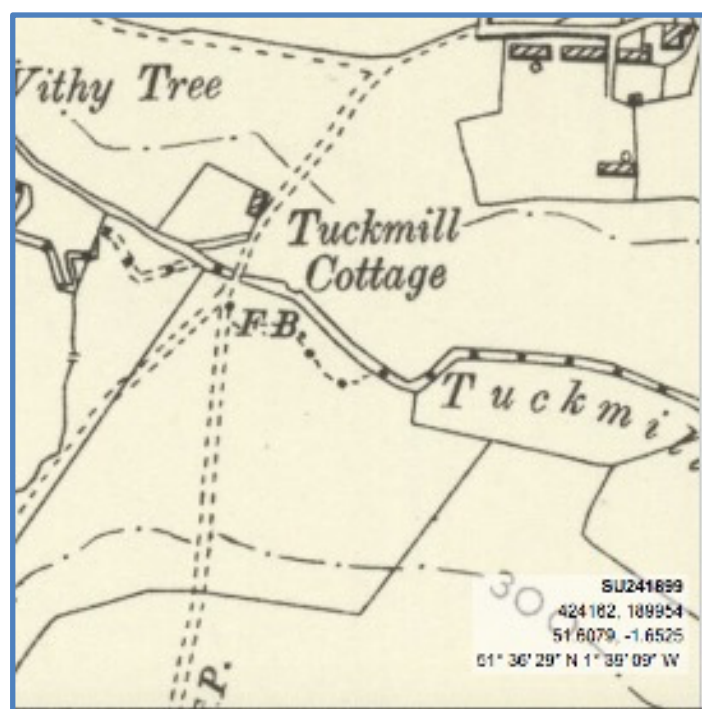


Little Mill - AKA - Tuckmill, Watchfield

By Neil Maw

You may be thinking that the title of this mini presentation is a little odd. Most people interested in local history will have heard of the name Tuckmill but may be puzzled by the name Little Mill. Over the last year I have carried out extensive archival research on this subject and have broken the information down into detailed units that are available on the Shrivenham Heritage Society Website Online Catalogue in the Listing No: N106. Similar to the other presentations in this series, this one is also designed to be concise but accurate.

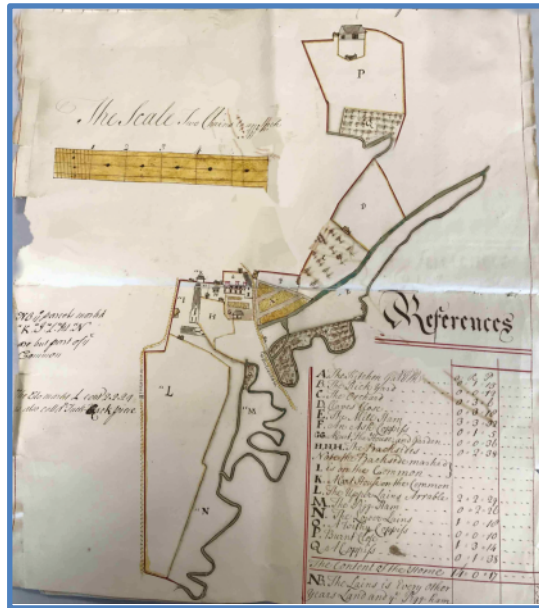


The above map shows the exact location of the site. The photo below shows what is there now; just a bridge over the stream of water that is known as Tuckmill Brook.



The earliest evidence so far discovered is for Edward Fayrethorne (sic) who operated a Farm and Mill at Watchfield in 1616. But we know that he was there earlier as his son William was baptised in the local Chapel in 1606. Documents in the Berkshire County Archive at Reading confirm the location by including a hand drawn map that is instantly recognisable as to its location.

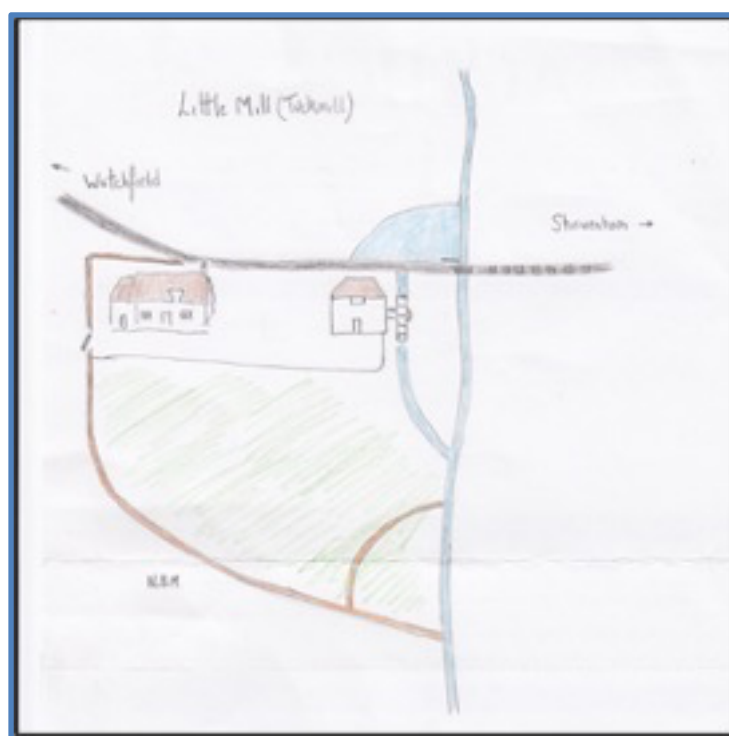




To give more of an idea what was there, we thank Alec Chambers for this water colour impression of how the site may have looked. It is necessary to note that the Manor Court Records for the 17th century name the mill at this location as Little Mill, to distinguish it from the other mill in the Parish called West Mill. I have found no documentary evidence to suggest what the Fairthorne family may have called it. Therefore, until more is discovered we will assume it was called Little Mill Farm.



We know that Thomas Fairthorne inherited Little Mill Farm, Watchfield, in the early years of the 18th century. He had been left it by his Uncle, Edward Fairthorne, who stipulated in his Will that his brother's son Thomas should inherit his lands and property. Thomas and his wife Mary had three daughters, Sarah, Mary and Anne. Their mother died in September 1735 and their father Thomas died in June 1741. It was the contents of his Will that would cause a problem that instigated a case to be brought to the High Court of Chancery in London.



Other small drawings with the files in the archives clearly show the layout of the mill. Above is a crude attempt by me to show the relationship of the actual mill building to the miller's cottage. Local people who may be old enough may well remember the lovely little cottage that stood there, sadly burned down by vandals in 1972.

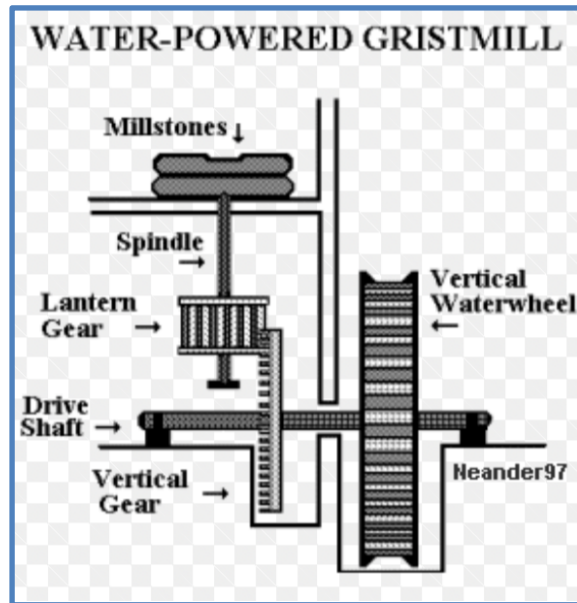


Tuck Mill 726nd 1983ad.

The water management was simple in that the bridge going over the main water course was also a dam. When the panels were put in place to halt the flow of water from the main course, the rising water level behind the dam formed a pool. The water was then ducted in by a tunnel under the footway to Shrevenham and onto the Mill Wheel. After it had turned the wheel it joined the main flow of the Brook further down. When the water levels are high the mill pond is more apparent as seen by the photo below.

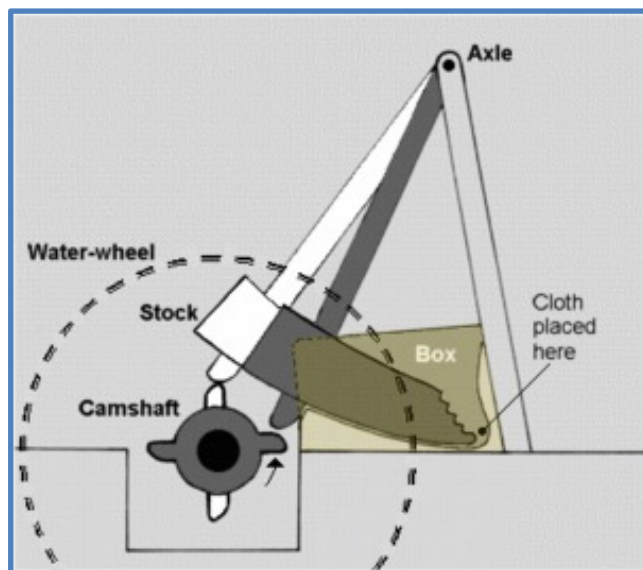


Several 17th century Indentures and Agreements all describe the mill as a '*Water Corn Grist Mill.*' The ruling of the High Court of Chancery in 1745 caused the whole of the Fairthorne Estate that consisted of a Farm House, Farm buildings, the Mill and Mill House, to go in to the hands of Sir Mark Stuart Pleydell of Coleshill on 5th December 1746 (Later to become the Radnor Estate). Within the documents that are contained in the bundle noted above, there is a description of a, '*Water Grist Mill House erected over the said Mill ...*' This confirms that in 1746 the mill was still equipped to grind corn.



