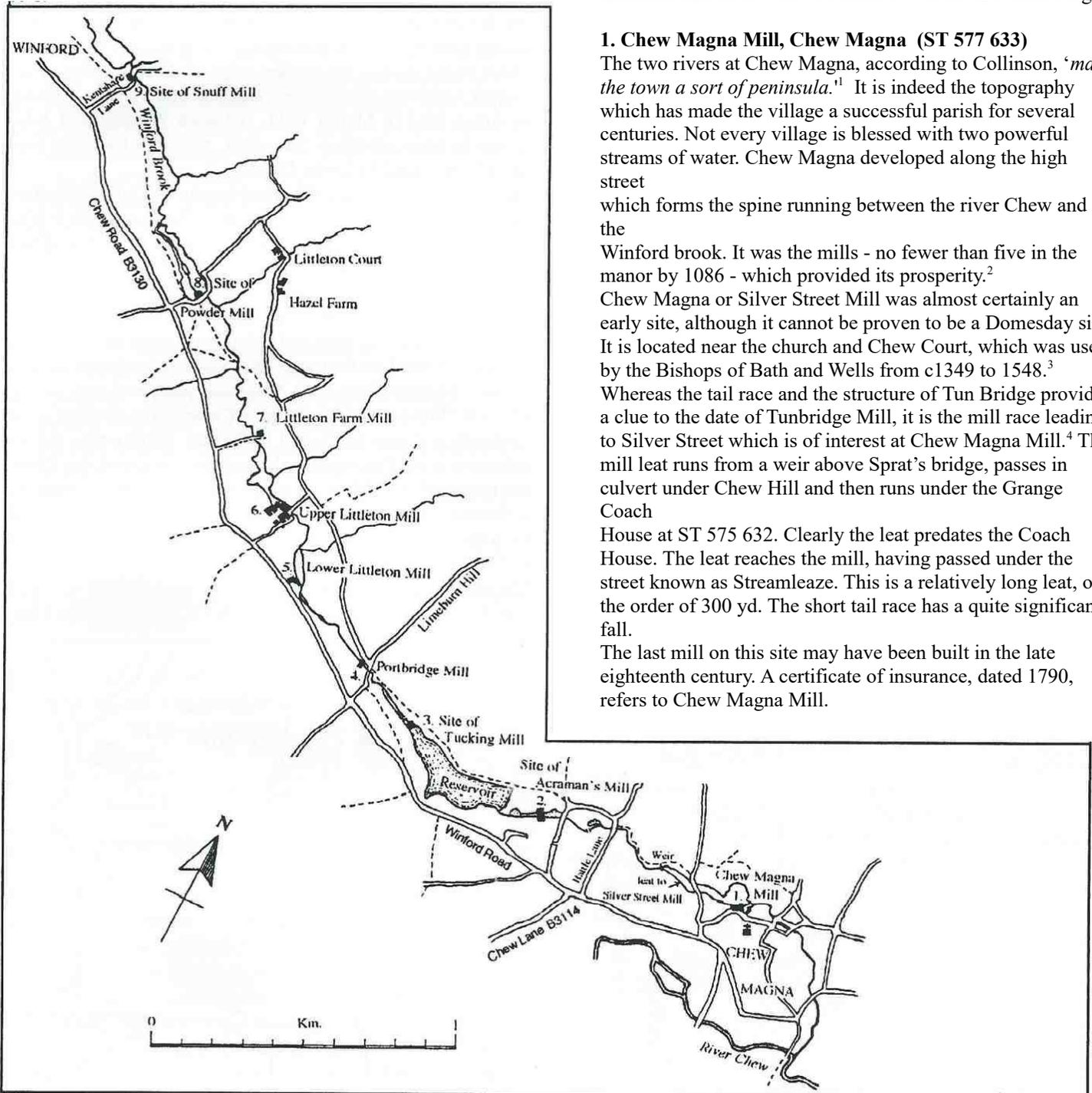
Winford brook. It was the mills - no fewer than five in the manor by 1086 - which provided its prosperity.<sup>2</sup>

Chew Magna or Silver Street Mill was almost certainly an early site, although it cannot be proven to be a Domesday site. It is located near the church and Chew Court, which was used by the Bishops of Bath and Wells from c1349 to 1548.<sup>3</sup>

Whereas the tail race and the structure of Tun Bridge provide a clue to the date of Tunbridge Mill, it is the mill race leading to Silver Street which is of interest at Chew Magna Mill.<sup>4</sup> The mill leat runs from a weir above Sprat's bridge, passes in culvert under Chew Hill and then runs under the Grange Coach

House at ST 575 632. Clearly the leat predates the Coach House. The leat reaches the mill, having passed under the street known as Streamleaze. This is a relatively long leat, of the order of 300 yd. The short tail race has a quite significant fall.

The last mill on this site may have been built in the late eighteenth century. A certificate of insurance, dated 1790, refers to Chew Magna Mill.



Mill sites on the Winford Brook

A Daniel Servier quit the mill and advertised his farming stock for sale in 1841.<sup>5</sup> A further advertisement ran thus:

*Capital Flour and Grist Mill to be let and entered upon immediately. Chew Magna.*

*Situate in the centre of Chew Magna, with a good convenient Dwelling-House, large Bake-house, Outhouses, Garden.....*

*The mill is supplied with a never failing stream of water from the river Chew, and drives two pair of stones. The premises are in complete repair and distant about seven miles from Bristol. An extensive Meal and Baking business has been carried on by the late tenants, Mr Daniel Servier and Mr Thomas Read, for nearly the last forty years.*

*For a view of the premises apply at the mill, and for further particulars to Mr Robert B Dowling, the proprietor; or to Mr Marshall, solicitor, Chew Magna.<sup>6</sup>*

Daniel Servier, possibly a son, was miller and baker here in 1866 and 1872. He was succeeded by William Fowler Carter, who milled from at least 1883 to 1894.<sup>7</sup> Earlier, in 1851, three millers and an assistant worked the mill.<sup>8</sup> Information for the 17th and 19th centuries is hard to come by. It is believed Chew Magna mill ceased work in the 1920s. Steam milling at Tunbridge may have made it uncompetitive; waterflows may anyway have been restricted following the construction of the compensation reservoir upstream in the 1850s<sup>9</sup>.

