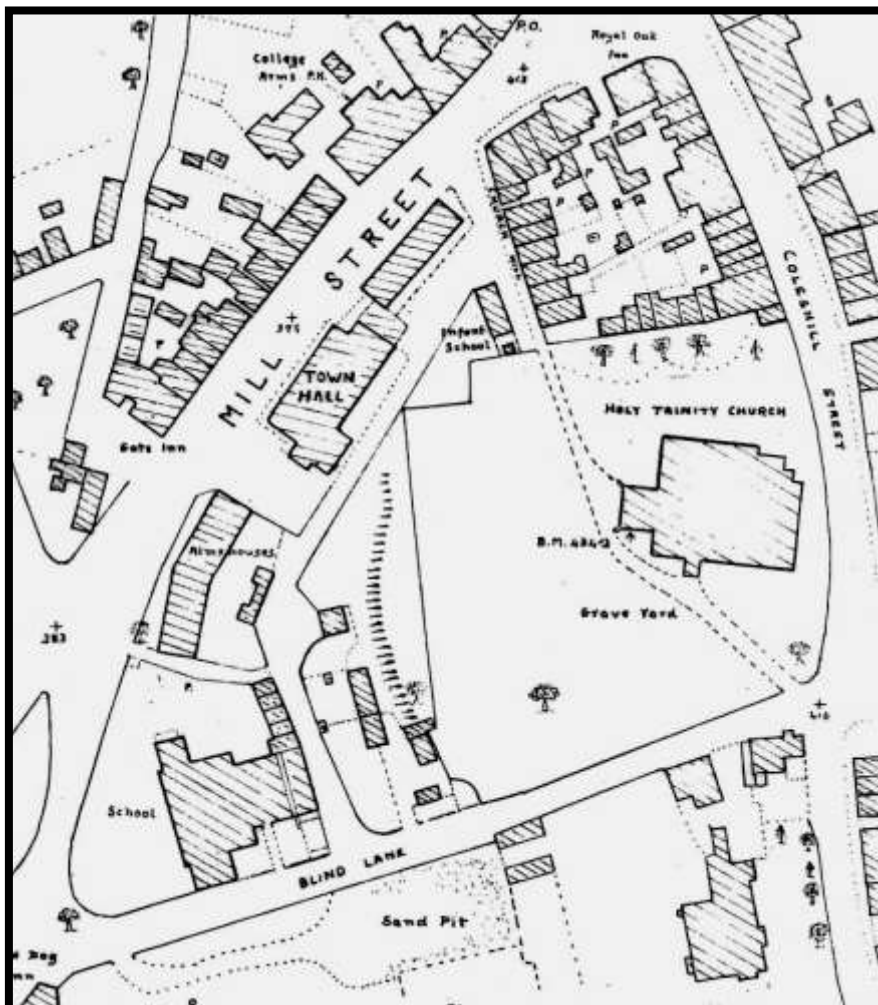


Church Hill, Coleshill Street and Mill Street

Part 7

Mill Street



1886 Survey Map

By Keith Jordan

(Member of the Sutton Coldfield Local History Research Group)

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MILL STREET

Mill Street is one of Sutton's oldest streets and it was named after the old Town Mill.

As previously mentioned under **PART 6 (Coleshill Street)**, the first detailed cartographic evidence for the town occurred in 1765. Andrew Hacket, of Moor Hall, a well known local personage, (a street was named after him) commissioned John Snape to undertake a survey of his land holdings. The resultant map showed that High Street, Coleshill Street and Mill Street were already established but, at the time, the town of Sutton comprised less than 100 houses.

On the west side of Mill Street there was an opening which gave onto two footpaths running west and north through the Ready Croft, the field then belonged to the property now known as Vesey House at Nos. 5-7 High Street.



Fig. 1 A section of John Snape's map of 1765. The original 'A Survey of the Lands of Andrew Hacket' is housed in the County Record Office at Warwick.

MILL STREET (Continued)

In 1792 the Corporation paved the streets of Sutton Coldfield with cobble stones at a cost of £350. Mill Street was extremely steep and narrow at the time and traffic had great difficulty in traversing the incline. Near the top, beside the old workhouse at the corner of Church Hill, was the town pump where residents used to fill their pails and stop and gossip. Idlers here were often entertained by the spectacle of coaches struggling to get up to the top of the hill and, even more, by coaches that nearly came to grief on the perilous descent.



Fig. 2 A typical stage coach of the period, laden with passengers.

Helen Holbeche, the younger sister of Sarah Holbeche, also kept a diary and she recalled, quite vividly, an incident which occurred on Mill Street;

“I do not remember from what place the coach called the ‘Red Rover’ came from or went to but it passed through Sutton Coldfield in the morning after breakfast and people used to go and see it on its perilous journey down the dreadfully steep hill out of the town. One morning when they were watching a cry arose, ‘Good God it’s over’. It was quite true, it swayed and swayed and eventually toppled over.”

Despite a period of sustained local opposition to the idea, a solution to the problem arrived through an Act of Parliament in 1807 when the first Turnpike routes through the parish of Sutton were established. Part of the works covered by the Act enabled Mill Street to be widened and a further Act allowed a reduction in the gradient. In 1824 a shallow cutting was formed at the top of the street and a new straight course was made at the bottom. This work encompassed the Dam, which was raised onto an

MILL STREET (Continued)

embankment by-passing the old line of the road, which previously had been along the former mill pool dam, now Lower Parade.

The Turnpike Trust was given the power to demolish any property which might cause an obstruction. On the left hand side of Mill Street travelling north, the landowner was Emmanuel College, Cambridge and the road works took in part of a garden and a stable. The Warden and Society owned most of the land on the other side of the street and this was where the most alterations were necessary. Richard Grange's house, Widow Farmer's outbuildings and Thomas Norris's pigsty were all demolished. Joseph Jones lost part of his garden and the strip of garden in front of the old workhouse was also taken. The land on this side of Mill Street was already higher than on the other side and the construction, added to the effect of centuries of traffic wearing into the soft sandstone, resulted in a low wall of rock half way up the hill, which can still be seen today. Some of the buildings in this area stood well above the road level, one of them being the policeman's house with the town jail adjoining. These properties could also be approached from Church Hill, which was then a twisting lane connecting Mill Street and Blind Lane (now Trinity Hill). This thoroughfare is still a public right-of-way and, if walked along, the changes to the levels may be viewed. The site that included the jail and the rocky bank was later chosen for building the Town Hall.

Sarah Holbeche, in her diary, included two comments regarding the work undertaken, as follows;

"The top of the town carried to the bottom, filling up the hollow and making a new road."

and

"Space gained by the blasting of rock away."

These improvements would certainly have made life much easier for travellers and local residents alike as, by 1827, twenty four stage coaches a day passed through the town as well as local traffic.

The mid-nineteenth century saw the beginnings of suburban development in Sutton, fuelled by commuter migration from industrial Birmingham. In 1853 Hacket Street (Station Street) was cut west of Mill Street across the Eade or Ready Croft and the land divided into building plots. Reddicroft and Lower Reddicroft were laid out along the line of the old field paths, with a new access cut from Mill Street below the 'Gate Inn', which had been established circa 1810.

As the population continued to grow in Sutton in the 1860's, so the demand for everyday goods and services increased. The High Street was the main focus for shopping at the time, however, things were about to change. The land, situated on the left hand side of the old Dam, which had been drained many years ago and had been forgotten and undeveloped, came suddenly into focus. The land in this area of Sutton formed part of the Somerville Estate and, in 1869, to encourage development it became the subject of a 94 year lease.