Contained within the document at the Berkshire County Archive Ref No: D/P112/26A there is a description of an exchange of land between the Radnor Estate at Coleshill and the Barrington Estate at Beckett, Shrivenham. The document is dated 3rd August 1789 and forms part of the official Enclosure of Bourton & Watchfield. There is a clause that states, *'the Earl of Radnor (of Coleshill) gives to Lord Barrington (of Beckett) a Mill House, a Tucking or Fulling Mill formerly stood, and all that part or parcel of pasture land, formerly the Mill Bank adjoining the brook.'*

Tucking or Fulling hammer mechanism



Tucking or Fulling is one and the same process. When raw wool is knitted together to create a fabric, it still contains natural oils and is bloated. It was discovered that if it was pounded and the oils removed it created a very versatile and durable fabric. Anciently, the method of pounding the material was carried out by human feet in tubs of water but as always, man's ingenuity invented a mechanical process whereby a wheel driven by the force of water could pound the material more evenly. Fullers Earth and also Stale Urine were used during the pounding to neutralise the oils.

The documents mentioned above provide us with the evidence that Little Mill was used as a Corn Grist Mill from the early 17th century (and possibly earlier) until at least 1746. Sometime within the period of 1746 to 1789 it was used as a Tucking Mill, and furthermore the wording, '*formerly stood*' suggests that at that moment in time it was either no longer '*Tucking*' or perhaps no longer a working mill. Therefore, it is highly likely that it was only Tucking for a very short period in its history and that its last known use as a Tucking Mill is why the name stayed with it for the following two centuries.



I remember this site from my childhood. I spent many happy hours playing around in the brook at what we used to call Paget's Bridge after the family of Victor Paget who lived in the little cottage. As a teenager I even decided that I would one day own that cottage and garden but that was not to be. Therefore, as a historian I was naturally drawn to research the history of it, as until now very little was known. I would still like to learn more; for instance, when did the large house get taken down and the rest of the buildings?

The walk from Watchfield to Shrivenham is a very pleasant route, but care must be taken when crossing the golf course for obvious reasons. The approach from the Shrivenham side of the bridge will allow you to walk over the huge stepping-stones shown above, if they are still visible. They lead to the only remaining structure of this once busy farm and mill, the stone dam walls that support the bridge. Stop for a while on the bridge and allow your new knowledge to imagine what had been there for centuries.

Finis

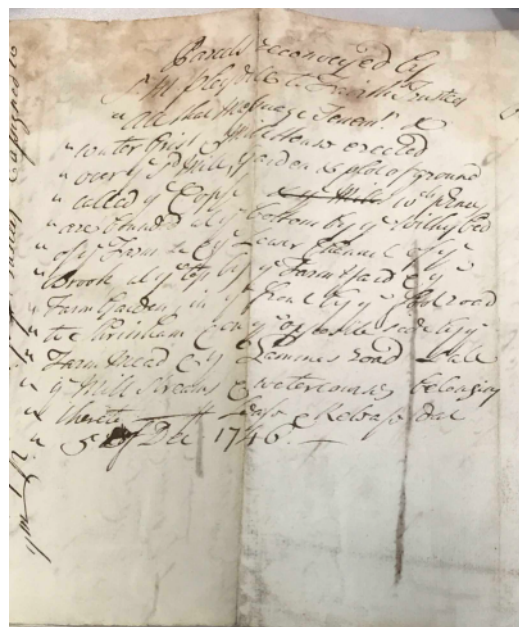
The Layout of Little Mill (Tuckmill) in Watchfield village

By Neil B. Maw

The drawing below is from the documents contained within the bundle Ref No: D/Epb – T46 in the Berkshire County Archives at Reading. It dates from 1746 at the time when the Fairthorne Estate passed into the hands of Sir Mark Stuart Pleydell at Coleshill (to become known as the Radnor Estate). Although the drawing may look crude, it is in fact remarkably accurate and is a true representation of what was there up to 1972/3.



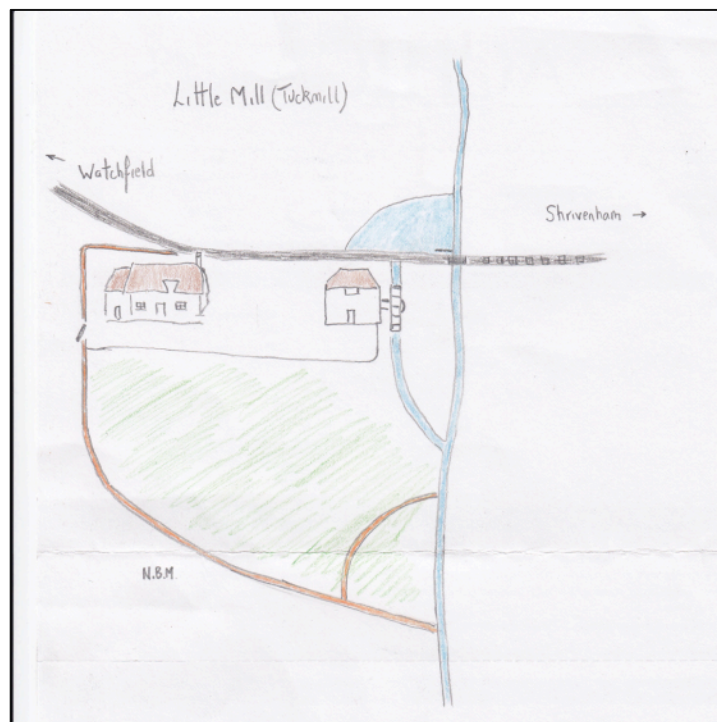
Attached to the drawing is a note that describes where the mill is located within the layout of the Fairthorne Farm.



This is a transcription of the note above. *'Parcels conveyed by Sir Mark Pleydell to the Trustees, all that messuage, tenement and Water Grist Mill House erected over the said Mill, Garden and plot of ground called the Coppice and the Mill which premises are bounded at the bottom by the Withy Bed of the Farm and the lower channel of the Brook at the top by the Farm Yard and the Farm Garden in the front by the Foot Road to Shrinham on the opposite side by the Farm Mead and the Lammas Road and all the Mill Stream and watercourses belonging thereto.*

Lease
5th December, 1746.'

The following drawing is a more detailed representation of the layout of the Mill and matches the cruder layout above in every detail.



The water management was simple in that the bridge going over the main water course was also a dam. When the panels were put in place to halt the flow of water from the main course, the rising water level behind the dam formed a pool. The water was then ducted in by a tunnel under the footway to Shrivenham and onto the Mill Wheel. After it had turned the wheel it joined the main flow of the Brook further down.



The history of Little Mill and Farm has been broken down and explained under separate headings in order to maintain accuracy.

The use of the Mill

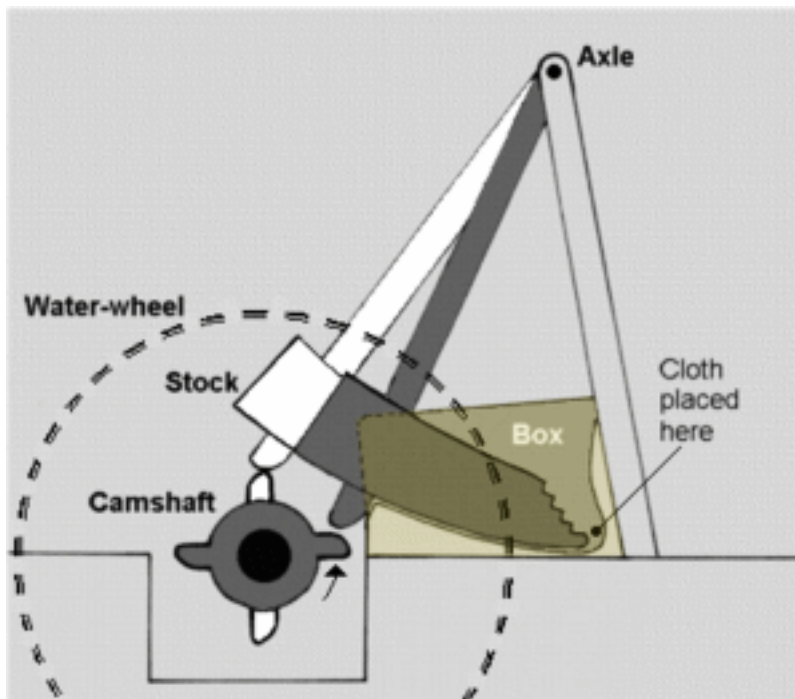
How the Farm went in to the Radnor Estate