In this century the mill lay empty for a number of years; in the 1980s the mill and millhouse have been heavily rebuilt as private residences. The building is now known as Issues Mill.

#### References

- 1 Collinson, J., *The History and Antiquities of Somerset*, (1791)
- 2 Thom, C. and F., ed., *Domesday Book: Somerset*. (Chichester, 1980)
3. Robinson, W.J., *West Country Manors*. (Bristol, 1930)
4. Bristol Water Archives, Bedminster Down, Bristol
5. *Bristol Mirror*, 6 March 1841
6. *Bristol Mirror*, 27 March 1841
7. Science Museum Library, H.E.S. Simmons collection, 'Somerset Watermills'. Information is from local directories

8 Spence, A.J., *Watermills of the Chew Valley*, BA dissertation, Department of Archaeology and History, University College, Cardiff, 1983.

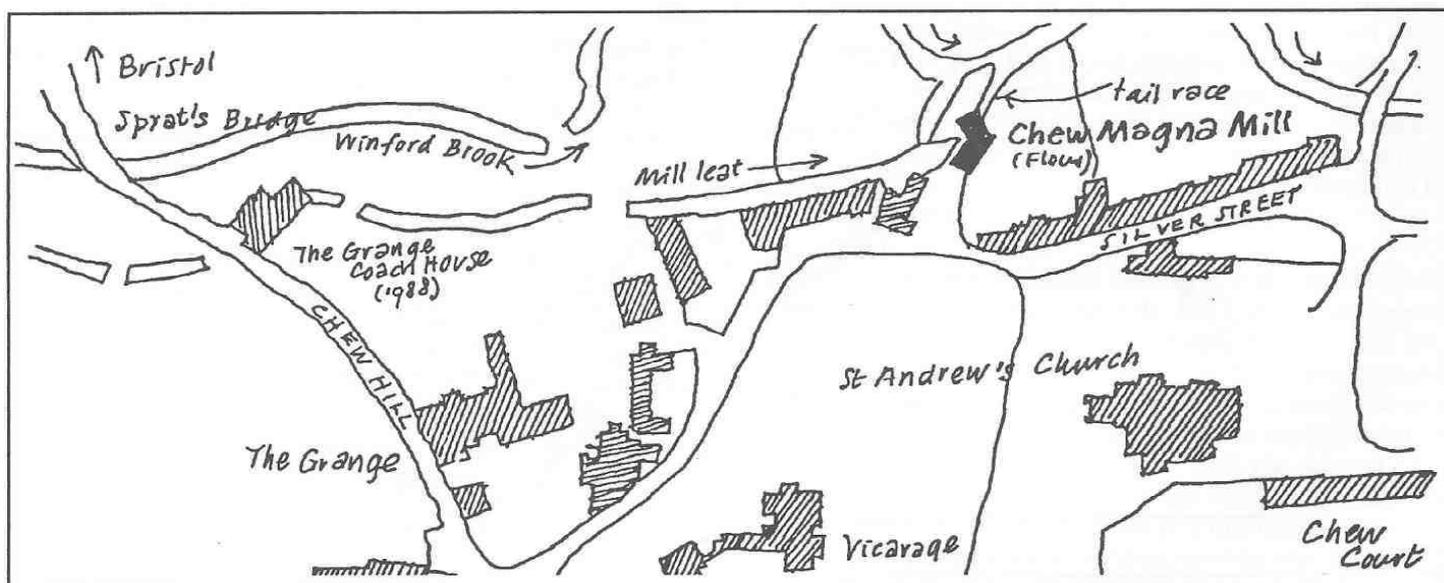
9 Odnance Survey (OS), 25in plan, 1886

#### 2. Acraman's Mill, Chew Magna (ST 567 633)

This was a short-lived site. It appears to have been founded shortly after 1792 when William Acraman purchased the old tucking mill upstream, which by 1769 was operating as a small edge-tool works.<sup>1</sup> Acraman's was a Bristol concern, forging anchors and constructing bridges and cranes.<sup>2</sup> By 1830 Acramans possessed three Bristol factories and the firm was involved in the construction of the steamship *Great Western*.<sup>3</sup> A new mill was constructed on the edge of Chew Magna together with ten workers' cottages in Battle Lane, only one of which survives. In keeping with Acraman's activities this was an iron foundry, but Whereas anchors were made in Bristol, the Chew works turned out spades, edge tools and frying pans. Copper and brass manufacture was also undertaken. William Acraman died in March 1824. His sons William and John appear to have inherited the works, although the plant was initially managed by Lydia Dowling.