MILL STREET (Continued)

The scheme was almost instantly successful and new building began at the Mill Street end with the 'Museum Inn' opening in 1870. This was followed by a scattering of individual businesses and suddenly, by 1879, there was a little parade of shops, which inspired one enterprising tradesman to advertise his premises as being on 'The Parade'. This seemed to hit a chord and the following year the name had tacitly been agreed and later officially adopted. The building of further shops continued apace and by the end of the century no fewer than 46 had opened for business and, by 1910, the whole of 'The Parade' up to Manor Road had been fully developed.

Great celebrations took place in Mill Street and Lower Parade on Tuesday 22nd June 1897, on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Proceedings began quite early in the morning with the Lord Mayor cutting the first slice from the still-roasting ox at 9.00 am.

Later the mayor led a procession from the flag-bedecked Town Hall to the parish church, with brass bands playing and on the return journey several decorated carriages joined the line, with the town fire engine bringing up the rear.

Luckily the weather remained fine for the afternoon events in Sutton Park where, among other things, there was maypole dancing by children from various schools. A large firework display in the evening brought festivities to an exciting conclusion.



Fig. 3 Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations at the bottom of Mill Street, 1897

Sutton's Town Charter granted in 1528 also provided for two annual fairs to be held. Trinity Sunday, being the first Sunday after Pentecost, celebrated the Holy Trinity namely: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The second celebrated Saint Simon and Saint Jude in October.

Although not on the scale of the Nottingham Goose Fair, they were lively enough occasions where the local population could venture out and enjoy themselves. In earlier times sheep pens lined the streets and livestock were driven here and there. Horses trotted up and down the horse fair (Lower Parade) and booths and stalls were set up wherever space could be found, selling sweets and nuts. There were also sideshows with freaks and wild animals and stallholders shouting their wares.

MILL STREET (Continued)



Fig. 4 Trinity Monday procession in Mill Street, circa 1900.

On Thursday 24th September 1925 an incident occurred in Mill Street which made headlines in the local papers. A report in the Birmingham Daily Gazette the following day stated;

“Two men were injured and two other men had narrow escapes as a result of a steam wagon getting out of control and crashing into a shop at Sutton Coldfield yesterday.

The injured were Ernest Steel of 55, Farm Street, Hockley, the driver of the wagon and John Bentley of 9, Moorcroft Street, Holland Estate, Hollywood, near Oldham, an assistant.

They were both taken to the Cottage Hospital at Sutton Coldfield. Steel was suffering from a cut eye and slight concussion and Bentley from a bruised back.

The accident happened in the early hours of the morning. The wagon, which belonged to Mr A Richards, amusement provider of Hull, was travelling from Uttoxeter to Birmingham and was carrying a ‘Cake-Walk’ for use at one of Mr Pat Collins’ amusement fairs. There were four men travelling with it.

MILL STREET (Continued)

FILE NOTE: The 'Cake-Walk' was a very popular fairground and amusement attraction at the time. The mechanism consisted of undulating gangways and bridges driven by cranks. The driving belt was often connected to the organ in the centre of the carousel, which meant that a speed up of the music resulted in an increase in the speed of the ride, causing the participants to jerk about and some to lose their balance and stumble, much to the delight of the many onlookers!

Pat Collins owned a funfair and amusement attraction known as the 'Crystal Palace' in Sutton Park during this era and it was highly likely this was the destination of the 'Cake-Walk'.

When descending Mill Street, the steep incline, which leads down to the Parade, the brake went out of action and the wagon mounted the pavement and crashed into the fruiterer's shop belonging to Mr F Gibbins.

The brick wall and a door were smashed and the wagon's progress only arrested by a second brick wall at the rear of the front part of the shop. The roof of the driver's cabin was taken off bodily by the force of the impact. The interior of the shop was a mass of wreckage, bricks, mortar and splintered wood being piled up on the floor.

The driver of the wagon, Steel, in conversation in hospital with a Gazette representative, stated; "We were coming down the hill at a steady pace when the brake broke". Steel added; "This made the engine get out of control and we were in the shop before we knew where we were."

Fortunately, at the time of the accident the street, a narrow thoroughfare, was deserted. Mrs Asbury, of the 'Gate Inn', which adjoins Mr Gibbins' shop was awakened by the noise of the wagon coming down the hill but, when she heard the crash, she concluded the vehicle had merely hit the kerb.

The spectacle of the wagon half-way inside the shop attracted crowds of people to the scene the following day and nearly 12 hours elapsed before the wagon could be towed away.



Fig. 5 A typical steam wagon of the period, 1924.

MILL STREET (Continued)

Mrs A Bramich of Little Aston, stated in a newspaper article that;

“Next to the Royal Oak was Lee’s Cycle Shop. It was outside these premises that the buses from Walsall to Sutton Coldfield loaded and unloaded (1930).”



Fig. 6 Omnibus waiting at the terminus outside the ‘Royal Oak’ Hotel on the Sutton Coldfield to Walsall route, 1925.



Fig. 7 Another Trinity Day procession, with the Fire Brigade engine and firemen in their best uniforms, driving up Mill Street in the late 1920’s.

One of the more important changes to take place in Mill Street occurred in the 1930’s. The corner at the top of the street, where it joined Coleshill Street, had been in decline since the 1880’s and it had become the focus of attention for many of the ‘great and good’ in Sutton circles.

MILL STREET (Continued)

There was a very old public house named the 'Old Sun' and another one, far less old, but nevertheless looking very run down, called the 'Royal Oak'. There was also a scattering of small shops, with the remaining buildings consisting of a 'rabbit warren' of crowded and unsanitary tenement type houses.

It was suggested that, if the area could be opened up, it would provide a wonderful vista, in addition to drawing attention to the ancient church of Holy Trinity. Charles Bateman, a respected Architect with local connections, was commissioned to draw up plans and the Corporation set about acquiring the land. They were eventually successful in their endeavours and Vesey Memorial Garden was officially opened on the 5th June 1939.

For further details, please refer to **PART 2 (The 'Royal Oak' Public House)**, **PART 3 (The 'Old Sun' Public House)** and **PART 4 (Vesey Memorial Garden)**.



Fig. 8 Vesey Memorial Garden at the junction of Coleshill Street & Mill Street. Circa 2000.

In 1957, an event was organised which shone the spotlight firmly upon Sutton, in the shape of the World Scout Jamboree, which was held in Sutton Park. This was the 9th one to be held and it commemorated dual milestones, as it was both the 50th Anniversary of the Scouting Movement and the 100th Anniversary of the birth of the scouting's founder Robert Baden-Powell.

The Jamboree was spread out over twelve days and commenced on the 1st August, when the event was officially opened by Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, accompanied by the Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan.

Although the exact number attending was impossible to ascertain, it was estimated that there were approximately 33,000 participants from 85 different countries. In

MILL STREET (Continued)

addition, there were about 17,000 British Scouts who were camping on other sites spread out over a 15 mile radius of Sutton and who attended the daily organised events at the main campsite, making a total in the region of 50,000. A further 7,000 scouts were bussed in from various other locations around the country for day long visits.

Unfortunately, the weather could have been kinder to the participants, as it varied from oppressive summer heat wave to two days of torrential rainfall, which turned pathways into quagmires and flooded many campsites.



Fig. 9 Mill Street, as the crowds disperse, following the arrival of Queen Elizabeth when she came to visit the World Scout Jamboree being held in Sutton Park. 3rd August 1957.

In the early 1970's, several old cottages were demolished on the west side of Mill Street and by 1983 Emmanuel College, Cambridge, who had been the Landlords for hundreds of years, were anxious to re-develop the site and informal discussions began between Edwards, Bigwood & Bewlay, their appointed Agents and the Local Authority.

The site in question formed part of the Sutton Town Centre Conservation Area and, although Sutton Civic Society was largely in favour, concern had been growing among the remaining shopkeepers about what their future would hold.