The Court proceedings that followed the death of Thomas Fairthorne

Little Mill (and Farm) Watchfield

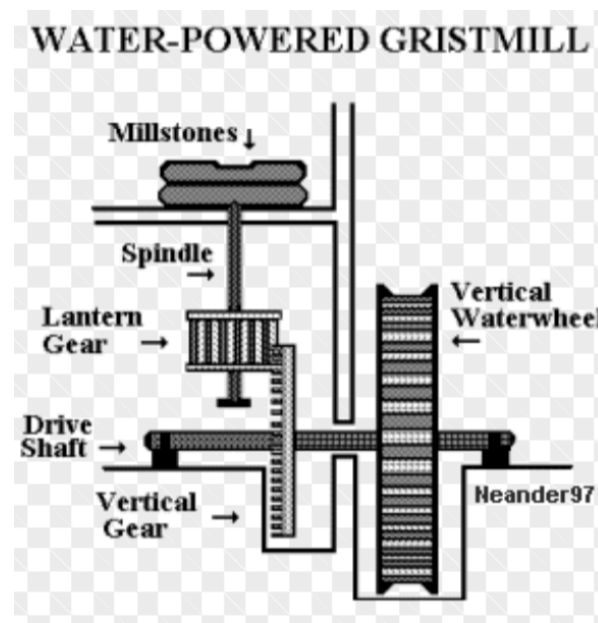
It is known that there was a mill operating just on the southern edge of the village of Watchfield that was known as Little Mill. It's also known that the Fairthorne family owned it from at least 1606. In the 19th and 20th centuries it was generally known as Tuckmill.

Tucking or Fulling is one and the same process. When raw wool is knitted together to create a fabric, it still contains natural oils and is bloated. It was discovered that if it was pounded and the oils removed it created a very versatile and durable fabric. Anciently, the method of pounding the material was carried out by human feet in tubs of water but as always, man's ingenuity invented a mechanical process whereby a wheel driven by the force of water could pound the material more evenly. Fullers Earth and also stale urine were used during the pounding to neutralise the oils.



The earliest documentary reference to the type of mill being used at Little Mill is from an Indenture dated 22nd January 1672. It belongs to the bundle of papers that make up Berkshire County Archives Ref No: D/Epb - T46 and is part of the Pleydell/Bouverie

Collection. The Indenture is a formal agreement between William Fairthorne and his wife Mary, to hand the Farm and Mill over to their son Edward. The description is described as, 'the Messuages and Tenements with their Appurtenances in Watchfield and also all those six Yard Lands to the same belonging and also all that Water Corne Mill in Watchfield.' And there we have the evidence that the mill was being used in the traditional way to grind corn into flour.



The whole of the Fairthorne Estate that consisted of a Farm House, Farm buildings associated with the farm, and the Mill and Mill House, went in to the hands of Sir Mark Stuart Pleydell of Coleshill on 5th December 1746 (Later to become the Radnor Estate). A full account of the circumstances of how this came about can be read separately. Within the documents that are contained in the bundle noted above, there is a description of a, 'Water Grist Mill House erected over the said Mill ...' This confirms that in 1746 the mill was still equipped to grind corn.

Contained within the document at the Berkshire County Archive Ref No: D/P112/26A there is a description of an exchange of land between the Radnor Estate at Coleshill and the Barrington Estate at Beckett, Shrivenham. The document is dated 3rd August 1789 and

forms part of the official Enclosure of Bourton & Watchfield. There is a clause that states, *'the Earl of Radnor (of Coleshill) gives to Lord Barrington (of Beckett) a Mill House, a Tucking or Fulling Mill formerly stood, and all that part or parcel of pasture land, formerly the Mill Bank adjoining the brook.*

The documents mentioned above provide us with the evidence that Little Mill was used as a Corn Grist Mill from the early 17th century (and possibly earlier) until at least 1746. Sometime within the period of 1746 to 1789 it was used as a Tucking Mill, and furthermore the wording, *'formerly stood'* suggests that at that moment in time it was either no longer *'Tucking'* or perhaps no longer a working mill. So it is highly likely that it was only Tucking for a very short period in its history and that its last known use as a Tucking Mill is why the name stayed with it for the following two centuries.

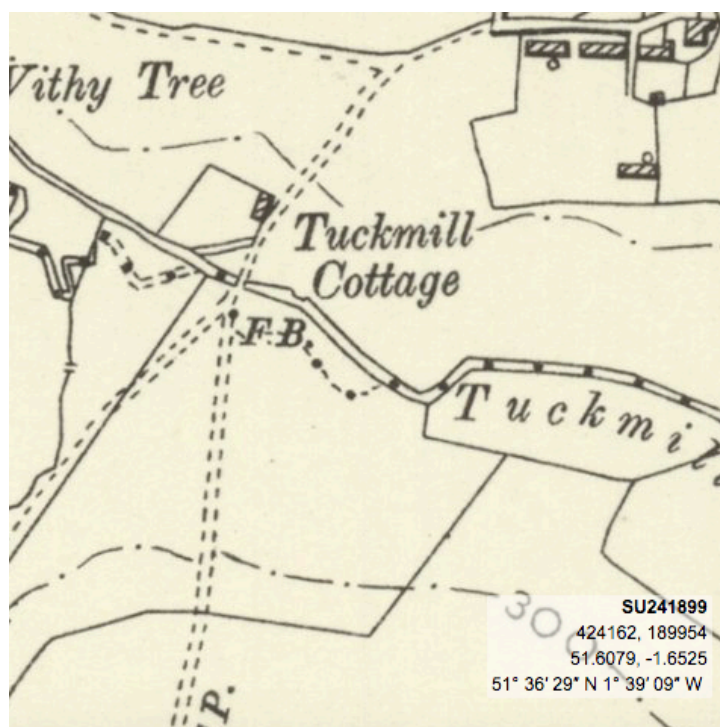
Fairthorne V. Fairthorne

The case of Henry Fairthorne and others versus the Estate of Thomas Fairthorne of
Watchfield.

Ref documents from Berks County Archives – Reading Ref: D/Epb – T46
and National Archives – Kew Ref: C11/159/12

We know that Thomas Fairthorne inherited Little Mill Farm, Watchfield, (also known as Tuckmill) in the early years of the 18th century. He had been left it by his Uncle, Edward Fairthorne, who stipulated in his Will that his brother's son Thomas should inherit his lands and property after the death of his wife. What we are not certain of is when his wife Sarah died. We know that Thomas was under the age of 22 as his Uncle made a stipulation about what should happen if he didn't reach the age of 22 before his Aunt died.

We know from documents contained with the Pleydell/Bouverie papers and from the Willington Survey Map, that there was a substantial farm and a small mill at Watchfield. It was referred to within Manorial records as Little Mill (to distinguish it apart from the other mill site in Watchfield called West Mill) but later known as Tuckmill, and was located on the northern edge of the Golf Course, accessed via a footpath from Star Lane.



Thomas had a wife called Mary and they produced three daughters. Sarah was born first and baptised at Watchfield on 25th October 1727. This was followed by Mary baptised on 15th January 1730 and Anne on 15th September 1732. We don't know the age of their mother but we do know that she died on or near to 27th September 1735.

We don't know what Thomas was like as a farmer/businessman (a Yeoman) but we do know that at the end of his life he left behind some considerable debts mainly in the form of loans of money. As well as running a farm at Watchfield his Uncle also referred to lands that he rented in Coleshill but we don't know the extent of them. We also don't know what involvement he had with the Mill at Watchfield. It was the normal practice for mill owners to lease out the day-to-day running of the mill and it's likely that this was the case with Thomas Fairthorne. Legal documents from the 17th century describe it as a '*Corn Grist Mill*,' and in 1746 when it went into the hands of the Radnor Estate at Coleshill, it was described as a '*Water Grist Mill*.' So at that time it would seem to have been operating as a standard corn-grinding mill to produce flour. However, in the Bourton and Watchfield Inclosure Award, BRO Ref: D/P/112/26A dated 3rd August 1789, there is an exchange of land that states; '*The Earl of Radnor gives to Lord Barrington a Mill House a Tucking or Fulling Mill formerly stood ...*' This is a completely different use of the mill that prepares cloth rather than grinding corn. The wording also suggests that the Tucking Mill was no longer in operation at that date but if it had reverted back to corn grinding we cannot tell as yet.

Thomas was active within the church as he was noted as being a Church Warden in 1703 and he regularly attended the Vestry meetings right up to his death on 2nd June 1741. It may be that he was not feeling well in the months previous as he made his Will in November of 1740. The attention to detail on the legacies he left to his daughters also suggests that he knew his end was drawing near.

A search of the National Archives Probate records do not list a Will for Thomas Fairthorne, but we know that he left one due to the litigation that eventually ensued three years later.