The Chew mill was sold to Charles Morgan and John McArthur for £2,380 in 1839. John McArthur, a third-generation iron founder, had arrived in Bristol from Glasgow in 1838 and had joined Acramans. In 1839 he set up in Charlotte Street, Bristol, as 'iron, copper and tin plate merchant, wholesale ironmonger and maker of edge tools.' The Chew mill was purchased in December, and its spades and frying pans were no doubt sent for sale in Bristol via the turnpike road over Limeburn Hill and Dundry. Meanwhile in 1842 Acramans went bankrupt, owing £75,000.<sup>4</sup> Morgan and McArthur's Chew works survived until 1848 when it was purchased by Bristol Waterworks for an unknown sum. The waterworks company required the Chew site to provide an additional compensation reservoir to ensure sufficient water to work mills downstream. Morgan and McArthur contested the compulsory purchase and were awarded £350 expenses at arbitration.<sup>5</sup>

The mill site was just below the present-day reservoir dam and was thus demolished to make way for it and the Battle Lane



Chew Magna Mill OS 25 in plan, 1886

cottages sold. Some of the works employees - spade makers and grinders - were listed as paupers in the 1851 and 1861 censuses.<sup>6</sup> John McArthur survived, selling tin and copper and the company thrives today. He died in 1864.<sup>7</sup>

**References**

1. Spence, note 1.8
2. Reid, H., *Bristol & Co.* (Bristol, 1987)
3. Spence, note 1.8
4. Reid, note 2
5. Bristol Water Archives, Bedminster Down
6. Spence, note 1.8
7. Reid, note 2, 109; see also Torrens, H.S., *Men of Iron: The History of the McArthur Group* (Bristol, 1984)

**3. Tucking Mill, Chew Magna (ST 564 633)**

Chew Magna's only known fulling mill lies under the village's compensation reservoir.

Thomas Edwards was tenant of the tucking - or fulling - mill in Stone or West Chew in c1576. It is probable that this was the mill referred to<sup>1</sup>. There is also a reference in 1639 to 'One ground called Westfield, near the tucking mill.'<sup>2</sup> Westfield lies immediately north east of Portbridge on the old Bristol - Wells turnpike. Fields known as 'Tucking Mill' and 'Tucking Mill Mead' in 1839 adjoin the site and confirm its past function<sup>3</sup> Immigrant cloth workers, from the Chew valley, settled in Bradford-on-Avon and Trowbridge in the period 1668-1679 with settlers from Chew Magna, Pensford and East Harptree<sup>4</sup>. One of the mills concerned was probably Tucking Mill and by 1702 it had been converted to a grist mill<sup>5</sup>. In 1769 William Pearce sold the mill to John Thompson. Tucking Mill was insured by the New Bristol Fire Office in December 1777. For a short period it appears to have served as an iron mill, while Acraman's Mill was under construction. William Thompson, John Thompson's son, was an ironmaster. In 1792, under the ownership of William Acraman, grist milling was resumed here. In this year Acraman's Mill was opened. John Reed was tenant at Tucking Mill in 1824 - the year in which William and John Acraman inherited it.<sup>5</sup>

In 1848 Bristol Waterworks purchased Tucking Mill so that

the compensation reservoir could be constructed<sup>5</sup>. The mill site lies at the top end of the reservoir.

**References**

1. Wood, F.A., *Collections for a parochial history of Chew Magna* (Bristol 1903)
2. Wood, F.A., *Terrier of Glebe Lands, Rents and Tithes of the Vicarage of Chew Magna*. Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society XLIX, 1903
3. OS 25in Plan, 1885. (Field names from the c1839 tithe award are hand written onto a copy of the above by Frederick Wood, Woodspring Museum, Weston-super-Mare.)
4. Rogers. K., *Warp and Weft*, (Buckingham, 1986)
5. Spence, note 1.8
6. Bristol Water Archives, Bedminster Down, Bristol

**4. Portbridge Mill, Chew Magna (ST 561 634)**

Portbridge was a relatively late addition to the mills on this stream. It was constructed between 1718 and 1769 and first operated as an iron or edge-tool mill under the supervision of Mr Felps. Acraman's Mill was constructed downstream towards the end of the century and this second, larger iron mill may well have led to the demise of Portbridge as an edge tool mill<sup>1</sup>.

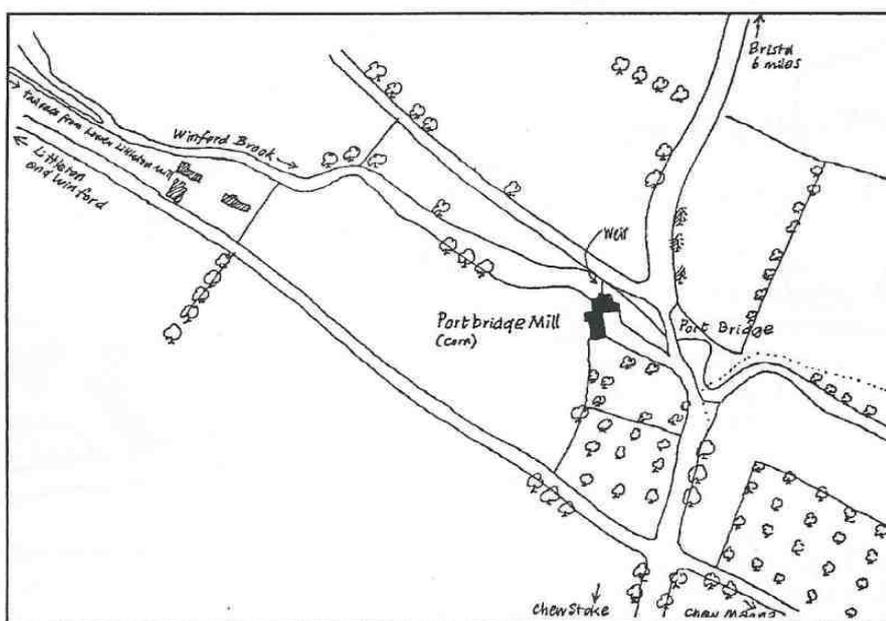
A sale notice following a bankruptcy indicates the mill's change of use by 1813

*...Lot 3. A close of Capital PASTURE-GROUND, called Portbridge Paddock, nearly adjoining the Grist Mill at Portbridge. .<sup>2</sup>*

No doubt the increased industrialisation in the valley, with Acraman's Mill and gunpowder mills still at work during the Napoleonic wars, justified the existence of an additional grist mill.