MILL STREET (Continued)



Fig. 10 Looking up Mill Street towards the High Street, in the early 1980's.

In early 1985, Mrs Joyce Wilson of the Sutton Discount Centre, said that she was living week to week, although the agents added that there were still no specific plans for the site.

Eventually, Emmanuel College revealed that they had submitted a proposal to demolish an additional four properties in Mill Street, together with properties in Reddicroft and a further building at the top of High Street, to make way for three-storey office blocks.

In defence of the scheme, Councillor Andy Foster reported that the proposals wouldn't affect the conservation project. The various traders by 1987, however, had become more and more worried about their future, especially as an element of vandalism had started to creep into the area.

MILL STREET (Continued)

In the spring of the following year, however, F E Wood Developments, came to an agreement with Emmanuel College and Contracts were duly signed. In 1989, work was well under way on the £4.3M scheme, with completion during the summer of 1990. It was said, however, in some quarters that, along with the re-development, a part of historic Sutton had been lost forever.



Fig. 11 Mill Street, February 1989, with demolition work in progress.



Fig. 12 Mill Street, July 1990, after completion of the work.



Fig. 13 Mill Street, October 1989, with building work in progress.



Fig. 14 Mill Street, July 1990, after completion of the work.

BISHOP VESEY'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL

The original Grammar School, founded by Bishop Vesey in 1543, was a medieval building off Blind Lane. In 1727, Paul Lowe, was the incumbent Headmaster, who had previously been assistant master at King Edward's Grammar School in Birmingham. Evidence from the Warden and Society Minutes at the time showed that he was providing Greek and Latin to the children of the gentry as well as elementary education for a dozen other children in the parish. Around about the same time he came to the conclusion that now would be a good time for a new school building to be erected. This was especially important as the present schoolhouse was no longer fit for purpose and had reached a state of near collapse.

MILL STREET (Continued)

Mr Lowe approached the Warden and Society and asked for their assistance and an entry in the minutes for the year 1727 confirmed the schoolmaster had indeed requested the Corporation for help because school accommodation had become untenable. The Corporation generously agreed to finance the purchase of a suitable piece of land and to contribute up to £400 towards the cost of construction.

They also agreed to pay him a rent of £4 per annum for such part of the schoolhouse remaining and the land upon which the building stood.

Paul Lowe finally decided upon a parcel of land named 'Bull Croft', situated a little further out of town to the north on the Lichfield Road and a purchase was agreed. It would appear, however, that by the time matters had reached a legal conclusion, Mr Lowe had considerably overspent on the initial budget agreed upon with the Corporation. So much so that he was forced to find another £300 from his own pocket, in order to 'balance the books'.

The construction, when completed, formed the central Georgian portion of the imposing three storey building fronting onto Lichfield Road and which is now the Headmaster's private residence.

Shortly afterwards, the old school building off Mill Street was pulled down to make way for the eventual erection of a Workhouse.

UPPER SCHOOL

Primary schools, capable of accommodating all the children in the parish of Sutton Coldfield, opened their doors in 1826. At the time, however, there was no provision for secondary education, except for a sort of ad hoc school run by a Mr Percy.

It was not until the Warden and Society held a meeting on the 11th August 1834 that the situation was addressed further. They agreed to set up a committee for the purpose of deciding upon a site for the school overseen by Mr Percy, as the existing building was no longer fit for purpose. A follow up meeting on the 19th October saw plans for the new school "*against the church yard*" and it was resolved that "*a free class of twelve boys be elected*" to attend the school.

In 1845 Matthew Wilson, who was only 21 years old at the time, was appointed master of the Upper School. It was situated on the site now occupied by the 'Sons of Rest' building just off Mill Street, with the school master's house occupying a portion of the old workhouse. The 1851 Census Return shows Matthew Wilson still residing there. He was then 26 years of age, unmarried, and originated from Clent in Staffordshire. He employed a young house servant named Elizabeth Butter, who was 17 years of age and hailed from nearby Curdworth. Three boarders were also named, aged 8, 9 and 11.

MILL STREET (Continued)

The school seemed to have been popular with the local tradesmen and yeomen farmers, but the gentry on the Warden and Society had their doubts. On the 11th August 1851 they ordered that *“chanting of the liturgy at the Upper School should be discontinued.”*

Up until 1849 the Grammar School, which should perhaps have taken on the role of the Upper School, had been at a low ebb. That year a new headmaster was appointed in the form of Mr Josiah Wright and, the following year, he was elected as a member of the Warden and Society. In 1851, he was included as a member of the Schools Committee, which was instructed to report to the Corporation as to whether the present system of education in, or management of, the schools could be improved.

The following June, the Warden and Society resolved that the Corporation Upper School be abolished and that twenty of the most forward boys in the school be removed to a class to be provided by Mr Wright at the Grammar School. In 1853 the Upper School duly closed its doors, leaving the large schoolroom on Church Hill empty. At their meeting on the 14th March 1853, the Warden and Society agreed that Matthew Wilson, the now redundant master of the Upper School, could continue as a tenant in the schoolhouse. The decision to close the school caused great dissatisfaction in the town and, at a public inquiry into the governance of Sutton Coldfield in 1855, Matthew Wilson stated that;

“He offered a good English and commercial education and had been paid £48 a year by the Corporation for the instruction of twelve boys and an additional twenty boys came from all over the parish, paying ten shillings per quarter. When his school closed the Corporation paid £50 to Josiah Wright for the education of only twelve boys at the Grammar School, where the education was classical.”

Josiah Wright was not openly accused of corruptly using his position on the School Committee to his own advantage, but rumours were rife.

Matthew Wilson subsequently set up a private boarding school at ‘The Anchorage’, a large house on the Lichfield Road. Coincidentally, this was situated almost opposite the Grammar School run by Mr Wright. It must have been galling for him to look across the road in 1861 and see Matthew Wilson’s school flourishing with fourteen boarders and over twenty day boys, whilst his own school register indicated just over twenty names in total.

In 1863, however, a new headmaster was appointed and, by 1875, there were over 100 boys on the roll. Matthew Wilson’s school also thrived and moved to Ashfurlong Hall where it was described as ‘Ashfurlong Hall Classical College’.

The Upper School was demolished and, as mentioned previously, the site was eventually redeveloped as the ‘Sons of Rest’. The schoolmaster’s accommodation in the old workhouse was superseded by municipal offices.

MILL STREET (Continued)

THE WORKHOUSE

The provision of state-provided poor relief was crystallised in the Poor Relief Act of 1601, which gave parish officials the legal ability to collect money from rate payers to spend on poor relief for the sick, elderly and infirm – the ‘deserving’ poor.

Though they were termed ‘workhouses’, from the 1620’s, the early institutions that provided poor relief were, more often than not, non-residential, offering handouts in return for work. By the end of the 17th century, however, providing care under one roof was widely regarded as the most effective way of saving money and, as a result, the early 1700’s saw a flurry of workhouses opening.

In 1723, Sir Edward Knatchbull’s Workhouse Test Act won parliamentary approval. The act embodied the principle that the prospect of the workhouse should act as a deterrent and that relief should only be available to those desperate enough to accept its regime. Nevertheless, by the 1770’s the number of parish workhouses in England and Wales had soared to around 2,000.

An entry in the minutes of the Warden and Society in 1727, concerning the Old Grammar School off Mill Street, indicated that the schoolmaster had approached the Corporation, “*Because the accommodation in St. Mary’s Hall had become untenable.*” As a solution, the Warden and Society raised £1,200 from the sale of oak trees in Sutton Park. From this amount, they also intended to spend £400 on building a workhouse. This, however, was not built until 1739 and, because of the delay of over ten years, further capital had to be raised and this was achieved by selling all the timber in Hollyhurst for £1,250.