The documents that make up the High Court Chancery papers in the National Archives Ref: C11/159/12 are described as Fairthorne v. Eyloe. The Plaintiffs (those bringing the complaint to the court) were Henry Fairthorne, (Brother of Thomas) Yeoman of Eastcott, Swindon, Wilts; Thomas Edwards, Yeoman of Hinton, Wilts and Ann Edwards his wife. The complaint is against the Executors of the Estate of Thomas Fairthorne, his three daughters and Sir Mark Stuart Pleydell of Coleshill (The Defendants). Other papers on this case refer to it as Fairthorne v. Fairthorne because Henry Fairthorne was the primary plaintiff against the Estate of Thomas Fairthorne.

The first document of two that make up this case contains some of the wording within Thomas' Will. He left his daughter Sarah his larger of the two Silver Tankards, his Silver Plate, five of his large Silver Spoons, six Silver Tea Spoons marked with her initials, two Stone Rings and four Gold Rings *'wrapt up in a piece of paper'*. And also all the furniture and other goods belonging to and which usually stand on the Parlour and Chamber over the same, belonging to his house wherein he dwells in Watchfield. He gave to his daughter Mary the other of his two Silver Tankards, four Silver Spoons, Tea Spoons marked with her initials, five Gold Rings, also wrapped up in a piece of paper with her name on it. And all the goods and furniture of the room called the Brick Room of his house. He gave to his daughter Ann four of his large Silver Spoons, his Silver Two-Handled Cup and Silver Watch and five Gold Rings, and likewise wrapped up in a piece of paper with her name on it. Also the furniture and goods belonging to and usually stand in the kitchen of his house and room over the same (except pewter and brass). And this is the part that caused the trouble and litigation. *'I give and bequeath to Richard Eyloe of Shrivenham, Lional Rich of Great Faringdon, Gent, and James Reynolds of Great Faringdon, Yeoman, all my Stock of Cattle, Corn, Implements of Husbandry and other Goods and Chattels, Personal Estate and Effects whatsoever not heretofore bequeathed, upon trust that they and the survivors shall as soon as conveniently may be after my decease sell and dispose thereof for the best price and prices that can be gotten and pay and apply the money as follows. Item. I give to Richard Eyloe, Lional Rich and James Reynolds all that my freehold Messuages and Tenements wherein I now dwell in Watchfield otherwise Watchinfield and also all those six Yardlands thereunto belonging with the Appurtenances lying and being in Watchfield and in Shrivenham, that they shall sell for the best price first to pay my Funeral expenses, then the residue to be divided among my three daughters equally in shares and proportions according to their respective ages of 21 years*

or days of marriage, and if any die before then that share shall be divided among the others.' He directed that the money from Rents and Profits of the Farm should go towards the upkeep of his daughters. He makes Richard Eyloe, Lional Rich and James Reynolds Joint Executors and also Curators and Guardians of his daughters, *'The care and tuition of whom during their respective minorities I do commit and leave to them, desiring them to place my said daughters to some Boarding School or Schools where they may be properly educated with quality and degree, and I give them one Guinea apiece for their trouble in executing the Trusts hereby in them reposed.'*

However, in the years that followed, the Executors did not sell the Estate, and the court papers state that the Executors, *'Do refuse to sell or dispose of the same premises or make any assurance thereof to any purchaser thereby to obstruct and hinder the performance of the Trust ...'* The situation was made more complicated by one of the Executors, Lional Rich, dying during that period, leaving Richard Eyloe and James Reynolds to administer the Estate. But they were accused that they, *'Do give out and pretend that the said premises cannot be sold because the three coheirs are under the age of 21 years.'* This was not the case as the Executors had been granted Guardianship of the three girls and had the legal power to execute the instructions in the Will. But of this they are also accused that the complainants, *'Have not the said Will nor the Probate thereof, the same lyeth in the hands of the Confrates.'* It's quite understandable to see why the Executors and the daughters would not want to sell the family property, but there were debts to be paid and Thomas Fairthorne's Will was quite specific. Consequently, on 13th February 1745, an order was made by the High Court of Chancery that the Estate should be sold, and as Sir Mark Stuart Pleydell of Coleshill had made the best offer of £1650 then it should be sold to him, less the amount of money that he was owed by Thomas Fairthorne (£792.4.2). There is a note within the documents that has written on the back by the Executors, *'Received from Sir Mark Stuart Pleydell the sum of £857. 15. 10.'* And now we understand how Little Mill and Farm at Watchfield came in to the ownership of what would become the Radnor Estate at Coleshill.

After the court ruling there was the matter of expenses incurred with the running of the Estate and one of the Masters of the High Court of Chancery, Anthony Allen, put together a list of schedules that make for interesting reading.

A document within the bundle at the Berkshire County Archives - Reading

Ref: D/Epb - T46

Expenditure Listed for the High Court of Chancery for the Estate of the late Thomas Fairthorne 1745 - 1746. This was collated by Anthony Allen, one of the Masters of the Court, and he produced three schedules.

The amounts of money paid in the schedules below are in pre-decimal English currency of L.S.D Pounds sterling, Shillings and Pence. There were 20 shillings in 1 Pound and 12 pence in 1 shilling.

The dates listed are from the Julian Calendar when the year ended on 24th March and the New Year began on 25th. An Act of Parliament was passed ordering the date to be changed from Sept 2nd to Sept 14th in 1752 as the Gregorian Calendar was adopted.

1741. June	14 th	Paid for a Comb, Scissors, thread and silk for the children.	0. 1. 5
	27 th	Paid Jane Wells for making three Caps for them	0. 2. 0
		Paid Ditto for two Aprons and two Bibbs and washing the same.	0. 2. 8
Aug	1 st	Paid for Shoe Buckles and two Knives and Forks and three Breakfasts and for Lock and Key and gave them pocket money when they went to school to Cirencester.	0. 6. 0
		Paid carrying them to Cirencester School and their Boxes.	0. 4. 0
Sept	5 th	Paid Mr Gunter nine weeks Schooling for the two young Girls.	0. 3. 0
Nov	8 th	Paid for two Hoop Petticoats and three Spoons	0. 8. 0
Dec	23 rd	Paid for eight yards of Long Lown for them	0. 18. 0
	24 th	Paid for several necessaries for them	0. 8. 0
Jan	11 th	Paid carrying them to Cirencester and back again	0. 8. 0
		Paid Mrs Keney's for things as by Bill	0. 15. 0
		Paid Sarah in Cash	0. 2. 6
Feb	23 rd	Paid John Beckley as by Bill	4. 9. 10
Mar	19 th	Paid James Clow for two Frocks	0. 18. 0
		Paid for Carriage of Letters from the Children	0. 0. 9
1742 Apr	20 th	Paid for half a years Board and Schooling due the 28 th of February last	15. 0. 0
		Paid Sarah Moore as by Bill	2. 17. 4
		Gave Defendant Sarah for pocket money	0. 2. 6
		Paid Thomas Dewson for three pairs of Stays	

	May	31 st	Paid Sarah Cook as by Bill	0. 7. 4
			Paid Mrs Sarah Kemp as by Bill	0. 8. 0
			Paid Defendant Sarah	0. 4. 6
	June	2 nd	Paid Martha Birch as by Bill	0. 7. 0
	July	22 nd	Paid Sarah Fairthorne for self and sisters	0. 18. 11
	Aug	9 th	Paid Defendant Sarah more	0. 3. 6
		16 th	Paid her more	0. 2. 6
	Oct	11 th	Paid Sarah Cooke for the children	1. 3. 0
			Paid Ditto for Physick for them	0. 3. 0
1743	Apr	25 th	Paid Solomon Moore for teaching the children to write.	1. 0. 10
	July	18 th	Paid Defendant Sarah	0. 2. 6
	Aug	1 st	For half a years Board and Schooling due the 28 th of February last.	15. 0. 0
	Sept	12 th	Paid Sarah Cooke for the children	2. 18. 7
			Paid Defendant Sarah	0. 2. 6
		26 th	Paid her more	0. 2. 6
	Nov	27 th	Paid Edward Smith for making up the account with James Blagrove	0. 2. 0
	Mar	12 th	Paid Solomon Moore as by Bill	1. 13. 2
			Paid Sarah Cooke as by Bill	3. 0. 4
			Paid Sarah Cooke for one year and the odds 20 shillings for boarding and schooling	31. 0. 0
			Paid Sarah Fairthorne	1. 5. 6
			Paid for carrying the children from school	0. 5. 6
1744	Mar	31 st	For 12 Quarters of Seed Barley to sow on the Estate	6. 0. 0

