

Dear Nathaniel,

I am directly descended from Edward Symonds, miller at Dowlish Wake (born circa 1676). He succeeded his father in law, William Milbourne in 1706 as copyhold tenant of Dowlish water mill with the house and lands adjoining and as the owner of a small lifehold estate in Cudworth. His will proved with inventory in Taunton Archdeaconry court is dated 19 March 1727-8, and he was buried on 28th of the same month aged 51 (monumental inscr. in church; also monumental tomb outside. He married at Dinnington in 1702 Anne dau of Wm Milbourne of Dowlish, miller, and Anne his wife. Anne Symonds survived her husband until 1745.

Having regard to the long association of my family with the mill and the adjoining land it will perhaps be fitting to chronicle some stray facts that are within my knowledge. Although this little mill cannot show a record beginning in Domesday Book, like its neighbour in Donyatt parish, nevertheless corn was being ground in feudal times and most probably on the same site. I have seen an ancient charter by which a bishop of Bath confirmed a gift by Ralph Wac (Wake?) of the mill at Duvelicium (Dowlish) to the monks of Ferleia in Wiltshire. The deed is undated and the bishop's name is denoted only by the letter R, but the Ralph wake therein mentioned may be the member of the family who was living in 1285 and Lord of the Manor, as the script is of that period.

A long interval then elapses, during which the manor passed to the Keynes family and subsequently by marriage to the Spekes. In the days of Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth the depositions in a Chancery suit yield a few particulars: one witness states that in 1651 the life-hold property included the dwelling house, the mill house and tenements, a back-side (yard) and a close of 3 acres, which were worth together about £24 yearly. The miller John Davys, then aged 51, deposed that he occupied the mill-house and a garden plot from which he paid 6 shillings rent weekly to the holder of the other part. The buildings then needed repair and a tree had been provided for the purpose, but the defendant objected and consequently £9 was spent on the timber. (Hutchins vs. Moore, Chan. Dep. Mitford 640/35).

In 1680 the miller was William Vincent; he was succeeded about 1688 by William Milbourne, my ancestor, whose daughter Anne married Edward Symonds. Thenceforward our kinsfolk successively held the mill in lifehold tenure during a long period. When an invasion by Napoleon was threatened, returns were called for, in all parishes in maritime counties, as to their resources in men, animals and food. The tithingman of Dowlish made a return in July, 1803, stating, among other things, that there was a miller in the parish but that the want of water prevented him from engaging to supply a greater quantity of meal than his usual customers consumed; if there was no scarcity of water he could supply ten quarters of meal weekly, over and above his usual needs (Som. & Dor. N. & Q. x, 169).

The existing stone walls and main timbers of the dwelling-house and the mill-house, which face each other across a yard, can be dated as 17<sup>th</sup> century work, if not a little earlier; the modern slate roofs being doubtless substituted for the original coverings of thatch. In each building there is a large open fireplace framed with oak, one being 7ft 9 ins wide; alongside the fireplace in the mill-house is a small arched recess in the masonry 14 ½ in, x 11 in., perhaps for a food vessel when heated, which suggests that this portion of the building was formerly used as a dwelling, not improbably by John Davys in 1651 as above mentioned.

Until recently there was an inscribed block of Ham Hill stone in the exterior face of the north gable of the mill-house, about 12 feet above the ground level. On examining the inscription it read as follows:

S  
E            A  
1710

My forbear was allowed to remove the stone, and it remained one of his cherished possessions until his death. The meaning of the inscription is sufficiently clear, namely, that Edward Symonds having married Anne Milbourne became, through his wife, the yeoman miller; then having altered the mill-house, he caused his own and his wife's initials, with the date, to be cut upon the stone (18 in. x 17 in.).

William Milbourne probably occupied the mill from 1687 in which year there was a vacancy through death, and also occupied certain lifehold land in Cudworth which passed to his daughter Anne Symonds. He gave evidence in a Chancery deposition taken at Ilminster in 1704 when he stated that his age was 73 years; therefore he was born in 1631 approximately.

He died 1706, having married Anne... who predeceased him at Dowlish in 1691. His will at Taunton probate court is accompanied by an inventory of the testator's effects which is transcribed in full below; this document furnishes some interesting details as to the equipment of the premises of a small yeoman-miller at the end of the seventeenth century.

Will of William Milbourne:-

I, William Milbourne of East Dowlish, Somerset, miller, "being in good health of body and of sound and perfect mind and memory" To son James Milbourne one shilling. To daughter Ann Symonds for her life a leasehold estate in Cudworth formerly in the tenure of John Hobman, and after her decease to son James if he survived her. To son Christopher two shillings weekly for his life to be paid out of the leasehold estate by daughter Ann

Symonds or by son James if he survived her. To grandson William Milbourne twenty shillings. To grand-daughters Elizabeth, Ann and Joan Milbourne twenty shillings each. To grandsons James and John Milbourne twenty shillings each. To grand-daughters Ann and Flora Symonds twenty shillings each. The residue "to my loving son William Milbourne and my loving daughter Ann Symonds", who are to be executors. To be buried in the churchyard of east Dowlish. Dated 29th November 1704, and signed,  
Will: Milbourne.

A true and perfect inventory of all and singular the goods and chattels of William Milbourne of East Dowlish, miller, deceased. Dated 6th March 1705-6.

Imprimis, his wearing apparel, 3.0.0.