Unfortunately, no plans, details of costs or records of the eventual opening of the workhouse have survived. A plan dated 1811, however, indicated its position on the street.

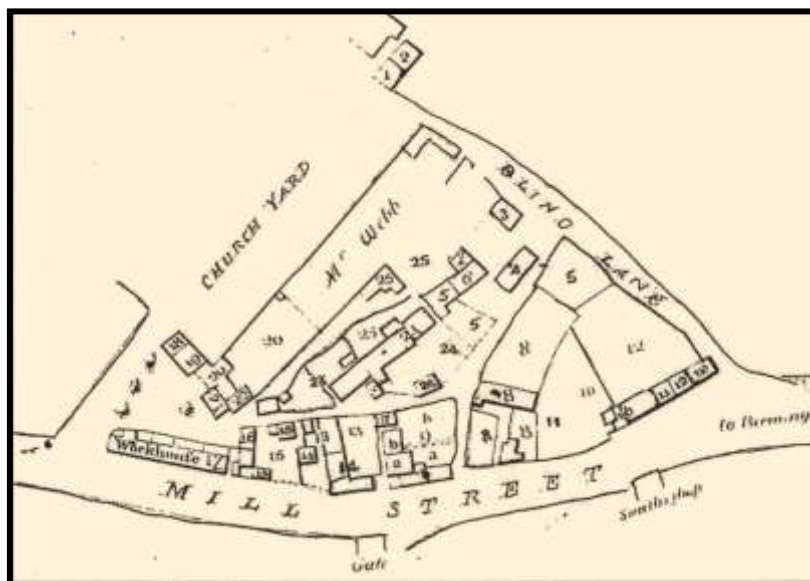


Fig. 15 Plan of Mill Street, from the 1811 Corporation Survey, showing the position of the Workhouse.

MILL STREET (Continued)

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 resulted in a change from individual parishes responsible for their own poor, to groups of parishes being joined together to form *Unions*, thus the parish of Sutton Coldfield became part of the Aston Poor Law Union. The Aston Union incorporated Bordesley, Deritend, Duddeston, Nechells, Castle Bromwich, Erdington, Sutton Coldfield, Curdworth (including Minworth) and Wishaw.

At its first meeting, the Aston Board of Guardians resolved that the inmates of Sutton's Workhouse should be transferred to the Union's Workhouse in Erdington. Shortly afterwards, it also agreed to sell Sutton's Workhouse and, on the 29th May 1837, an advertisement was duly placed in Aris's Birmingham Gazette, which said;

To be SOLD BY AUCTION, by MR WEBB, at the Three Tuns Inn, Sutton Coldfield on Wednesday next the 7th June, at four o'clock in the afternoon, subject to conditions as will be then produced and without reserve – all that large and spacious Freehold Building called the WORKHOUSE, situate in and fronting Mill Street, in the town of Sutton Coldfield, in the county of Warwick; together with the Buildings used as a Hearse House, Out-houses, Yard and appurtenances thereto belonging, containing in the whole about eight perches.

For further particulars application is requested to be made to Mr Pearson, Woodcock Street, Birmingham; Clerk to the Aston Union; to the Auctioneer, Castle Bromwich; or at the office of Messrs. Holbeche, Son and Willoughby, Sutton Coldfield.

The Workhouse was sold to Sir Francis Lawley of Canwell Hall for £735, plus auction expenses totalling £94 18s 0d. Eventually he sold this on to Sutton Corporation in exchange for land.

In March 1838, the Warden and Society requested that its School Committee should:

“Prepare plans for the conversion of the Workhouse into a house for the schoolmaster and for the proper application of the two tenements between the Workhouse and the Jail”.

A further conversion of the workhouse took place fifty years later. In 1888 the Borough Surveyor informed Sutton Council that the conversion of new offices was nearly complete and, in 1892, Richard Holbeche wrote in his diary that;

“The old workhouse has lately been very well restored and converted into municipal offices”.

These alterations were carried out under John Fletcher, the Sutton Coldfield Borough Surveyor, prior to his move to a similar post in Durban, South Africa.

MILL STREET (Continued)



Fig. 16 The old Workhouse in Mill Street, circa 2005.

MOOT HALLS AND TOWN HALL

At the very top of Mill Street stood the Town Hall, known in earlier times as the Moot Hall. The first Moot Hall, constructed in 1528 during Bishop Vesey's time, was situated on a site close to where Vesey Gardens is now. The Moot Hall was on the first floor of the stone building, with a dungeon and market house on the ground floor, where there was also an arcaded covered market. After nearly 150 years of use the building became unsafe when the first floor collapsed, due to sheer overcrowding on the occasion of a funeral dole being given out but, fortunately, no one was seriously injured.

In 1671, the Moot Hall was re-built on the same site, in a style similar to the old market hall in the centre of Warwick, although on a much smaller scale. It had rather more accommodation than the original and it is recorded that, in 1779, Mr Blick, who was the curate of Holy Trinity Parish Church, started a library on the premises and founded a Book Society.

MILL STREET (Continued)



Fig. 17 The Old Market Hall, Warwick. Built in 1670, it provided a large open plan Ground Floor with large arches all round for easy access for stallholders. The First Floor housed a number of meeting rooms and a small lock-up. The arches were glazed during the 1880's. It has now been adapted as a Museum.

Sarah Holbeche, in her diary, made the comment;

“The building contained two large rooms and a small one. Under the sloping roof at the entrance, the butter market was held (before my memory) and the town stocks were kept in the arcaded space beneath.”

One of the rooms was used as a council chamber and the Warden and Society held its monthly meetings there and the other housed the Reading Room and Library, which was managed by a Reading Room Committee. This room was upgraded by Richard Williamson, who was the Rector at Holy Trinity Parish Church from 1843 to 1850 and Warden of Sutton in 1848. He was mainly instrumental in founding what eventually became known as the Permanent Library and Institute. By the early 1850's, however, after 170 years of use, the Moot Hall was showing signs of collapse and the Warden and Society Minutes for 1854 refers to this matter. In April of that year it was resolved; *“That steps be taken for the necessary repairs”* and subsequently £100 was voted through the following month with this aim in mind. Unfortunately, this did not solve the problem as, two months later, a further £250 was spent.

MILL STREET (Continued)

This overall sum would have been the equivalent of about £40,000 today and so it was not an inconsiderable amount of money. Unfortunately, even this did not bring about the necessary solution, because the decision was taken to abandon the building towards the end of 1854.

As it happened, the Upper School in Church Hill closed in 1853 and the Warden and Society changed the venue of their meetings to a room in the schoolmaster's house in Mill Street. Matthew Wilson, the previous schoolmaster, was currently living there as a tenant, but space was still available and the Corporation had also earmarked another room in the building for the library. The Reading Room Committee, however, preferred to move into the Upper School and they duly leased the property from the Corporation and they remained there until towards the end of 1859, when the new Town Hall was completed.

At their October meeting in 1854 the Warden and Society agreed;

“That the School House, in which this meeting is now assembled, shall be named and called the Moot House until a new one is built.”

So began a period of five years when the Corporation did not have a permanent home.

The growing town needed a new and bigger building and so construction eventually commenced on Sutton's third Town Hall. Sarah Holbeche, in her diary, stated;

“Foundation of the town hall – first stone laid by Mrs Baron Webster on the site of the old jail, gardens and infants school, added to the space gained by the blasting of rock.”

The ceremony of laying the first stone took place at noon on Wednesday 25th August 1858, with a large number of spectators present. Mr Baron D Webster attended, as Warden, along with his wife, Anna Maria, who, a little later, was handed a trowel to undertake the actual laying of the stone. A glass vase, containing a record of the event, written on parchment, was then placed, together with specimens of the coins of the realm, in a cavity within the stone. After the ceremony, the Corporation entertained various dignitaries to a luncheon in the Public Reading Room and the workmen, employed in the erection of the building, sat down to a substantial dinner at the 'Three Tuns' Hotel.