Apr	20 th	Paid James Clow for Linnen etc for the children	0. 12. 8
	24 th	Paid Mary Kember for ditto	0. 1. 11
	26 th	Paid for two Quarters of Seed Barley to sow on the Estate	1. 10. 0
	29 th	Paid for James Butler for three pairs of shoes for the children	0. 7. 0
May	10 th	Paid for a Drench for a Cow	0. 0. 6
	13 th	Paid for two Bushells of Pease to set on the Estate	0. 4. 4
	18 th	Paid Smith for assisting at Sale of Goods	0. 1. 0
	30 th	Paid Blaggrave for a Sow	0. 1. 0
June	8 th	Paid Carriage of Lead from Watchfield to Faringdon	0. 5. 0
	11 th	Paid James Clow for the children	0. 3. 10
	23 rd	Paid for two Pattens for them	0. 1. 8
	24 th	Paid for carrying a Mare and a Colt to Burford Fair For two nights keeping and shoeing the Mare	0. 1. 6 0. 2. 4
July?	8 th	Paid Defendant Sarah what she paid for mending Shoes Stays etc	0. 9. 3
	24 th	For 8 Bushells of Beans to make use of on the Estate money for the Deft Sarah	0. 1. 8
		Paid for a new collar for the Mare	0. 2. 6
Nov	2 nd	For 10 Bushells of Seed Wheat to use on the Estate	1. 9. 2
		Paid Defendant Sarah to buy her a Gown	0. 9. 0
	20 th	Paid her more to pay for a pair of Stays	0. 9. 0
	22 nd	Paid James Clow as by Bill	0. 12. 10

		For expenses at Fairs selling the Cows etc	0. 4. 5
		Paid William Cooke an Attorney his Bill for Sueing and Seizing the Tenant Blgrave and for several journeys taken and business done on account of this Trust	8. 18. 11
		Paid Joseph Green for his attendance at the Seizure at Watchfield	1. 5. 0
		Paid the Thresher	0. 15. 0
		Paid Smith for attending the sale of the Tenants Goods	0. 2. 0
		Paid Thomas Holmes a Church Rate	0. 6. 8
		Paid William Willoughby for driving the plow	0. 9. 4
		Paid John Sutton as by Bill	0. 1. 6
		Paid a Messenger with a Letter on extraordinary business	0. 1. 0
		Paid Margaret Harris for Interest	0. 12. 0
		Paid Edward Stephens for teaching Miss Mary Fairthorne to write	0. 4. 2
1742 June	18 th	Paid Thomas Stratton for Blacksmith's work	10. 6. 0
		Paid William Lawrence the Balance of his Bill for work	13. 18. 0
		Paid Ditto by Ditto	0. 14. 0
		Paid Henry Edwards for Collar makers work	3. 15. 0
		Paid Thomas Lawrence as by Bill	5. 5. 0
		Paid John Fairthorne for the Balance of an account	1. 4. 0
		Paid Elizabeth Evans for work for the children	0. 3. 6
		Paid Henry Fisher Farrier the Balance of his Bill	1. 1. 6

Paid William Herbert the Balance of an account	11. 18. 0
Paid John Sutton for wine	5. 8. 0
Paid William Edmonds for work at the Farm	1. 1. 0
Paid Mr Triplet the balance of his debt	0. 12. 0
Paid John Franklyn for wine	0. 6. 0
Paid Thomas Kitcheside's bill	0. 6. 0
Paid Mary Marsh for Butchers meat	3. 4. 0
Paid John Lewis for ditto	8. 11. 0
Paid Mr Southby his bill for Physick	18. 7. 6
Paid George Dawson a Taylors bill	5. 9. 0
Paid Robert Alder for work	2. 9. 0
Paid James Rodburne for Thrashing	0. 4. 0
Paid William Edmonds & John Naish for repairs	1. 3. 0
Paid Angel Young for Malt	1. 18. 6
Paid William Mundy for Honey & Metheglin (Mead)	0. 18. 0
Paid Jeffery Church a Debt on note	5. 2. 6
Paid Mary Aidy a debt	0. 18. 6
Paid Anthony Lewis for work	2. 10. 0
Paid Francis Morse for mending a pump	0. 12. 6
Paid Anne Newport for work	0. 7. 8
Paid Edward Hunt for Liquors	0. 7. 0
Paid Thomas Midwinter for Schooling	0. 4. 0
Paid Mary Richards for Beans	4. 15. 0
Paid Edward Turner for work and materials	4. 10. 0
Paid Mr Wing for the Testators Funeral	16. 0. 0
Paid ditto for Sundrys	2. 10. 0

		Paid Nicholas Adams Adams for Hops Straw & Malt	6. 11. 6
		Paid Mathias Martin for Coopers work	0. 14. 0
		Paid F. Martin as by Bill	0. 12. 10
		Paid Thomas Dalton for Hollands	2. 14. 0
		Paid Thomas Mace for mending sacks	0. 14. 0
		Paid John Gorton for Bisket for Testators Funeral	1. 8. 6
		Paid Mr Bowles for wine	1. 16. 6
		Paid Thomas Deacon for Sadlers ware	0. 5. 7
		Paid Thomas Butler Shoe Maker	1. 0. 6
1745 April	17 th	Paid Mrs Rich for her late husbands Bill of Fees and disbursements relating to the Trust	15. 18. 0
		Paid William & Thomas Blgrave & Edward Fairthorne balance due to them for work at the Farm	2. 17. 4
	Feb	19 th Paid Mr Jenner for Rent of a Farm which Testator held of him	50. 0. 0
		Allowances made to the said Defendants	
1741		For the Board of the three Defendants (children) at the house of the Defendant Reynolds from the 19 th day of June 1741 till they went to school being 10 weeks at 9 shillings per week	4. 10. 0
		And for one week more at Christmas following	0. 9. 0
1744		And for their Board for one whole year ending 13 th of March 1744 at £9 per annum each	27. 0. 0
1741	6 th & 11 th	For Defendant Reynolds expenses for himself and horse to Watchfield to appraise the Goods 2 days	0. 10. 0
	Dec	17 th Ditto to set the Estate one day	0. 5. 0
		22 nd Ditto to appraise other part of the Goods 1 day	0. 5. 0
		Ditto to Shrinham to pay several of Testators small debts	0. 5. 0

Nov	28 th	Ditto to Wooton Bassett 12 miles to enquire of the infants Uncle if he would advance money to pay the Creditors & save the expenses of a Suit	0. 10. 0
		Allowed said Defendants for interest at £42 percent per annum on the sum of £150 which they were obliged to take up of Peter Dore on their joint Bond dated 1 st June 1742 in order to pay off small debts due from the Testator to several poor Tradesmen and Labourers who could not wait for their money but threatened to bring action for the same and likewise for the maintenance and education of the Defendants the infants which interest computed from the date of the said Bond to the 30 th July 1746 being 4 years and 59 days	28. 1. 7
		And for interest for the same time and at the rate aforesaid on the sum of £130 which said Defendants took up at the same time on their joint Bond to Susannah Allom for the same purpose and for interest at the rate aforesaid for the sum of £100 which the said Defendants took up on their joint Bond to Benjamin Langley dated 25 th June 1742 for the like purpose which interest computed from the date of the said Bond to the 25 th June 1744 when the Defendants might have paid off the said Bond amounts	9. 0. 0
		Total of the above	433. 16. 1
		Further payments made by the said Defendants	
1744	Jan	29 th Paid John Taylor Apothecary on account of Testators daughter Mary	0. 8. 0
		Paid her to pay for a Cloak	0. 3. 6
	Feb	2 nd Paid her and her sister Anne	0. 2. 0
		9 th Paid for five quarters of Beans to sow	4. 0. 0
		14 th Paid for 14 quarters of Barley to sow	8. 15. 0
		22 nd Paid the Testator's daughter Sarah	0. 4. 0
		23 rd Paid Thomas Lovelock for mending Defendant Mary's shoes	0. 1. 0
		26 th Paid James Clow more	0. 2. 6

Mar	12 th	Paid Thomas Butler for 2 pairs of shoes	0. 4. 10
	19 th	Paid for 4 Bushells of Beans to set	0. 8. 0
	26 th	Paid Defendant Sarah to pay for a Gown for her sister Mary	1. 2. 0
1745 Apr	15 th	Paid for 2 Quarters and 2 Bushells of Barley to sow	1. 8. 1 ½
	19 th	Paid for 5 Bushells of ditto	0. 7. 8 ¾
May	28 th	Paid Defendant Mary to buy Stockings	0. 6. 0
June	6 th	Paid James Clow as by Bill	0. 9. 10
	25 th	Paid Mary Kimber for making said Sarah's Gown	0. 2. 6
	26 th	Paid Thomas Mace for 12 sacks	1. 6. 0
Aug	6 th	Paid Defendant Sarah	0. 3. 6
Sept	1 st	Paid ditto	0. 5. 0
	26 th	Paid Defendants Mary & Anne to pay for Shoes	0. 5. 0
Oct	16 th	Paid Defendant Sarah	0. 2. 0
Nov	5 th	Paid George Barrow writing Master	0. 16. 6
Dec	10 th	Paid Defendant Sarah to buy Hankerchiefs	0. 2. 6
	11 th	Paid Defendant Sarah to buy 3 Aprons	0. 5. 6
Jan	7 th	Expenses at Faringdon with the Bailiff of the Testator's Estate consulting about the Trust Affair	0. 0. 9
	22 nd	Paid John Clow as by 2 Bills	0. 17. 4
Feb	3 rd	Paid Defendant Sarah to buy Shoes	0. 5. 0
	21 st	Paid Defendant Mary to pay for a Gown	0. 10. 6
	23 rd	Paid Thomas Butler as by Bill	0. 5. 8
Apr	5 th	Paid Defendant Sarah when her sister Anne was ill	0. 5. 0
	1 st	Paid ditto to pay for mending her sister Mary's strap and other things	0. 13. 6
	18 th	Paid Sarah 4 shillings & Mary 1 shilling	0. 5. 0