One leasehold estate for two lives, 50.0.0.

Due on severall bonds, 56.0.0.

Due on booke debts sperate and disperate, 51.19.11½.

Money in house, 5.0.0.

Three cows and one heifer, 18.0.0.

Tenn ewes and lambs, 5.0.0.

Three horses and ye tackling belonging to them, 7.10.0.

One pigg, 1.10.0.

In ye little room within ye kitchen; three brasse potts, one brasse pann, three kettles, three skilletts, a brasse basing ladle, a flesh picke, a dish cage, dishes and spoones, a table board frame and furne, and books, 4.10.0.

In ye kitchen; four pewter dishes, a latten collender, a settle and a small cupboard, a board and frame, a brake and forme, three paire of pothooks, two backe crooks, a paire of tongs and bacon racke, 1.10.0.

In ye milke house; a wooden platter and some small things, 0.1.0.

In ye mill; four tubbs, three willyes, two iron barrs, five pailles, two ropes, fifteen baggs, two peckes, one halfe pecke, six bills, two vorriers, a handsaw, a gouge, a chizell, two hatchetts, one hooke, a beame & weights & weight stones, a sledge, four iron wedges, 1.10.0.

In ye buttery house; four halfe hogsheads, a little barrell, seaven tubbs, a cheese steane, a malt hutch, a table board, 4.4.0.

In ye kitchen chamber; two boxes, two coffers, one chest, fourteen cheeses, one flitch of bacon, a halfe head bedsteed, a truckle bedstede, three paire of sheets, four paire of blanketts, two ruggs, four pillow tyes, two feather bolsters, two pillows, one flocke bedd, one flocke bolster, a dust bedd, two dust bolsters, six boards, 5.10.0.

In ye mill chamber; a flocke bedd, a dust bedd, two ruggs, one standing bedsteed, one truckle bedsteed, one dust bolster, 1.11.0.

In wood, 1.10.0.

In things forgotten, 0.5.0.

Totall, 216.10.11½.

Signed by Elias Combe and Samuell Gundry.

I also have the will of my forbear, Edward Symonds, miller:

In ye name of God, amen. I Edward Symonds being sick and weak in body but of sound and disposing mind and memory (blessed be God for it) do make this my last will and testament as follows:- Imprimis, I give my son William ye summe of fifty pounds to be paid within two years after my decease but in case he should die before ye said term of two years be expired yn my will is that it shall go to my executors. Item, I give unto my grand-daughter Elizabeth one guinea. To my daughter Mary likewise one guinea. All ye rest of my estate, money, goods, etc., I give unto my wife and my two sons Edward and John. But if my wife should happen to marry yn my will is yt her share shall go until my two sons before named, whom together with my wife I make and appoint ye executors of this my will, and I do by these presents do revoke and annull all former wills and testaments made by me. In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seale March 19th 1727-8. Signed, Edward symons.

Attested by Arthur Hood, rector of Dowlish, and Christopher Lodg.

A true and perfect inventory of the goods chattels and credits of Edward Symons of Dowlish Wake lately deceased taken and appraised by Abraham Rook, John Donne and Robert Poole, 5th April 1728.

Imprimis, 7 Milch keen £30.0.0.

Four Horses and a coal £25.0.0.

One swine £1.15.0.

In ye kitchen; 6 potts, 3 brass kettles, a warming pan £5.5.0.

A dozen & halfe of pewter dishes, a dozen & halfe of pewter plates £3.3.0.

A jack, 2 spitts, 2 crooks, 4 pair of pothooks £0.10.0.  
 A table board, a settle & 3 chairs. £0.6.8.  
 In ye hall; a clocke, a table board, six chairs £3.10.0.  
 In ye milkhouse; 3 kettles, 2 brass pans. £2.0.0.  
 2 cheese wrings, 12 flatts (vats - Ed), 6 tubbs, a safe. £2.10.0.  
 In ye seller; 30 hogsheads. £10.10.0.  
 In ye hall chamber; 3 feather beds & all things belonging to them. £18.0.0.  
 3 chests, 3 boxes, a coffer. £1.5.0.  
 In ye kitchen chamber; one flock bed £1.2.0.  
 2 cheese shelves & cheese £2.0.0.  
 In ye mill chamber; one flock bed. £1.0.0.  
 In ye mill house; one corn whick, 3 tubs £1.0.0.  
 2 whimshits (winnowing sheets - Ed) & bags £1.15.0.  
 In ye malthouse; malt 60 bushells £12.0.0.  
 A ffurnace, a malt whick, a cistarn £2.10.0.  
 Bond debt £60.0.0.  
 Book debt £40.0.0.  
 A leasehold estate in ye mill for 2 lives £120.0.0.  
 A leasehold estate called Macye's £45.0.0.  
 A leasehold estate called Hobman's £80.0.0.  
 A leasehold estate lately Gould's & one close called Yaerate (?) late Hawkin's £450.0.0.  
 Wearing apparrell and pockett money £20.0.0.  
 A putt & wheels & other horse tackling £3.0.0.  
 Things forgotten £0.6.8.  
 Total £943.8.4. also bound.  
 Proved at Crewkerne 21st May 1728 by Anne Symonds, the relict.



The stone in situ.



Lino cut of Dowlish Wake Mill.



Dowlish Wake Mill in 1970.

Yours sincerely

Richard Symonds