The Architect of the new Town Hall, which was built in red brick, banded with white brick, with stone facings in the Italian Gothic style, was George Bidlake (1830-1892) of Wolverhampton and the Builder was Charles Burkitt also of Wolverhampton.

The Building was completed on the 27th September 1859 and invitations were duly sent out to various members of the public to attend the opening ceremony and to meet the Right Honourable Lord Leigh, the High Steward.

MILL STREET (Continued)

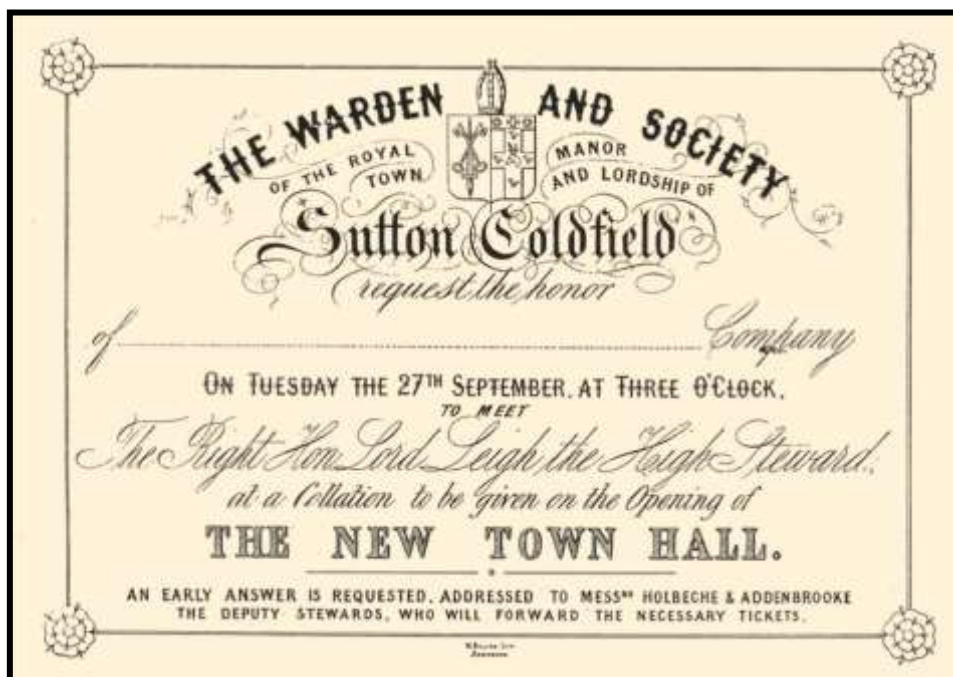


Fig. 18 An official Invitation to the opening of the Town Hall in Mill Street, 1859.

A medallion was also struck to commemorate the event and full details of this can be found on the Sutton Coldfield Local History Research website (www.sclhrg.org.uk).

It cost £4,500 to build and much of the funding came from the London and North Western Railway Company, which had agreed to build a railway from Birmingham to Lichfield, but later changed its mind. The Company had to pay £3,000 towards the cost, as compensation and to free it from its obligation.

The Town Hall was described in the official Guide to Sutton Coldfield as follows:-

“The Main Entrance is ornamented by a large stone shield. There is a separate entrance next to the tower for artistes. Arriving at the portico, visitors pass through massive oak doors into a Vestibule and thence into the Entrance Hall, which has the Mayor’s Reception Room on the right and the Gentleman’s Cloak Room on the left.

The Reception Room accommodates from 70-80 persons and is well lighted by windows bearing the Borough, Vesey and County Arms. The swing doors leading into this room are of oak and other features of the apartment are the handsome fireplace, the very fine ceiling and the floor of polished oak.

The Entrance Hall leads to a spacious Crush Hall, which runs the entire length of the building and has communication with the Council House at its southern end. Large oak swing doors lead from this apartment to the Assembly Room, which is 78’ long, 42’ 9” wide and 30’ high. There is accommodation here for 650 persons. The theatre seats nearest the platform being beautifully upholstered in velvet. The visitor will note also the large proscenium arch framing the platform, which is fitted in the most up-to-date

MILL STREET (Continued)

manner with a drop curtain in velvet and four good scenes. At the rear of the platform are dressing rooms for ladies and gentlemen and a Green Room. The floor of the Assembly Room is of polished oak and the apartment is well lighted from both sides from windows near the ceiling. Rooms used for the preparation of refreshments, washing up after supper parties etc., are provided within easy reach of either the Supper Room or the Assembly Room. The ventilation and heating arrangements throughout the entire building are excellent. The Architect was Mr A R Mayston A.R.I.B.A., of London, who was assisted by the Borough Surveyor. The contractor was Mr T Elvins of Soho Hill, Birmingham."



**Fig. 19 Sutton Town Hall, Mill Street. Note the fine clock tower.
Circa early 1900's.**

The building was used for meetings and concerts and also contained a reading room, which could be used for the benefit of its citizens for a fee. This was confirmed by Peers' 1870 'Guide to Sutton', which commented that;

"One of the rooms in the Town Hall was fitted out as a reading room and small library, where all who wish may, for ten shillings a year, enjoy all the privileges, alternatively a penny a visit for strangers."

In July 1876 an issue of the Sutton Coldfield News contained a letter from 'Grumbler', who stated;

"We want more than public house knowledge and we have an idea that a portion of the town's wealth should be expended in a free library and thus be the means of elevating us from our present low standard."

MILL STREET (Continued)

The cost would, unfortunately, have been prohibitive to the class of people 'Grumbler' was speaking out for. Ten shillings, at the time, would have been the equivalent to £58 today.

Francis James Chavasse (1846-1922) who lived at Wylde Green House and later became Bishop of Liverpool, started to write a diary on the 27th September 1862, on his 16th birthday. One entry for October reads;

"Went to the Reading Room with Vincent Holbeche and stayed all evening."

Francis must have been admitted to the Reading Room as Holbeche's guest as, two months later on 31st December, he records;

"Mama has very kindly subscribed to Sutton Reading Room for me, so I shall be able to go there now."

Based purely on the date, this gift was highly likely to have been a Christmas present. The ten shillings subscription would not have been a problem for the wealthy Chavasse family, in complete contrast to people like 'Grumbler'.

Sutton's collection of antique halberds and other ancient weapons, used by the old town watchmen, were also stored in the recently built Town Hall. Some of these weapons, it is thought, may date from the time of Henry VIII. On Trinity Monday, at the time of the annual fair, these halberds were taken down and carried by eight of the town's oldest men, in procession. They were led by the Town Sergeant-at-Mace, who dressed in a curious green velvet costume and carried the silver mace of the Warden.