20 th	Paid Richard Roberts for a Gown for Defendant Mary	1. 5. 0
	Paid Defendants Mary & Anne	0. 2. 0
	Allowed the Defendants the Executors for one year and a quarter Board for Testator's said three children to the 13 th March 1745 at £9 per annum each the sum of £33.15s whereout 27 shillings is to be deducted for three weeks during which they were visiting their Uncle to there remain.	32. 8. 0
	Paid the Bailiff Edward Young for the balance of his account the sum of	42. 16. 6
	Total third Schedule	535. 9. 5
	Anthony Allen	
	The fourth Schedule referred to by the Report annexed containing an amount of the Testator Thomas Fairthorne's personal Estate remaining in the hands of the Defendants Reynolds & Eyloe in specie and undisposed of ans also an account of the Rents and Profits of his Real Estate which have not yet come to the hands or use of the said Defendants or either of them that is to say ...	
	The several Goods and Effects specifically bequeathed by the Testator to his three daughters the particulars whereof are contained in the first schedule annexed to the Examination of the Defendants Reynolds and Eyloe and have been appraised at the several sums therein mentioned amounting together to the sum of ...	111. 9. 6
	The several Goods and Effects not specifically bequeathed by the Testator now remaining in the hands of the Defendants Reynolds and Eyloe undisposed of the particulars whereof are contained in the former part of the second Schedule annexed to the Examination of the said Defendants and have been appraised at the several sums therein amounting together to the sum of ...	317. 5. 5 ½
	Due from James Blagrove who was employed by the Defendants Reynolds and Eyloe upon the Testator's death to manage the farm and sell and dispose of the Stock and was also Tenant of the said Testator's Estate on the balance of his several accounts which are particularly set forth in the 4 th Schedule annexed to the Examination of the said Defendants the sum of total 4 th Schedule ...	225. 19. 4
		654. 14. 3 ½

Note

Readers of this booklet please note. Although Victor Paget was passionate about his little cottage, he was not an historian and used only the Victoria County History as his source of information. Therefore, some of his claims on the history and use of the mill is not accurate. His excavation exploits however, make for interesting reading, and I hope that archaeologists of the future will open up the ground to verify and record what Victor discovered.

Neil B. Maw
May 2023

Tuck Mill
in
Watchfield

by
Victor Paget



726 a.d.

1983 a.d.

Tuck Mill
in
Watchfield

by
Victor Paget



726 a.d.

1983 a.d.

TUCK MILL

in

WATCHFIELD

by

Victor Paget

THEY SAY, do they not, 'that a prophet is without honour in his own country'. I have also heard it said that an artist does not become famous until he is dead.

I happen to think that these similis also apply to places of historic interest buried in small villages deep in the heart of the English countryside. Places which have long been extinct and which to the local inhabitants are just names, but which to a stranger to the district, as I was, arouse a curiosity which only an investigation into the past would assuage.

I lived in such a place for nigh on twenty years. The name of the place was Tuck Mill and it was a cottage standing alone in a field and close to a brook which bore the same name as the cottage. Tuck Mill brook.

I went to live in Tuck Mill in 1953 but it was five years and a visit from a ninety-three year old man that aroused my curiosity in the past history of the old mill. He poked his head over the garden wall one day and asked if he could have a drink of the spring water, the spring which gave the cottage its water supply.

Naturally, I invited him in and as he sat sipping his water he told me that he had once lived in the cottage. He had got married in 1880 when he was twenty-one and had brought up nine children there which was interesting enough, but what really got my imagination working was when he walked round the garden with me.

There was a huge yew tree in the garden which was bordered on its south side by the brook which ran parallel to the edge of the garden some twelve feet away from the brook itself.

Under the yew tree was a large depression, which, as it was full of rubbish, I had always taken to be the rubbish tip used by past tenants of the cottage. Although it had been used as a rubbish dump that was not its true purpose, the old man said what it really was, he went on, was an old mill pool, which I learned later was called a tail race, carved out by the spent water from a water mill. A "Tucking" mill, he told me before he left. He did promise to come back again but he never did and search the village as hard as I could I never saw him again.

Armed with the knowledge that there had acually been a mill at the place I now lived and that it was a 'Tucking Mill' I had to find out what 'tucking' was. This took a considerable time but I eventually stumbled across the word whilst reading a book on 'The History of Berkshire'.

Tucking was another word for 'Fulling', a process used in the treatment of woven woollen cloth. Roman soldiers in the years B.C. were thought to have discovered the benefits of fulling.* Before setting out on a campaign that involved much marching they lined the inner soles of their sandals with raw wool. After a while they found that with the pounding of their feet on the march, the wool became compacted and shrunken, becoming solid enough to cut like a piece of cardboard.

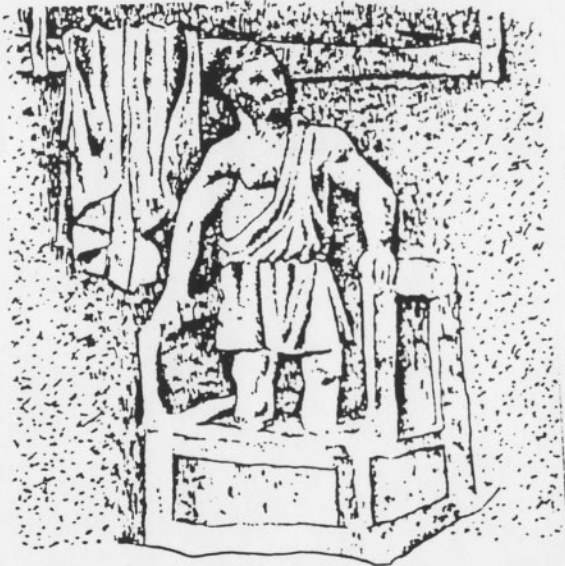
This was noticed by some long gone entrepreneur and the process of pounding was incorporated into the treatment of woollen cloth. Fulling is an ancient craft and in the streets of ruined Pompeii were found well-preserved fulling or tucking premises.

In those far off days the process was carried out by the physical pounding or stamping of the material by men. Five or six tubs filled with water would be set in

* FULL, from the Latin "Fullo" - to work or treat woollen cloth.
TUCK, from the Anglo Saxon "Tucian" - to press, work or gather woollen cloth.



East side



A European fuller at work - Roman era.

a line touching each other and the end of the length of cloth would be placed in the first tub. After perhaps fifty stamping movements the cloth would be placed into the next tub and that man would give it another fifty stamps, the first man carrying out his stamping on the next part of the material.

This treatment was repeated by every man in the team until the whole length of cloth had been subjected to the pounding process. The chief fuller would then assess the treated wool and if satisfactory, it would have a final washing and then be hung out to dry.

The craft was jealously guarded and guilds were formed to protect its members with rules and regulations that would make a present day employer scream with anguish. In the eighth century Watchfield, or Waecensfeld as it was then called, was a manor with a mill attached, and which between the years 726 and 737 A.D. was given to the abbey of Abingdon by charter granted and signed by one King Aethelbald, a king of the Saxons.

Tuck Mill was still being worked in the eleventh century, by which time the village was known as Watchfield, the name it still bears. The manor and mill were evaluated in the Domesday Book as being worth fourteen villeins, six serfs, with land for four ploughs, eight oxen, one hundred and fifty acres of meadow and £2.10.0 a year.

Before pursuing my search into the written history of Tuck Mill, I thought it might be advisable to make a search in the area of the mill to find out if there was any factual evidence remaining that would bolster the written evidence. There was plenty to investigate!

There was a mass of tumbled stone lying around the brook which it seemed fairly obvious had been at some time some kind of structure. Most of the stone lay some seven or eight feet from the twelve inch thick garden wall on the east side of the cottage. This wall was some thirty feet long and at the end of it built at right angles to and pointing west was another short wall ten feet long and eighteen inches thick. Four feet away from this wall on the brook bank lay another pile of fallen

who, in that year, paid a tithe of three hides to the Abbey. How long it was held by him I do not know, but as I cannot find any record of it being let to anyone else, I assume it was worked once again by the men of the Abbey, but this time with the new fulling stock.

At the time of the Reformation both the Abbey and the mill passed into the hands of Henry the Eighth and it is recorded that around this time both the Abbey and the mill were burnt down but the mill was rebuilt shortly afterwards.

In 1541 Watchfield manor and Tuck Mill were given by Henry VIII to Jacob Malt, a merchant of London, who held it for fourteen years after which it changed hands at least five more times, either by marriage or purchase. He settled it upon his illegitimate daughter Audrey who was to marry a Richard Southwell, bastard son of Sir John Southwell. This marriage didn't materialise. She married instead a John Harrington who took over the manor and the mill in 1556. In 1631 it was in the ownership of one Hester Stubbs, widow. She sold it in 1636 to a Thomas Tatten who in turn sold it to Sir Humphrey Forster, baronet. He held it until 1674 when it changed hands once more, the new owner being a Christopher Willoughby. On his death it seems, it passed to one of his descendants, a Henry Willoughby who sold it to a Lord Holland.