Samuel Watts was tenant and miller in 1832. In this year the Pope family appears to have sold Portbridge to the Dowlings, a family of some influence in the district. However, by 1837 Watts was in possession and he put the mill up for sale.<sup>3</sup> He may have sold associated lands but still owned and occupied Portbridge mill in 1839.<sup>4</sup>

In 1873 the estate included a bakehouse, two houses, waterwheel,



Portbridge Mill, OS 25 in plan, 1885

stable, shed and pigstyes. The mill worked two pairs of stones.<sup>5</sup> John Caner was listed as miller and baker in 1872 and Thomas Carter ran the mill in 1875.<sup>6</sup> W.F. Carter relinquished business at Portbridge in 1884.<sup>7</sup>

Winford Iron Ore and Redding Co. bought the premises in 1888 and leased the mill to William Masters who ran Portbridge until his death in 1926. His widow sold the business to Albert Carter who stayed until 1928.<sup>8</sup>

Portbridge had no leat and was built into the Winford Brook. A weir provided a small millpond on the stream sufficient to drive the waterwheel which may have been located externally. By 1910 a steam engine had been installed to augment power.<sup>9</sup> The mill house is a solid stone-built three-storey structure of about four bays, with a smaller wing facing east - the original mill. Portbridge lies close by the old Bristol-Wells turnpike and is a private residence today.

**References**

1. Correspondence with Peter Addison of Bath, 1988
2. *Bristol Mirror*, 9 January 1813
3. Addison, note 1
4. Somerset County Record Office (SCRO), Chew Stoke Tithe Map and Apportionment, (SCRO),D/D/Rt 326 and 326A, 1839
5. Phoenix Fire Insurance Policy, 1873, cited by Addison, note 1
6. *Morris's Directory of Somerset and Bristol*, (1872)  
*Kelly's Directory of Somersetshire*, (1875)
7. *Bristol Mercury*, 19 March 1884
8. Addison, note 1
9. *Kelly's Directory* (1910)

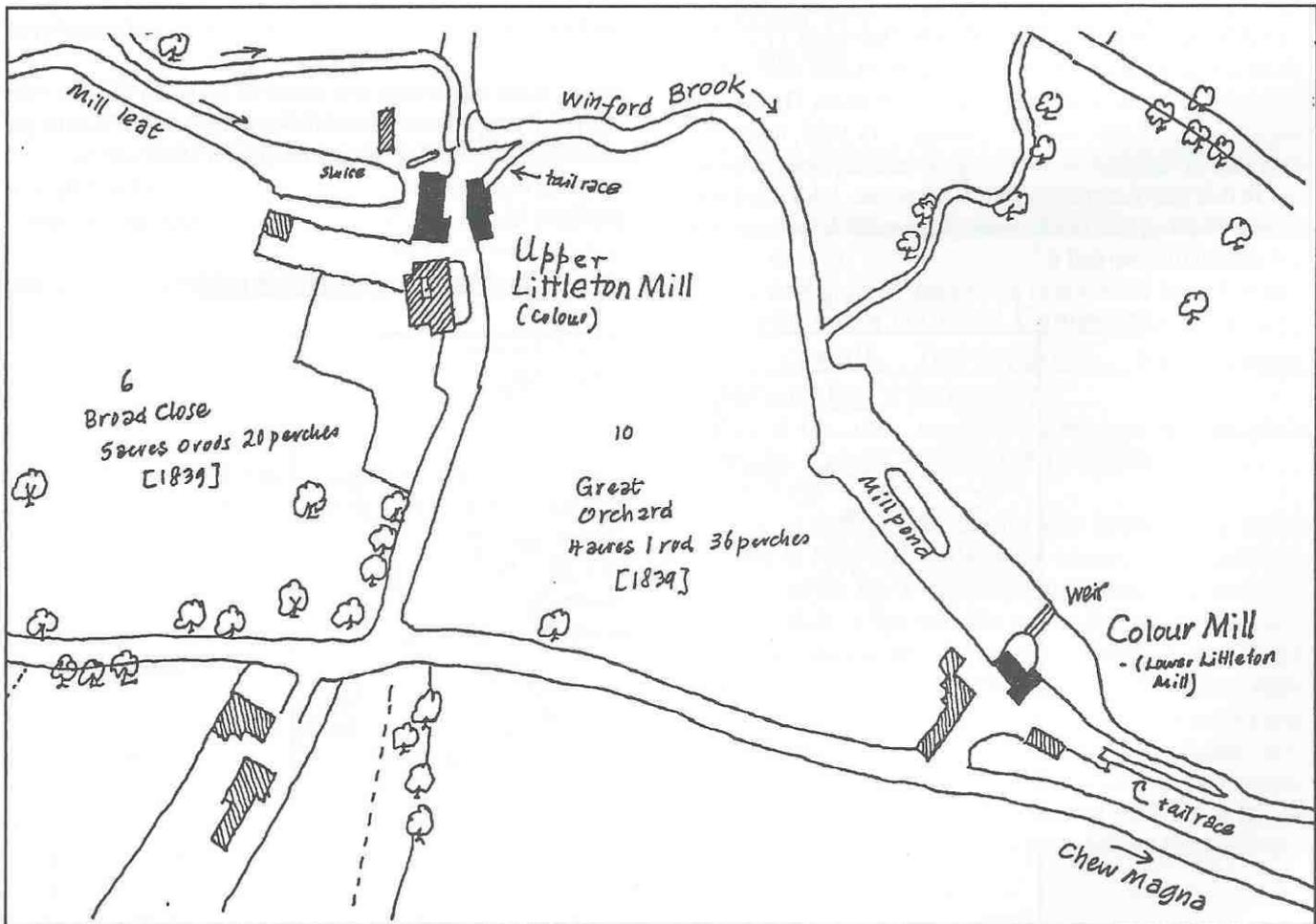
**5. Lower Littleton Mill, Chew Magna (ST 558 636)**

Winford Road Garage now stands on this site, which until recently was in the parish of Chew Stoke. There was a mill here at least from the early eighteenth century until about 1960.