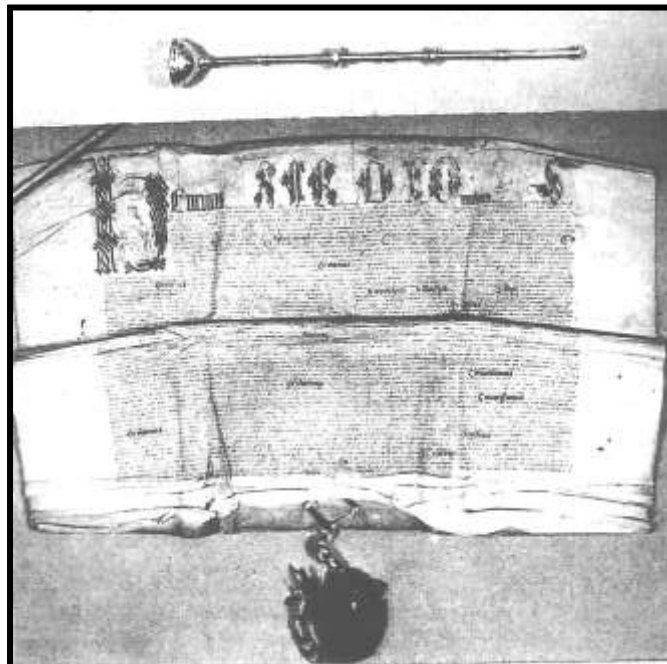


Fig. 20 Silver Mace of the Corporation and the Charter of 1528. The mace has been in use since 1590 and bears the inscriptions; 'Gardianus et Societas Ville Regie de Sutton Colfede' and 'John Harman Fecit Hoc .Ano. Dom. 1590'.

MILL STREET (Continued)

The ancient stocks were also kept on the premises. These can now be found in Sutton Coldfield Library, where they are kept in a presentation glass case.

In his 'History of Sutton Coldfield' the Reverend W K Riland Bedford stated;

"Since 1859 the Town Hall was improved and enlarged and connected to the old Workhouse, which was devoted to official purposes.

The confined nature of the site presented many difficulties, which was successfully overcome by the Borough Surveyor. The room adjoining the entrance is still retained as a subscription library and reading room, while what was formerly the Justice Room is now fitted up for the Council Chamber.

The Bench of Justice (what we would call a Magistrates Court today) and the cells for prisoners were moved to Station Street and located in a separate building, which opened in 1888."

In 1887, at a Meeting of the General Quarter Sessions for the County, it was ordered that a Police Station and house should be provided for Sutton Coldfield Borough. At the same time the Borough Council required a Justices' Room and offices as part and parcel of the proposed Police Station. This was agreed and the premises were built during the period 1887 and 1888. By the Local Government Act 1888, the Police Station, including the Justices' Room and offices, became vested in the Warwickshire County Council.



Fig. 21 Police Station, including the Magistrates Court and Cells, circa 1890. The site was used from 1888 until approximately 1960. It was finally demolished in 1967.

MILL STREET (Continued)

By the end of the century, after being in use for just 40 years and with Sutton's population continuing to grow rapidly, the Town Hall and the adjacent municipal offices, situated in the converted workhouse building, were proving to be inadequate for the requirements of administering the Borough's affairs once again.

At a meeting of the Council, held on the 1st January 1902, a decision was made to purchase the Sutton Coldfield Sanatorium (originally the Royal Hotel) with the view to converting the building into new council offices. It was duly purchased from the Charity Commissioners for £9,000, barely a month later, on the 13th February.

The following year, on the 11th February 1903, the Town Hall was sold to the Sutton Coldfield Masonic Hall Company for £4,150 and it became the Masonic Hall for the Freemasons (Warden Lodge No. 794 and Hertford Lodge No. 3208). The old workhouse and jail, where the cell still remains in the sub-basement, were renovated and subsequently turned into Municipal Offices. The Main Hall served variously as the Magistrates' Court, a cinema named Rosella's (Sutton's first picture house), Sutton Fire Station, a bank and a tax office.

Prior to the Sutton Coldfield Masonic Hall Company purchasing the Town Hall, they used the building themselves for their meetings, very often alternating between it and the Royal Hotel in High Street. From 1895 until 1903, however, they held their meetings solely at the Town Hall, in one of the rooms in the Mayor's Parlour.

Currently 19 Masonic Lodges and Orders hold their meetings in the Masonic premises and incomes from five commercial tenants contribute to the up-keep of the Grade II listed building.

When the town hall and municipal offices were moved from Mill Street to King Edward Square in 1902, no provision was made for a reading room and library in the newly adapted building. It later came to light that the contents had been stored in the Town Clerk's cellar for, in 1937, a newspaper article stated;

"During recent alterations in the council house, a collection of books was found in the basement, which was part of the town library founded 100 years ago by the Rector Dr. Williamson."

The Public Libraries Act of 1850-1866 empowered local authorities to provide public libraries but, for a long time the Sutton Coldfield Council declined to take advantage of the Act. When it finally adopted the Act in 1936, it was one of the last authorities in England to do so. Sutton's first public Library opened in a converted Wesleyan Church on The Parade on the 6th March 1937.

Disaster struck the Town Hall in 1970, when it was discovered that part of the clock tower was in an unsafe condition.

MILL STREET (Continued)

Rather than perform a sympathetic restoration the decision was taken to brutally ‘chop-off’ the top section of the tower completely, leaving the building looking rather squat and out of proportion. Yet another example of how Sutton’s heritage has gradually been slipping away.



Fig. 22 Masonic Hall, Mill Street, with its Italian Gothic design, minus the clock tower. September 2007.

THE ALMSHOUSES

When Sutton Coldfield became a self-governing town in 1528, by virtue of a Charter granted by King Henry VIII, one of the duties of the new Corporation was to provide almshouses for the aged poor. Prior to 1528, when Sutton was a feudal manor, alms were distributed to the poor by the officers of the Manorial Court.

Almshouses were duly built and flourished for a period of time. It seemed, however, at some later stage, that the viewpoint changed amongst the general population, which made folk prefer to stay in their own cottages rather than depend upon charity.

New legislation in the 18th century required that a Workhouse be erected in Sutton and, on the 6th March 1837, the minutes of the Warden and Society recorded;

“That the almshouses belonging to this Parish (which had become ruinous and much decayed) should be taken down and all the timber, bricks and materials which should arise therefrom should be applied towards the cost of building a Workhouse, where the old school stood.”

MILL STREET (Continued)

There remained some provision for the elderly infirm at a parish house at 'The Blabbs' at the bottom of Reddicap Hill, but in the 1780's the Warden and Society came under pressure to provide something a little better.

After a long legal process in the Court of Chancery, a scheme for the proper management of the affairs of the town was put into operation in 1824. Included in this scheme was the provision of ten almshouses. Due to an increase in Sutton's population by this time, a housing shortage had arisen and the aged poor were more than happy to take advantage of the accommodation on offer.

In 1826, the almshouses were erected on a site adjacent to the new Town School and one of the tenants of the old cottages previously there actually moved into the newly erected homes. These have long been demolished and the site is now occupied by Mill Street Car Park.

The occupants of the almshouses received a grant of fifteen shillings a month, if single, or twenty five shillings for a married couple. The white-washed almshouses were built towards the bottom of Mill Street but, as Sutton was a large parish, with a scattered population, a further ten almshouses were built, with the help of local benefactors, at Mere Green, Boldmere and Walmley.

Whenever a vacancy occurred, notices were put up on the doors of the Town Hall and the Parish Church and frequent references can be found in the minutes of the Warden and Society to candidates being 'elected' to an almshouse.

In 1885, Sutton received a new Charter giving the Corporation at the time different powers, but taking away the management of charitable foundations. A new body was set up, which took on responsibility for the almshouses, which was called the Sutton Coldfield Municipal Charities.

In 'Memories of Sutton Coldfield' by an old resident, the almshouses in the 1920's were described, as follows;

"The properties were very ancient and, on the few occasions I visited any of the occupants, which I did sometimes to shop for them, they seemed drab and cold and I was not impressed with the accommodation and facilities, nevertheless, the Trustees of the Municipal Charities did their best to help the aged live and enjoy their independence fairly comfortably and, being local inhabitants, most had relatives to visit them and help with the gardens."

Eventually, additional almshouses with superior accommodation, at a site in Fox Hollies Road, Walmley, began to replace the old ones situated at Mill Street, Mere Green and Boldmere. The organisation, which is now known as Sutton Coldfield Charitable Trust, is still flourishing today and is an independent charity providing much needed funding to a host of deserving causes in Sutton Coldfield.