In the year 1751 the manor and mill of Watchfield were bought by Lord Barrington, lord of the manor of Shrivenham which adjoined Watchfield. During the time that Lord Barrington held the property, lake and summer house were built in the grounds of Beckett Hall, the manor house, reputedly by Inigo Jones. The lake was formed by the damming of Tuck Mill brook which diminished its flow considerably and it was then, I think, that the mill finally stopped working.

About 1851 another Lady Barrington had the sarsen stones laid which gave the villagers of Watchfield quick and easy access to Shrivenham across the fields.

After a lengthy stay at the newly enlarged estate, the Barringtons eventually sold it to a Sir Denis Lawson,

sluice that would release the dammed up water onto the waterwheel.

So I dug across the path and eventually uncovered a stone-lined channel dead in line with where the wheel would have been. I think this water was dammed much the same as the main dam though not so big or heavy, the fallen stones to me being the material from which it had been built.

Finally, there had to be within the garden area a hard floor of some kind. With the wealth of water the fullers needed, an earthen floor would have become a morass in a very short time. The obvious place for this floor was close to the water wheel and so in the rectangle formed by the cottage wall, the garden wall and the wall which supported the water wheel I prodded around with my fork.

I found what I was looking for some twelve inches under the soil. A stone floor, or most of it. The stones had been sunk into the earth edgewise and covered an area of about twentyfive feet by ten feet and were smooth and polished by the treading of countless feet.

So although I might have been wrong in some minor detail, in the main my deductions were correct.

In the first quarter of the twelfth century fulling underwent a radical change in England. It became mechanised. For some years on the Continent fulling had been carried out by a machine known as a fulling stock. It is thought that it was brought to England by the Knights Templars and was first used in the Cotswolds. From there, it spread rapidly to Wiltshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire, increasing production of finished woven cloth and making money invested in the wool trade.

Although reputedly the fulling stock was brought to England by the Crusaders, as these forays into the east were of a religious nature, I think that warlike bishops and monks could well have been amongst the warriors and who better than the churchmen, a lot of whose income was derived from the wool trade, to take note of this new machine, a machine that would vastly improve the revenues of the church.

In 1107 Tuck Mill was let to a William de Watchfield

masonry.

Most of this stone, though, lay heaped around two walls built into the bed of the brook facing east and west and some eight feet long by eighteen inches thick and four feet high. This fallen stone also lay to the north of the brook and was more or less in line with the short garden wall.

As my first task, I cleared out the tail race and at the western end of this I uncovered a channel, easily discernable by the different coloured grass that grew from it, leading in a gentle slope down to the waters of the brook. On the eastern side of the pool was another deep but muddy cutting that presented itself to me as a mill race, the channel in which the mill wheel turned.

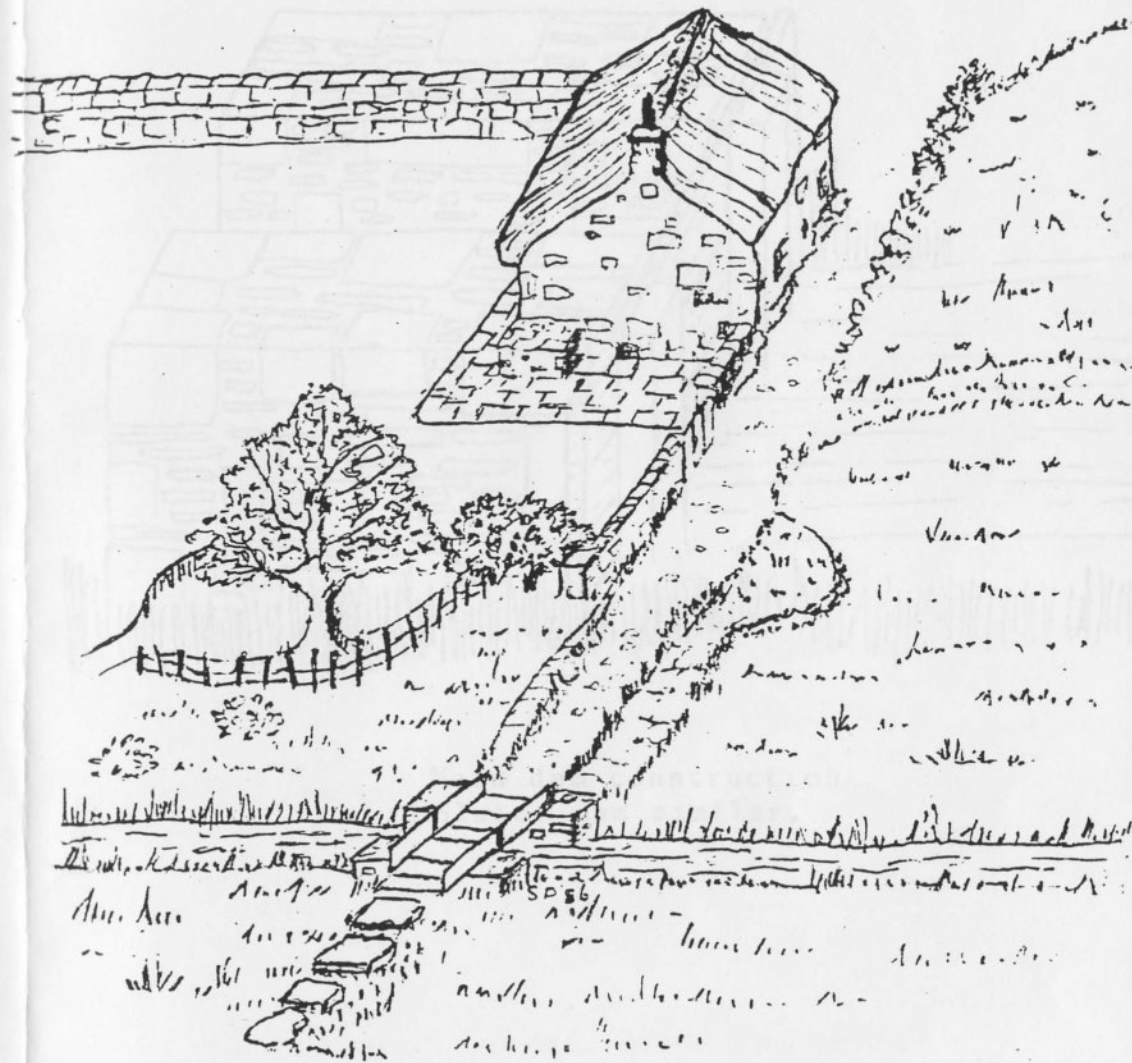
Edging this was the first pile of stones which, no doubt, would have been at one time another wall similar to the garden wall and on which the wheels axle had been supported.

So far, so good! My next discovery was purely accidental. Three of my daughters - schoolgirls - one day heaped some of the fallen stone between the two thick walls, confining the brook, thus creating a dam which held the waters of the brook back, this water in due course creating a large pool which the girls found deep enough to swim in.

The far bank of the brook on its south side was high enough to contain this water so as it built up and spread, it flowed over the shallow north bank and finished up by becoming a pool some eighteen feet wide. This, I concluded, must have been how the dam had been created some centuries ago.

The tumbled stone I thought was the remnants of two piers which had been built in front of the existing walls with a space between them to take heavy oak planks which could have been put in or taken out as required to control the amount of water in the head.

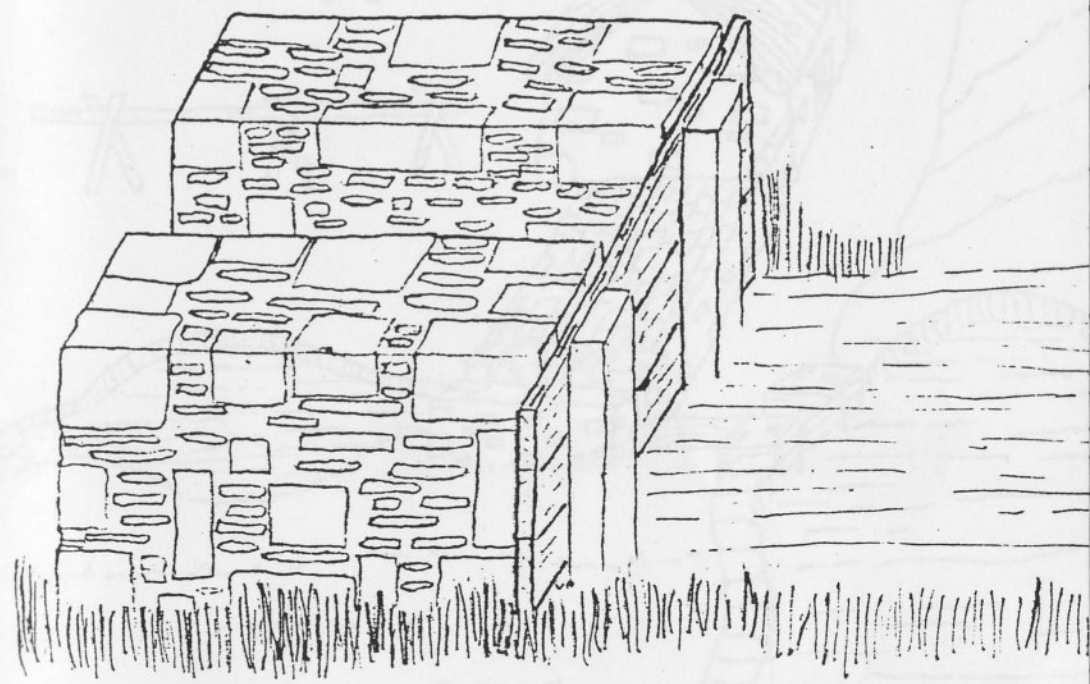
About eight or nine feet away from the dam, towards the north lay some more stone. If my deductions were right, there had to be somewhere close by, a gully or



