

# North Mill – Kingston/ Ashbury, Berks

History known so far – By Neil B. Maw



From Ashbury looking towards Shrivenham. Photo Neil B. Maw

There is likely to have been a mill on this site for several centuries, but the difficulty is finding any documentary evidence that might provide us with more accurate information about it. The location is nearer to the village of Kingston Winslow than it is Ashbury, but it is within the parish of Ashbury. Its location had been chosen to take advantage of the stream that originates from the chalk downland as it flows across the flat lands. Further up the stream at Kingston there were two mills very close together, using the steepness of the slope for the weight of water. Their closeness can cause confusion and are generally referred to as, '*Upper Mill*' (SHS N144) and '*Lower Mill*' (SHS N1026). It is therefore useful that the mill further to the north is generally referred to as, '*North Mill*,' and maps from the later 19th century labelled it as such. The earliest reference we have for this mill is from a newspaper advertisement offering it for sale (see below). The description suggests that it had been operating from at least the 18th century. We can only assume that J.W. Puzey of Bishopstone, could likely be the owner.



Mill location. Ordnance Survey Map 6inch to 1 mile, 1883 – 1913. Courtesy of National Library of Scotland geo-referenced

*To MILLERS and BAKERS.*

TO be LET, with immediate possession,—  
 The remaining Part of a LEASE (Eight Years of which will be unexpired at Lady Day next) of that excellent WATER CORN MILL, called NORTH MILL, situate in the parish of Ashbury, in the county of Berks, capable of doing extensive business; the whole of which, together with the Dwelling House and Bake-House, Stabling, &c. have been re-built within the last 12 years, and is now in complete repair, with a Garden, Orchard, and from 2 to 3 Acres of most productive Water Meadow adjoining.—It is presumed that the low rent, and moderate terms on entering, are advantages seldom offered to the public.

For a view of the premises apply to the Miller residing thereon; and for further particulars, and to treat for the same, to Mr. J. W. Puzey, Bishopston, or to Mr. Reason, auctioneer and appraiser, Shrivenham, Berks.

Letters, post paid, will be duly attended to.

North Mill for Sale. Oxford Journal 6th August 1825

There are two references to North Mill in 1849 with the death of two children, Anne Rogers who was buried on 21st April, age 8, and John Rogers buried on 10th April, age 4, both at St Mary's churchyard, Ashbury. They were both listed as from North Mill. We can only suggest that they were from the actual mill rather than the cottages, and can further speculate that dying so close together, that it was likely caused by a disease such as smallpox. There is a further link to the name Rogers and North Mill with an inquest that took place at the Crown Inn, Ashbury on 26th September 1860. A lady called Sarah Rogers was making her way from Kingston to North Mill to visit a friend and feeling unwell already, she became worse and died. (Swindon Adver 1st Oct 1860). The census of 1841 recorded several Rogers family in Ashbury and Kingston, so a common name at that time.

The Ashbury census return for 1851 recorded the names of three people who were listed as millers. We cannot be certain at the moment which of the three operated which mill, but by knowledge gained later, we can suggest that William Chivers, age 37, may have been the Miller at North Mill.

We have evidence of how North Mill was equipped by its description of being a Water Corn Mill, but we don't know yet if it was a single stone or multiple. But we do know that there were several cottages at the same location. As it is the intention to mark the existence of this site, it may be prudent to include who lived in the cottages.

1871 No 1 North Mill Cotts		
Fanny Ebsworth	63	
Thomas Chivers	34	Son
Ann Chivers	26	Son's wife
Charlotte Chivers	3	Daughter
Martha Chivers	1	Daughter

1871 No 2 North Mill Cotts

William Bunce 59  
Sarah Bunce 60 Wife  
Charles Bunce 14 Son  
Sarah Finch 9 Niece

1871 No 3 North Mill Cotts

Daniel Jones 61  
Keziah Jones 62 Wife

1881 No 1 North Mill Cotts

Thomas Chivers 44  
Ann Chivers 36 Wife  
Martha Chivers 11 Daughter  
Clara Chivers 9 Daughter  
Ellen Chivers 6 Daughter  
James Chivers 3 Son  
Thomas Chivers 1 Son

1881 No 2 North Mill Cotts

Charles Bunce 24  
Sarah Bunce 21 Wife  
William C 1 Son

1881. No 3 North Mill Cotts

Kessiah Jones 66  
Emanuel Page 42 Lodger

1891 North Mill Cotts

Jesse Derham	40	
Jane A	38	Wife
Charles E	18	Son
Herbert W	14	Son
Elizabeth J	13	Daughter
Joseph	11	Son
William G		Son

1891. North Mill Cotts

Jesse Hughes	34	
Ellan A	33	Wife
Florence E.J.	11	Daughter
Selina A	10	Daughter
Henry G	8	Son
Arthur J	6	Son
Charles B	1	Son

1901 North Mill Cotts

Henry Holmes	51	
Marah Holmes	47	Wife
Tryphinea Archer	8	Grand daughter

1901 North Mill Cotts

Daniel Iles	62	
Sarah Iles	60	Wife
Angel Iles	21	Son

1911. North Mill Cotts		
Edward Partridge	35	
Edith Annie Partridge	44	Wife
Henry Tom Pearce	13	Stepson
Ernest Robert Pearce	11	Stepson
Beatrice May	9	Daughter
Edward Holdsworth	7	Son
Reginald George	5	Son
Percy Charles	2	Son
Cecil William	2	Son
Edith Annie	1	Daughter

1911 North Mill Cotts		
William Perris	41	
Mary Ann Perris	31	Wife
Frederick William	15	Son

This is as far as we can go using the census records. However, the Partridge family had cause for pride when their Stepson, Private Henry Tom Pearce of the Gloucester Regiment, was awarded the Military Medal for bravery in carrying messages to the front while under shell fire. (Faringdon Adver 15th Sept 1917).

From an article that appeared in the newspaper in 1930, we learn that the North Mill Cottages were still standing and occupied. Thomas Daniels who occupied one of them, heard a roaring sound and went to investigate. He discovered that it was his own chimney on fire. Neighbours and the local policeman helped by forming a chain and pouring water down the chimney. The cottage had been recently newly thatched but damage to the roof was minimal. The article provided the information that the cottages belonged to the Craven

Estate, and that the occupiers of the other cottages were Messrs Partridge and Webb. (North Wilts Herald 14 Feb 1930).