MILL STREET (Continued)



Fig. 23 The Sutton Almshouses in Mill Street can be seen on the right hand side of the photograph, circa 1870.

TOWN SCHOOL

William Felton was aged 33 when he opened his school, which was in the front room of a house in High Street next to the Royal Hotel. Sarah Holbeche, in her diary, commented;

“In the bay window to the right, Felton began his school in 1823. Having lost his leg (we don’t know how) he began to teach and so successfully that he soon had more boys than the room would hold.”

He went up to Birmingham to learn Dr. Bell’s method of education and teaching and returned six weeks later fully qualified. Dr. Andrew Bell’s method originated in Madras, India, in 1789. Compared to the standards of today, it sounds bizarre, as effectively, the children taught each other.

Previously, the master had ‘heard’ all the lessons; when one child was ‘saying’ his lessons, the rest sat idly by awaiting their turn. Under Dr. Bell’s plan, the children were arranged in divisions and one of them taught. When one read the others listened and the next boy in the group corrected any errors. The lessons were always very short and each child prepared his work without a single mistake. The aim was for the children to ‘get everything perfect’. Records were kept of the work covered and the pupil’s progress was written in a monthly report. They would have been taught reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, morality and religion.

MILL STREET (Continued)

Meanwhile, in 1822, the Warden and Society had identified a site for the construction of a new Town School. T & J Bateman, a firm of Birmingham architects, was commissioned to draw up appropriate plans. The only suitable Corporation owned ground available was a triangular piece at the bottom of Mill Street. Unfortunately, this was already occupied by five old cottages with gardens, which would first have to be demolished. The tenants were duly approached by the Corporation and they were asked if they were willing to relinquish their leases. The five residents were Widow Wilkins, Mr Joseph James, Mr James Bonell, Widow Yates and Mr John Heath. Although the tenants were given notice to quit by Michelmas 1823, they were still in possession in 1825. In September of that year they were therefore interviewed again. James Bonell, who had the largest piece of ground had already left. Joseph James, who had the smallest cottage was prepared to move, as was John Heath. Widow Wilkins agreed to move if she could have one of the new almshouses, but Widow Yates would not leave. She had three gardens, a house and a shoemaker's shop. Whether she was eventually persuaded to move by a more generous offer or by a Court Order is not known, but the school was built on the site the following year.

Sarah Holbeche, in her diary, commented upon William Felton, as follows;

"He had to leave (Whitehouse's, as it then was) and was allowed the use of the Town Hall. He then went to Birmingham to learn Dr. Bell's plan, returned in six weeks and was elected first Master of the new Corporation School in January 1826."

The Town Hall mentioned by Sarah Holbeche would have been the second Moot Hall situated near to the top of Mill Street.

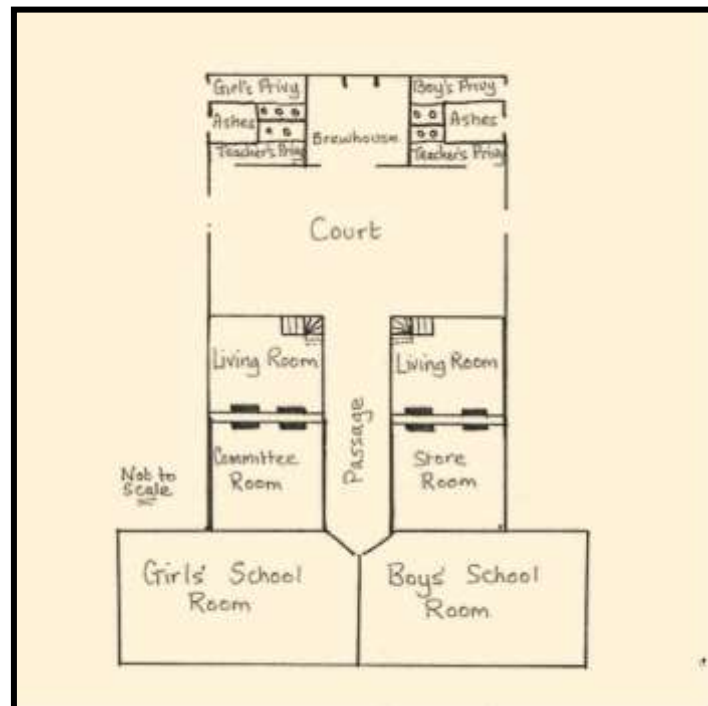


Fig. 24 A Sketch Plan of the interior of the Town School by Janet Jordan, with schoolmaster's accommodation, circa 1826.

MILL STREET (Continued)

One of Felton's 'perks' was the use of the living quarters provided to the rear of the classrooms. This consisted of two rooms on the Ground Floor, together with sleeping accommodation upstairs.

'One-legged' Felton, as he was known by some of the boys, must have found it difficult looking after young energetic schoolchildren with his disability but somehow he seemed to have coped well enough.

On the 24th October 1829 he married Miss Ann Parnell from Nuneaton, when the couple were in their forties, and the following year they celebrated the birth of a son, which they named William, after his father.

William Felton continued to teach at the Town School until he retired in 1859.

Richard Holbeche, in his diary, could just remember him at church services in the 1850's, when he stated;

"There sat the Blue Coat boys in tiers. A blue curtain separated us from them and it was quite pleasant to hear the knocks that one-legged Mr Felton administered."

The school uniform for the boys consisted of blue cloth jackets with silver buttons and corduroy trousers, with a shirt, stockings and shoes. On their heads they wore woollen caps with a tuft on top. The girls wore blue cotton frocks, straw bonnets ribboned with blue, shoes, stockings and a cloak.

The school initially had an annual allowance from the Corporation of £2 per boy and £1 11s 6d for a girl. By 1834, the total annual sum for clothing had increased to £429. Upper-class Suttonians tended to agree with a later comment by the Rector that the majority of the inhabitants sent their children to school, not for the free education, but for the free set of clothes!



Fig. 25 The Town School, Mill Street from a stereoscopic photograph taken by William Grundy 1858.

MILL STREET (Continued)

The Town School stood for over 40 years until 1870 when, due to the growing numbers of pupils, it was re-built in the same Italian Gothic style as the new Town Hall had been built, some ten years previously.

It is known from The 'Wardens' Calender for 1899 by George Sidwell that Miss Sarah Brentnall was mistress of the Town Girl's School in 1886.

The school was extended in 1888 and again in 1902, when cottages were demolished in Trinity Hill to provide for a playground. In 1907 a new Boy's School was built on land once used as a sand quarry on the corner of Trinity Hill and Victoria Road. Finally, in 1915, a manual training school for boys was erected above the playground on Trinity Hill.

Sutton Coldfield Baptist Church, founded in 1908, was situated just across the street in Victoria Road and therefore in close proximity to the Town School. That site is now occupied by a branch of McDonalds and associated offices. Following continued growth over the years the church decided that a move to larger premises would serve its best interests and agreed the old school building would be more than adequate for its needs.

In 1985 therefore they re-located, following the completion of all necessary renovation work. The Town School for Boys building is now the Baptist Church Hall, the playground is now the Baptist Church Car Park and the manual training school is now occupied by the Baptist Church itself.



Fig. 26 The Town School at the bottom of Mill Street, 1939. Note the red brick and stone facings, similar in style to that of the Town Hall.

MILL STREET (Continued)

THE TOWN CORN MILL

The first water mill to be built in Sutton Coldfield belonged to the Lord of the Manor and was situated near where the 'Knot Inn' once stood (previously the 'Dog Inn') in the Lower Parade. A stone faced dam was erected spanning the valley below the parish church and this held back the waters of the Ebrook creating a mill pool that extended over an area now occupied by the Gracechurch Shopping Centre and the railway embankment. Through an arch in the dam water from the Ebrook flowed which, in turn, drove the Town Mill.