Lower Littleton has worked as a fulling mill, a gunpowder mill, a grist mill and a colour-processing mill in this time. A neighbouring field in an estate map of 1718 is called 'Rackmead' lending credence to Lower Littleton's status as a fulling mill<sup>1</sup>. Cloths from the nearby fulling mill would probably be stretched and dried on racks or tenters here. Walter Webb leased the mill to John Stallard in 1732. Margaret Stallard was tenant in 1755 when Lower Littleton was clearly recorded as a fulling mill<sup>2</sup>.

The cloth industry was already in decline in the Chew Valley in the seventeenth century. Cloth workers from Chew Magna, were migrating east in significant numbers to Bradford on Avon as noted above.<sup>3</sup> For this mill to have survived a further 80 years suggests it was an efficiently run concern.

In the 1760s Lower Littleton was converted to gunpowder manufacture. It would seem probable that it worked in conjunction with the major complex at Powdermill, upstream. Gunpowder manufacture ceased here after the Napoleonic Wars and in 1822 Lower Littleton was entirely rebuilt as a grist mill.<sup>4</sup> In 1839 it was owned by Walter Benjamin Webb and occupied by John Napp.<sup>5</sup> Lower Littleton was leased to Edward Millward in 1851.<sup>6</sup> Millward later moved to Tunbridge Mill in Chew Magna.



Upper and Lower Littleton Mills, OS 25 in plan, 1885

A further conversion followed in 1878 when the mill was purchased by the Winford Iron Ore and Redding Company. Edge-runners were introduced to crush yellow ochre mined in nearby quarries. Colour milling continued until the 1960s. In 1967 the site was reopened as a garage. Nineteenth century buildings survive, now serving as offices and workshops. Some of the mill shafting remains [1988]. A weir is also extant, behind the garage: the mill was supplied by a millpond which has since been filled in. The tail race was partly culverted and this is believed to remain beneath the hardstandings (water power was subsequently converted to turbine operation).

### References

1. SCRO, Estate Map of Walter Webb, 1718.
2. Communication with Peter Addison of Bath, who at that date had access to deeds and indentures belonging to Winford Red. See also, *BIAS Journal* 26.
3. Rogers, note 3.4
4. Addison, note 2
5. SCRO, note 4.4
6. Spence, note 1.8

### 6. Upper Littleton Mill, also known as Ward's Mill, Chew Magna (ST 556 637)

Mill buildings survive, now forming part of a small complex of industries and workshops. Like Lower Littleton Mill, this was a fulling mill in the early eighteenth century. Upper Littleton was then known as Ward's Mill. Walter Webb's Estate map, dated 1718, shows racks for drying and stretching cloth in a nearby field<sup>1</sup>. An indenture of 1721 made between George Hurlle and Walter Webb, gentleman of Littleton, then in the parish of Chew Stoke, refers to premises known as Ward's Mill near Lamster's Mead, which was a field close to the present mill site<sup>2</sup>.

The mill was powered by a twisting leat which originates at a weir near the recently closed Littleton Farm. The leat is still in water near the weir but has been filled in nearer the mill site. Upper Littleton was converted from a fulling mill to a leather mill during the eighteenth century. The mill was owned by Joseph Yates, William Ogbourne and Mary and Walter Webb in 1808. This consortium leased the mill to tobacconists from Bristol, Jacob Ricketts and Isaac Leonard. This implies that the mill had undergone a further change of use from tanning to snuff milling<sup>3</sup>. Confirmation of the change comes in the Chew Stoke tithe apportionment for 1839. Entries 7 and 8 list a snuff mill, cottages and garden owned by Walter Benjamin Webb and occupied by Ricketts Wills & Co. Webb owned and occupied the adjoining Ward's Mill House<sup>4</sup>. Snuff milling ceased shortly afterwards and Upper Littleton now became a grist mill

*Littleton, Chew Stoke, Somerset. Capital Freehold Mill. To be sold in fee by auction, by Mr Gibbs, at the Pelican Inn, Chew Magna, ...on 11th.. February 1846...A ll that Messuage or Dwelling House, water Grist Mills, wheels, Machinery, Stables, Carthouse, Bakehouse, Pond, Stream of water, Yard, Garden...late in the occupation of Mr John Webb junior..the property was valued by Messrs Sturge and Co of Bristol. . at the sum of £1000 and since that period a new iron shaft and various other additions have been made to the machinery, which is in a most perfect state and fit for immediate use... Messrs J and W Rees Mogg, Solicitors, Cholwell, near Temple Cloud.*<sup>5</sup>

The following year Ward's Mill House 'late in the occupation of Mr Walter Benjamin Webb' was for sale by auction.<sup>6</sup> W.D. & H.O. Wills purchased the mill in 1853. The decades that followed saw a succession of owners. The mill was bought from W.D. & H. O. Wills by Edward Griffin, a local hay dealer, in 1875. He was followed by William Tilly who sold to William Wade of Wraxall in 1879.

Winford Ore and Redding Co took over in 1881 and converted Upper Littleton to colour processing, grinding ochre and 'red' brought from the local Winford quarries.<sup>7</sup> The company employed about 30 staff at this mill and a further 30 at Lower Littleton. The local ores were crushed by pairs of 6 ft diameter granite edge-runners, similar to those once used at Powdermill upstream.

