



Ron Cookson
Chairman of Trustees
The Mills Archive Trust
Watlington house
44 Watlington Street
Reading

1st July 2006

Dear Ron,

At last I am forwarding a few details concerning my family's 'history' in milling, as promised. I hope they may be of interest, and apologise for any bits of irrelevant information that you can ignore!

My grandfather, William Cornwell, was born in Littlebury, Essex, in 1851, died in 1933 at Wanstead, Essex and was interred at Saffron Waldon, Essex. His earliest recorded employment was as a 'pupil' with Joseph Wisely, a miller at Ickenham, Essex. He married Mary Ann Lofts (step-daughter of Joseph Wisleys sister) and soon afterwards moved to St. Albans, Hertfordshire, as a 'working miller'. Later they moved to Bow, London, where my father, twin brothers and sister were born and William was employed, (initially, probably as manager) at the new Sunflour Mills (the site for which unconfirmed record suggests was actually chosen by William). Quite early in his adult life, my father Earnest joined the staff at the Sunflour Mills and was an active member of the Corn Exchange, Mark Lane. Both became directors and during the 1914-18 war years were much involved with the various Ministry of Food restrictions and (quote) "advised Lloyd George on flour". William retired to Wanstead in 1920, where he became a life deacon at the Congregational Church, and a warden of Epping Forest.

Regrettably, I have been unable to ascertain when the Sunflour Mills (which in 1921 had joined with five other mills of similar size to form the Associated London Flour Millers) actually stopped production mainly due to post-war over-production and building of much larger and more economic port mills. At about this time my grandfather purchased the small 5/6 sack flour mill at Uxbridge, Middlesex, known as William King Ltd, New Roller Mills, with the sole intention of, quote "providing the family with a profitable occupation"! Initially 'the family' was to consist of his twin sons (Archie from the mill at Saffron Waldon and Arthur who owned a grocery business). They became the first, and only two, directors of the Uxbridge Mill. Much later, they were to be joined by my father, Ernest, for a brief period following the closure of the Sunflour Mills ---- and prior to his sudden death at the age of 56 years in 1935.

The mill at Uxbridge still stands in its entirety and has been skilfully incorporated in what is now the much larger Associated British Foods mill of 'Kingsmill' bread fame.

With this letter I am enclosing an old scrapbook, probably started by William Cornwell and later passed to my father for later entries which contain some interesting 'milling' facts (and many figures!!) mainly associated with the 1914-18 war years and earlier, which you may consider are worth preserving at Reading. Also photographs of William Cornwell (as I knew him in his latter years), and of the Corn Exchange membership about 1922. (See back of photo).

I do hope the forgoing information will be of interest, and wish you great success with the Mills Archive Trust, which I certainly hope to visit in the not too distant future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Guy Cornwell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends across the width of the signature.

Guy Cornwell

September 21st 2015



Dear Mrs Cookson,

Thank you for your recent letter and I enclose this Henry Simon spatula which I came across recently.

I thought you might be interested in a few brief memories and procedures that were a part of my early years at the 5½ sack (280lbs) family Kings Mill at Uxbridge.

1. Installation of our first, and only, plansifter.
2. Removing the heavy fluted steel rollers for periodical re-fluting.
3. Periodical replacing of Swiss-made silk covers on the centrifugals.
4. The 40ft (?) deep laminated hardwood lined wheat intake holding silos, emptied at base by revolving measuring drums and transferred to the washer and conditioning bins as required. A cable lamp would be lowered from trap door on the top floor to measure the level of wheat during filling and emptying.
5. Regular moth cleaning operations to avoid (sometimes) a complete stoppage of the whole mill machinery.
6. Many hours spent cushioned on a half bag of bran while doing a stint of re-dressing on one of the two pairs of waterwheel powered millstones used for stoneground flour customers.
7. Stacking 200cwt sacks of wheat from barge to mill floor when silos were full or in process of being emptied.
8. Periodical cleaning of the mill weir of debris to divert surplus canal water from the turbine to the mill pool.
9. Weekly train journey to Battersea Polytechnic for a milling correspondence course.
10. Fishing in the mill-pool on a Saturday afternoon when my weekly wage - £1-10-6p, less £1-5-0p for lodgings with one of the lorry drivers family and 1/6p for a national insurance stamp - prohibited regular visits home to Buckhurst Hill by Greenline coach. Only once did I catch a bream big enough for my landlady to fry for my supper! It was delicious!

Yours sincerely with best wishes,

Guy Cornwell