Tuck Mill as seen from old golf course
about 1966

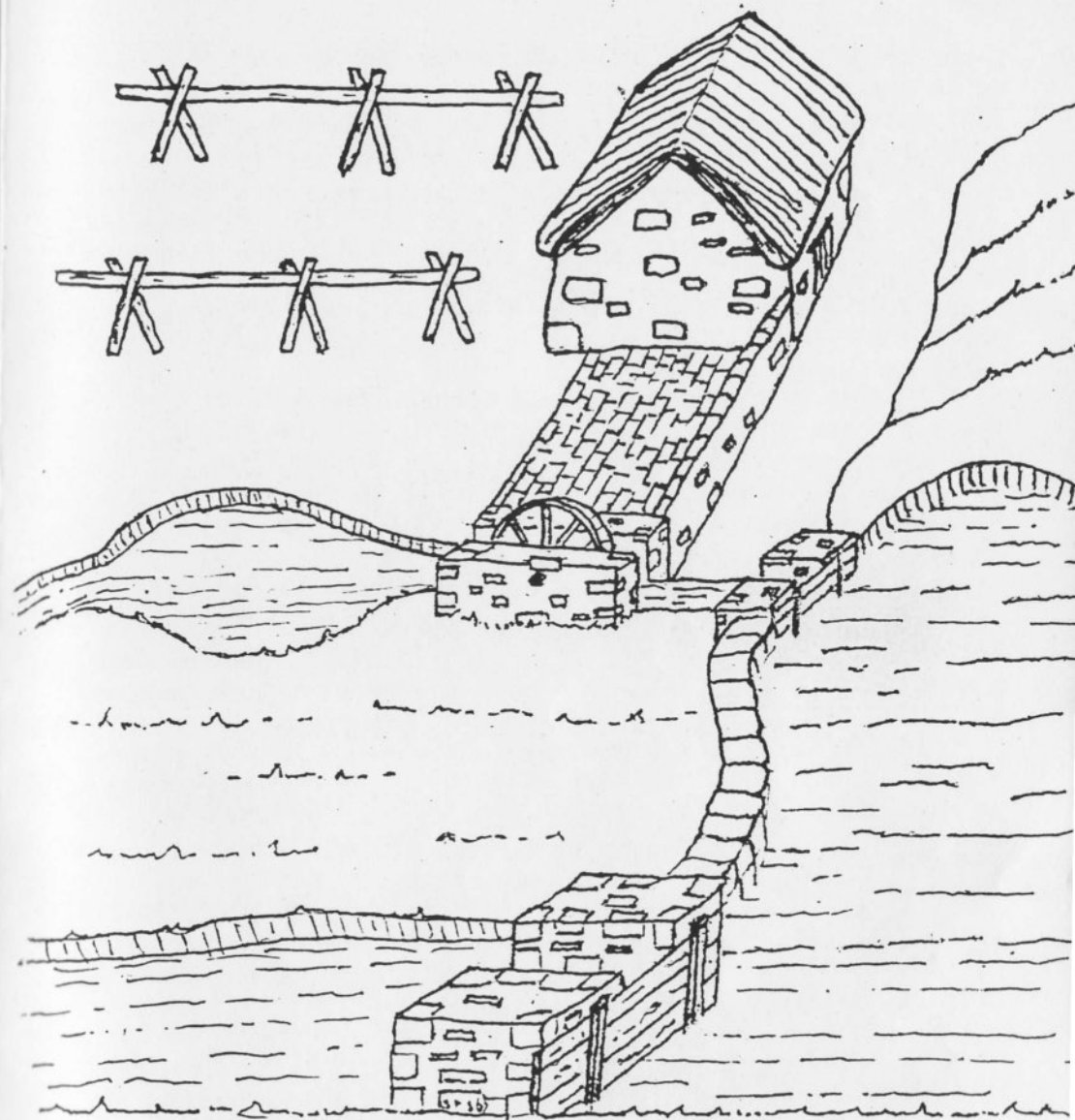
asonry.

West of this stone, though, lay deeper worked two
walls built into the bed of the brook facing east and
west and were eight feet long by eight-inch thick
and four feet high. Similar stone also lay in the



Main dam construction
Sluice dam similar.

The finished dam was about 100 feet long and 10 feet high. It was built of large stones and was very strong. It was built in the 18th century and has been in use ever since. It is now a national monument and is a very important part of the history of the area. It was built by the people of the area and it is a very important part of their heritage. It is a very beautiful structure and it is a very important part of the area's history. It is a very important part of the area's heritage and it is a very beautiful structure. It is a very important part of the area's history and it is a very beautiful structure. It is a very important part of the area's heritage and it is a very beautiful structure.



Impression of Tuck Mill in the 13th century showing main dam, sluice dam, water wheel, fulling yard, tail race, drying frames and store room - from the south.

later to become a Lord Mayor of London who in turn sold it to the Ministry of Defence. In the grounds of Beckett Hall buildings were erected to house and school young officers in and the place was given the name of the Royal Military College of Science.

The majority of the old manor of Watchfield was turned into an army camp and a housing estate for military personnel. So it stayed for some forty odd years during which time a new bridge was built across the brook, which to the youngsters of those days became known as Paget's Bridge.

In 1969 the army decided to auction the site of the mill, the fields to the south of it and the fields and buildings and barracks of the camp, Arnhem Camp, to the north. Arnhem Camp will no doubt be remembered by the many hundreds of National Service men who served their two years there, many dozens of whom spent a lot of their time prowling around my five nubile daughters.

The upshot of this was that I got notice to vacate Tuck Mill, something I could do nothing about and on a miserable December day that looked like I felt my family and I left our beloved cottage.

The building was immediately bolted, barred and sealed up. The most horrible thing about it was that it didn't get sold for another ten years. Added to that was the fact that vandals broke into the cottage and in 1972/3 set fire to it.

The ruins of Tuck Mill and the surrounding land was bought in the early 1980's by a gentleman who laid out the whole area as an extension to his golf course. Originally, the cottage was going to be rebuilt and I spent a deal of time with the businessman concerned, telling him its history as I knew it and describing the interior and exterior of the cottage.

The restoration of the cottage never took place though. Instead, the ruins of the cottage, its containing walls and every other piece of stone has been bulldozed down and covered with soil and unless you knew where it had stood it would not be recognised for what it once was, a very ancient fulling mill!

Now it is a natural hazard on a golf course. So disappeared for ever a little piece of England's history, a place that the Romans knew, that King Alfred would certainly have fought around, the Normans had included in their famous survey, Henry VIII had given as a gift and which Cromwell must have marched through when he attacked and burned the Royalist stronghold of Beckett Hall.

All of which to me adds up to a great shame.

The Stock

"Stock" was the name given to a heavy, cumbersome, piece of machinery, for "fulling" or "tucking" woven woollen cloth.

It was introduced into England in the twelfth century from the continent where it had been in use for a considerable time.

It was a device for stamping or pounding the cloth and superseded the old method of pounding by human feet.

The machine was quite large, the "striker wheel" being some four to five feet in diameter its component parts being proportional and built to withstand the constant pounding of the "pounding foot".

The "toe" of the pounding foot was designed to slightly rotate the cloth at each strike thus ensuring that the whole of the material enclosed in the "cheek" was thoroughly fullered or tucked. Oak and Beech were the two woods used in the early days of the stock, metal supplanted the timber in later years although the old wooden stocks were still in use in the remoter parts of Wales as late as the 1920's The motive power for the striker wheel was supplied by a water wheel. When not in use the "shanks" of the stock would be suspended above the striker wheel and would be lowered

onto the striker after the cheek had been packed with the wet woollen cloth ready for the fulling operation.

The cloth was part of a continuous length fed into the cheek a load at a time. The master fuller would decide when a cheek load had been sufficiently treated when the load would be pulled through and the cheek packed once again with a further length of the cloth. When the striker was rotating the "shanks" would be lowered onto it and each shank would be lifted by one of the "tappets" the foot falling once it had passed over the tappet.

The machine was so successful and increased production of fulled cloth so dramatically thus increasing the export of the much sought after English Woollen cloth to Europe that fortunes were made by the enterprising wool merchants who invested their money in the machines.

This was especially notable in the county of Berkshire. Abingdon and Newbury becoming two of the great wool centres of the industry.

In parts of Britain however, the old foot stamping method of tulling or tucking still obtained and in Ireland in the 1920's was still practised.

With acknowledgement to Victoria County History of Berkshire.