The ground ore was then mixed with water and separated by grade in a series of tanks. Long drying kilns, one of which remains on site, completed the process before packing and despatch. 'Red' was sent to Amsterdam, red and ochre - the latter a slightly different chemical composition- were sent to Glasgow. Ochre was used as a paint colouring. In Glasgow, red was used to provide backing for linoleum. In 1906 the company quarried 8,639 tons of red and ochre, much of it from the Winford area.

The quarries were sold in the 1960s and the mills were leased for other uses.<sup>8</sup> A worn edge-runner, once powered by a water wheel, may be seen incorporated in a wall at Upper Littleton. This part of Chew Stoke reverted to the parish of Chew Magna in about 1982<sup>8</sup>.

### References

1. SCRO, note 5.1
2. SCRO, DD/BR/py41, 1721
3. Communication with Peter Addison of Bath, 1988
4. SCRO, note 4.4
5. *Bristol Mirror*, 7 February 1846
6. *Bristol Mirror*, 23 January 1847
7. Addison, note 3  
See also, *BIAS Journal* 26
8. Spence, note 1.8
9. Communication with Mr Durham of Chew Magna, 1991

### 7. Littleton Farm Mill, Chew Magna (ST 555 640)

Webb's estate map of 1718 appears to show a mill site here.<sup>1</sup> Donn's map dated 1769 shows the snuffmill at Winford then two gunpowder mills - presumably the powdermill complex - followed downstream by a paper mill.<sup>2</sup> By 1839 this was a farm.<sup>3</sup> In 1969 a new concrete yard was laid, and in levelling, prior to concreting, a system of culverts was discovered which may help to suggest a previous millsite existed here.<sup>4</sup> The site would have been immediately upstream from the weir serving Upper Littleton Mill, which survives today. The farm was sold in 1989 and has since been converted into a private residence.

### References

1. SCRO note 5.1
2. City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, Donn's Map of 11 Miles Round the City of Bristol, 1769
3. SCRO, Chew Magna Tithe Map and Apportionment, 1839
4. Spence, note 1.8

**8. Powdermill, Littleton, Winford (ST 551 643)**

Hidden in the trees below the Winford-Chew Magna road lies a major watermill complex of the Chew Valley. The two mills here - the shell of one remains - produced gunpowder for over a hundred years. Manufacture probably began at the beginning of the eighteenth century as a coin dated 1711 has been found in Powdermill Cottages.<sup>1</sup>

Powdermill was a cog in Bristol's infamous trading triangle: gunpowder, together with brass and Bristol glass was exported to Africa, Africans taken as slaves to the West Indies and America and sugar imported to Bristol<sup>2</sup>. The mill also required imports to function: sulphur was brought from Italy and saltpetre, which made up the bulk of the powder, came from South America. The third ingredient, charcoal, was produced locally.<sup>3</sup>

Winford was an ideal location for the production of explosives. It was within reasonable distance of the port of Bristol, yet relatively remote in the eighteenth century: gunpowder manufacture was not without danger.

Gunpowder was used locally as well as for export. Documentary evidence points to the use of powder in the Somerset coalfield in 1719<sup>4</sup>. The tin and copper mines of Cornwall and the South Wales mines probably also used Winford powder: Bristol traded extensively with South Wales in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The history of the Winford mill is obscure, but scraps of information help to build a picture. A tragic event occurred in March 1786:

*Wednesday se'nnight as a man was carelessly driving a wedge with an iron hammer, at the powder-mills at Littleton, in Somersetshire, a spark communicated to the powder, which blew up the mills, and the man and his wife were much burnt; the man is since dead, but it is thought the woman will recover..<sup>5</sup>*

It appears the mills were not rebuilt immediately for they were offered to let in January 1789:

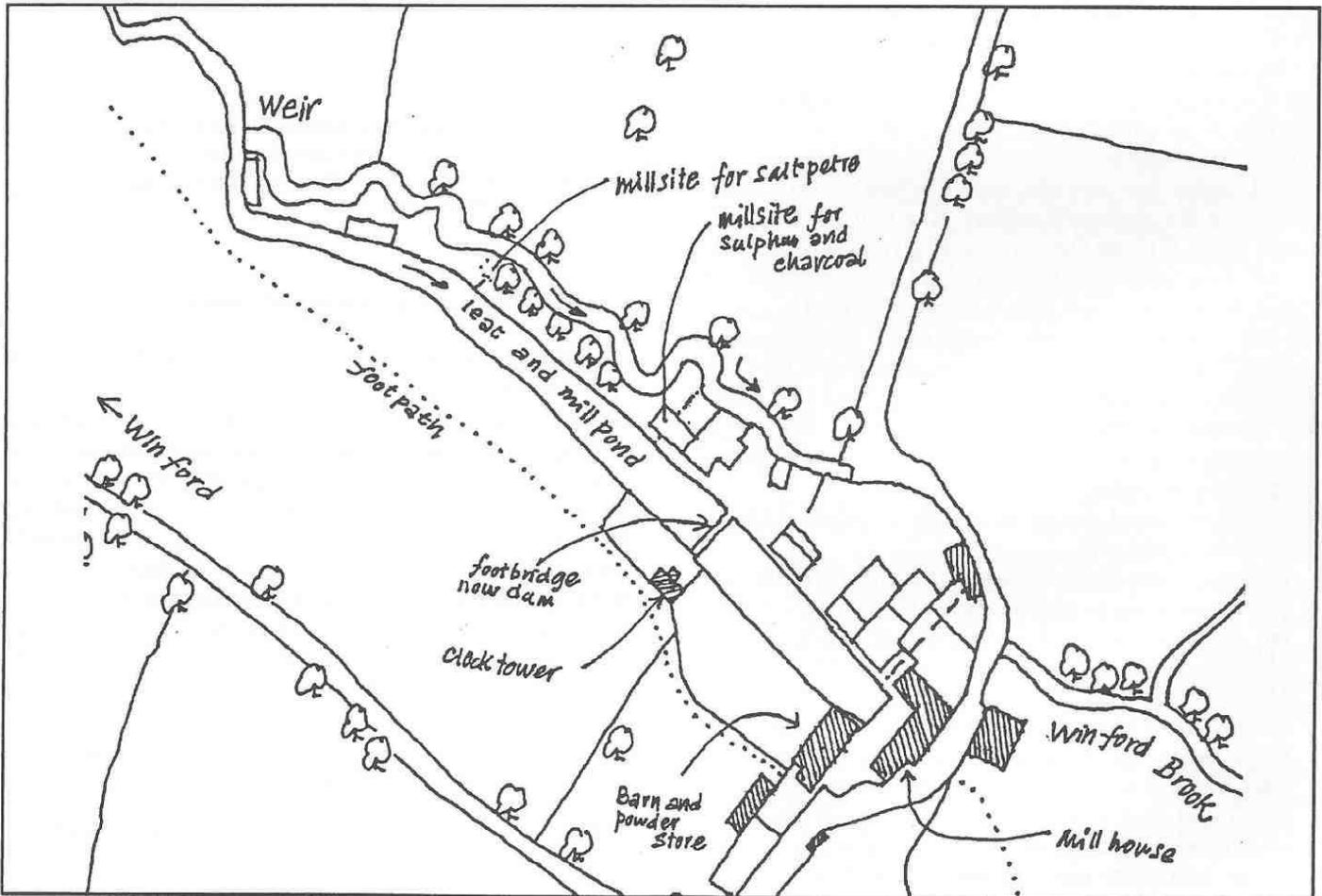
*At Chew Magna, in the County of Somerset, [actually just inside Winford parish] six miles from Bristol with or without...1½ of Land...*

*A Head of Water for a MILL, where a Powder-mill was lately situated; and as the pond-head and thoroughs are still remaining and also the old shafts, a new mill may be replaced at an easy expence, in the same or for another business.*

*The stream of water is constant and there is sixteen feet head and fall...Any person of character disposed to erect a spinning mill for cotton &c, will be met with encouragement, as employment is wanted for a number of poor people in the parish.*

*For particulars enquire of Richard Summers of Chew Magna, James Harford of Bristol...<sup>6</sup>*

By the end of the century, Winford had a connection with the gunpowder mills at Woolley, near Bath. In 1803 George Dyer, managing director of the latter, together with Sir Henry Strachey of Sutton Court, were involved in 'consolidating' the



Powdermill, OS 25 in plan, 1885

two enterprises. Woolley was near the end of its lease, whereas the works at Littleton were freehold. Woolley was closed and production concentrated at Winford. At its height, Winford produced 3,500 barrels of gunpowder a year; by 1802 output had declined to no more than 1,000 barrels.<sup>7</sup>

Unlike Woolley, where the steep hillsides forced the proprietors to build two leats, one above the other, Littleton relied on one large millpond, 850 ft long and capable of storing 1,500,000 gallons of water. A sale notice of 1813 suggests that the millpond was enlarged at this time:

*..Lot 2. A close of capital Meadow or Pasture GROUND called Littleton Mead..2 Acres. This Lot adjoins the Powdermill, in Littleton Lane, the Proprietors of which pay an annual rent for an excavation into this Lot, for the enlargement of the Mill-Pond..'*<sup>8</sup>

Powdermill was advertised for sale in 1821:

*Extensive and old-established Gunpowder Manufactory, near BRISTOL, To be SOLD by Private Contract..with every requisite convenience for the Manufacturing of Gunpowder, situate seven miles south of Bristol; with a Licensed MAGAZINE (being the only one in the vicinity of Bristol) situate on the River Avon four miles below Bristol; also a Licensed Magazine at Liverpool..*

*The foregoing Manufactory being the only one within 100 miles of Bristol, presents an eligible opportunity for any person desirous of embarking in such a concern; or the Mills and Premises are applicable for any other purpose for which an ample fall of water and a great deal of room is required...*<sup>9</sup>

The millpond supplied two millhouses, both driven by overshot wheels. The small mill nearest the weir ground saltpetre. The second mill was a larger structure incorporating mills for grinding sulphur and charcoal. It had a larger head of water and consequently, it appears, a larger waterwheel. Mixing of the constituents was undertaken elsewhere and gunpowder was stored in the very solidly roofed powder store, now part of a barn. A special force - the Winford militia - was responsible for escorting the barrels of gunpowder to the magazine at Tower Harratz on Temple Back in Bristol. This was closed late in the eighteenth century and the purpose built magazine referred to above constructed on the Avon.<sup>10</sup>

Powdermill was taken over by Curtis's and Harvey's, which later became part of ICI. But by 1838 the mill had closed.<sup>11</sup> Well established mills at Waltham Abbey, Faversham and Chilworth continued to produce gunpowder. A century earlier these mills nearer the capital reputedly used edge-runners producing a finer and more effective powder. In practice it may have been a lack of smoothness in the edge-runner and the bed stone which generated inferior powder.

Following the American Wars of Independence demand declined as Du Pont and other manufacturers in the United States began making gunpowder locally. The African trade was finished by the 1790s.<sup>12</sup>

Today, over 150 years after Powdermill closed, the site layout is largely unchanged. The mill house, cottages, powder store and clock tower all still stand. The latter has recently been restored and a bell installed under the roof. Timing was an important element in the production process: at Woolley

powder was ground experimentally for five and for six hours in 1762. Trial and error, it seems, determined the best combination.

The millpond silted up over the years. The owners of Powdermill Cottages have recently cleared the pond, damming it across the end of their property and refilling it. When the silt was excavated in 1989 the remains of two punts were discovered lying on the bed of the pond, to some extent preserved in the mud. The punts were used to transport materials to and from the mills and to the powder store at the millpond's eastern end. This was a practice adopted at other water-powered gunpowder works, the millpond serving a dual function as a canal and power source.

A stone-lined outfall tunnel remains near the cottages. This culvert is 6 ft high and can still be walked through. It may once have connected with tailraces from the two mills; these outfalls were laid in long underground channels as they were constructed below the level of the nearby brook. Of the two mills the smaller has received a new 11 ft diameter steel overshot wheel which runs very smoothly on a small flow of water. It was installed in the summer of 1993. Near the cottages a 5 ft diameter wooden gear wheel survives, the only item of original machinery remaining on site.

Powdermill and Powdermill Cottages are private property and access is only with prior permission.

## References

1. Spence, note 1.8
2. Richardson, D., *The Bristol Slave Traders. A Collective Portrait*, (Bristol, 1985)
3. Buchanan, B.J. and Tucker, M.T., 'The Manufacture of Gunpowder: a study of the Documentary and Physical Evidence Relating to the Woolley Powder Works near Bath'. *Industrial Archaeology Review* III, (1981)  
[Sources include Strachey Papers, SCRO, DD/SH Box 27]
4. Strachey, J., 'Observations on the Strata in the Coal Mines of Mendip'. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* XXX. 360, 1719, p 968 (cited in note 2)
5. *Sarah Farley's Bristol Journal*, 1 April 1786
6. *Bristol Gazette*, 1 January 1789
7. Buchanan and Tucker, note 3
8. *Bristol Mirror*, 9 January 1813
9. *Bath Chronicle*, 3 May 1821
10. Spence, note 1.8
11. SCRO, Winford Tithe Map and Apportionment, 1839
12. Richardson, note 2

## 9. Snuff Mill, Winford

(ST 545 649)

Winford was one of seventy Somerset manors held by the Bishop of Coutances in 1086. The mill then established was worth 40 pence a year.<sup>1</sup> It may well have been a Norse or stream mill and was probably sited in the village.

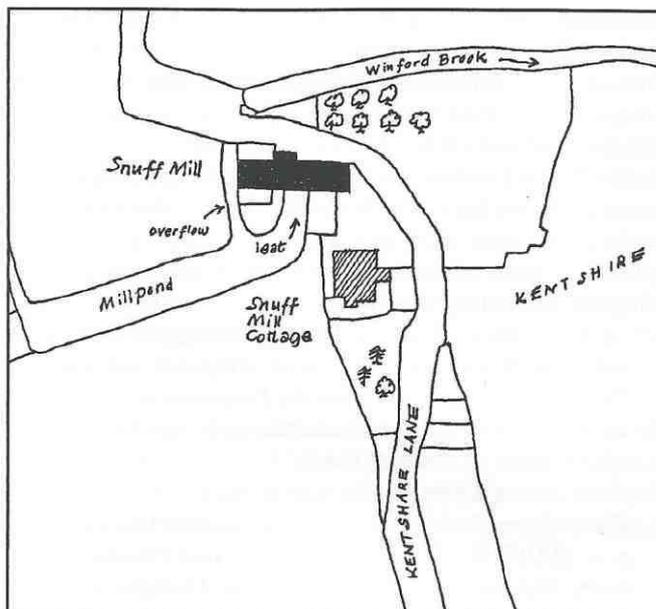
The Snuff Mill is in Kentshare Lane, east of Winford village. Old leases in the possession of the owner of Kentshare farm show that a watermill existed here in 1721. The lease in that year was for £200.<sup>2</sup>

In 1769 the mill was grinding snuff.<sup>3</sup> Snuff milling was a port industry, dependent on Bristol imports of tobacco leaf. Mills on the Winford Brook, the Land Yeo and the Bristol Frome were converted to snuff milling due to their proximity to the port. A windmill at Brockley performed the same function.

Demand for snuff appears to have declined during the nine-

teenth century and this mill was even closer to another industry which was starting to grow - the Winford Redding or colour pits. The first mill known to be associated with these works was Chew Stoke Mill, converted to colour processing as early as 1805.<sup>4</sup> The Winford snuff mill was nearer the quarries and was converted by 1839. Mrs Mary Pearce had offered the mill for sale in 1837 and in 1839 it was owned by Mrs Amelia Biggs, but was unoccupied.<sup>5</sup>

Colour milling was carried out here at least until 1876 when Upper Littleton Mill was converted to grind ochre. In 1887 the mill was purchased by F. C. Perry, chairman of the Winford Iron Ore and Redding Company, and in 1900 the company took it over. The mill appears to have ceased work by this date.<sup>6</sup> The ruinous remains stand in the garden of Snuff Mill Cottage, smothered in ivy. The mill leat was restored in 1959 to provide a feature in the rock garden. This is the highest known millsite on the Winford Brook.



Snuff Mill, from conveyance 7 July 1887

**References**

1. Thom, note 1.2
2. Deeds in the possession of Mr A E Clark of Kentshare in August 1988
3. City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, note 7.2
4. *Bristol Mirror*, 26 January 1805
5. SCRO, note 8.11
6. Correspondence with Peter Addison of Bath
7. A.J. Spence, note 1.8



A decaying wooden gear from Powdermill



Clock tower at Powdermill undergoing restoration



The remains of two boats or punts discovered at Powdermill in 1989

[NOTE; This photo appears on page 43 of the printed journal  
and not page 11, as shown here]