Prehistoric travellers made pathways through the countryside finding the firmest routes to cross marshy valleys. One such valley was the one formed by the Ebrook, the bottom of which would have consisted of a morass of bog and quicksand. It was the millers' responsibility to maintain the road on its embankment, together with the bridge over the Ebrook.

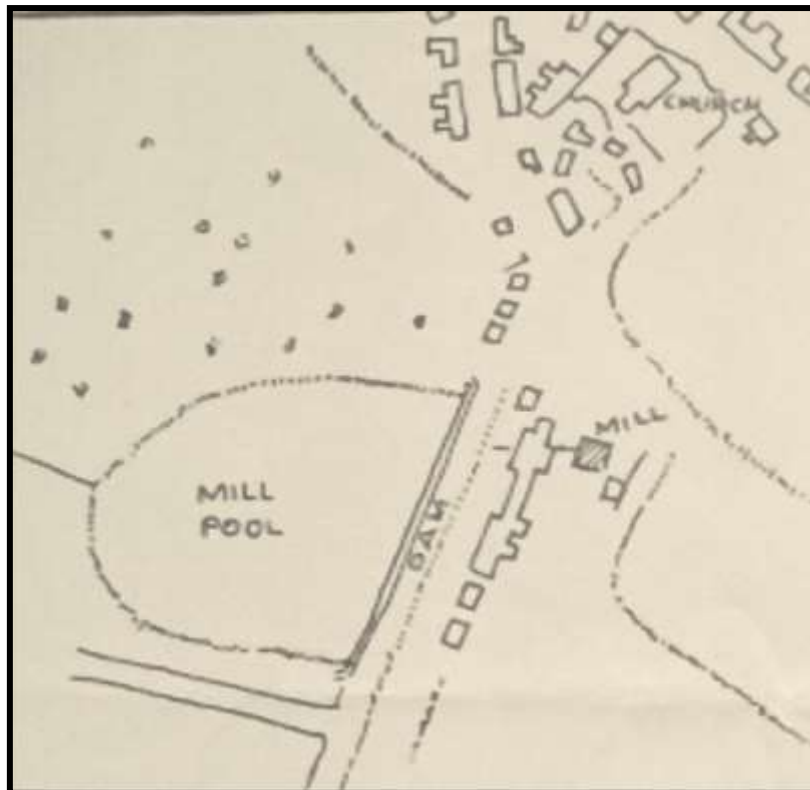


Fig. 27 A Sketch Plan of the Mill Pool, Dam and Corn Mill at the bottom of Mill Street, by K J Williams.

Documents show that the mill was working in the year 1126, when the Manor of Sutton was exchanged by King Henry I with the Earl Roger for the Manor of Hockham and Langham, in the county of Rutland. The exchange included '*One water mill with suits*'. In addition, the tenants of Sutton were compelled to use the Lord of the Manor's mill exclusively.

MILL STREET (Continued)

A document, dated 1309, confirmed that, in the interim period, nothing much had changed and the Lord's monopoly continued, as can be deduced by the following clause:-

'and none of these customary tenants used to grind his corn but at the Lord's water mill, so long as the mill was in repair for grinding unless they first delivered the whole of the corn to the Lord's miller.'

If the tenants did not abide by this condition they would forfeit the whole of their corn. They were also required to ensure the banks of the mill pool remained in good repair, or be fined.

Sir William Dugdale in his 'Antiquities of Warwickshire' in 1651 in citing customs of the manor stated;

'Tradition maintained that from the time of King Athelstan (circa 895-939) there had been a water mill in the Manor of Sutton.'

This would pre-date the Domesday Survey and indicate the mill was in existence at least 200 years before the earliest documented date of 1126.

Sutton ceased to be a feudal manor in 1528, when it became a self-governing town. The new Corporation wished to show the town's gratitude to Bishop Vesey for all his benefactions and so, in 1533, they gave the profitable Manor Mills to Thomas Keen, who had married Vesey's niece Jane Gibbons.

John Leland, Chaplain to King Henry VIII, travelled throughout England recording antiquarian lore and was given the title of 'King's Antiquary'. He visited Sutton in 1535 and recorded in his itinerary for the area;

"Stone dam with arch through which water flowed and drove a mill. Mill and pond pertained to the Manor of Sutton in 1298 and 1317".

The Sutton Court Leet continued to issue by-laws to protect the monopoly of the Manor Mills and penalising anyone who sent their corn to any other mill. In 1582, Thomas Keen, a descendant of the earlier Thomas, sold the mill to his relative Thomas Gibbons for £320.

On the 24th July 1668, Sutton was hit by a storm of such ferocity that, within a short period of time, streams were turned into raging torrents. Longmoor Brook, swollen by floodwater and with no dam at either Longmoor or what is now called Powell's Pool to impede its progress, rushed on to Wyndley Pool. With the mounting press of water, both Bracebridge and Wyndley dams gave way releasing a deluge that resulted in the Town Dam being overwhelmed.

MILL STREET (Continued)

The Parish Register recorded the incident, as follows:-

“There was a great fflood of water so great here at Sutton Pools that it fflooded over the stone wall at the further end of the dam by reason of a sudden rayne which did break down winly poole dam and also brassbridg pool dam.”

The mill was put out of action and property in the town was damaged. The damage in the town was put right by ‘*The voluntary subscription of the gentlemen*’. Entries in the Parish Register at the time show that the repairs to the mill were also undertaken, but it never fully recovered, although it continued to operate for at least another ten years. The damage to the dam at Wyndley was also made good and the mill remained in operation as a blade mill, then as a rolling mill and lastly as a saw mill, until 1961, when the buildings were finally demolished.

John Wood was the miller at the time of the flood and he was succeeded by John Power and he was also the tenant of New Hall Mill until 1711, which then became the town’s principal corn mill.

Around 1765 the mill pool was drained and converted to meadowland and towards the end of the 18th century the old mill was pulled down. The dam had a low stone parapet and Zachariah Twamley recalled that; “*When I was a schoolboy (1780’s) I have had many a run along the top of it.*” The stone dam was removed in 1827 and the new replacement road continued to be called the ‘Dam’ and only much later was changed to the ‘Parade’.

A considerable amount of material must have been quarried from Mill Street, where the car park is situated now and no doubt the remainder came from Trinity Hill. The completed scheme would have presented a barren and exposed appearance and so the Turnpike Trust planted a row of lime trees which, in time, would soften the landscape, in addition to their roots helping to stabilise the embankment. Some of those trees are still in existence today along South Parade, where they provide welcome shade to the people waiting for buses on hot sunny days.



Fig. 28 A sketch of Sutton in 1863 by Miss Agnes Bracken.

MILL STREET (Continued)

Although the Longmoor Brook and the Ebrook both flowed into the town pool, it appears likely that, at an early stage after the failure of the Town Pool Dam, the flow from the Longmoor Brook either reverted back to its original course, or was specifically channelled, along the southern edge of the town pool. This was possibly augmented by a penstock/overflow discharge point at the southern end of the Town Pool Dam, in order to reduce the flow passing through the vicinity of the destroyed town mill. Evidently, the continued flow of the Ebrook through the site of the old mill pool during the development of the town in the Victorian period, began to be choked with sewage and rubbish and gave rise to dreadful smells. Proper sewers were laid in 1890 and the stream bed tidied up, but the South Parade area and the meadow on the site of the former mill pool were still liable to flooding, a problem not resolved until the Ebrook was diverted into the Longmoor Brook on the west side of what is now Clifton Road.

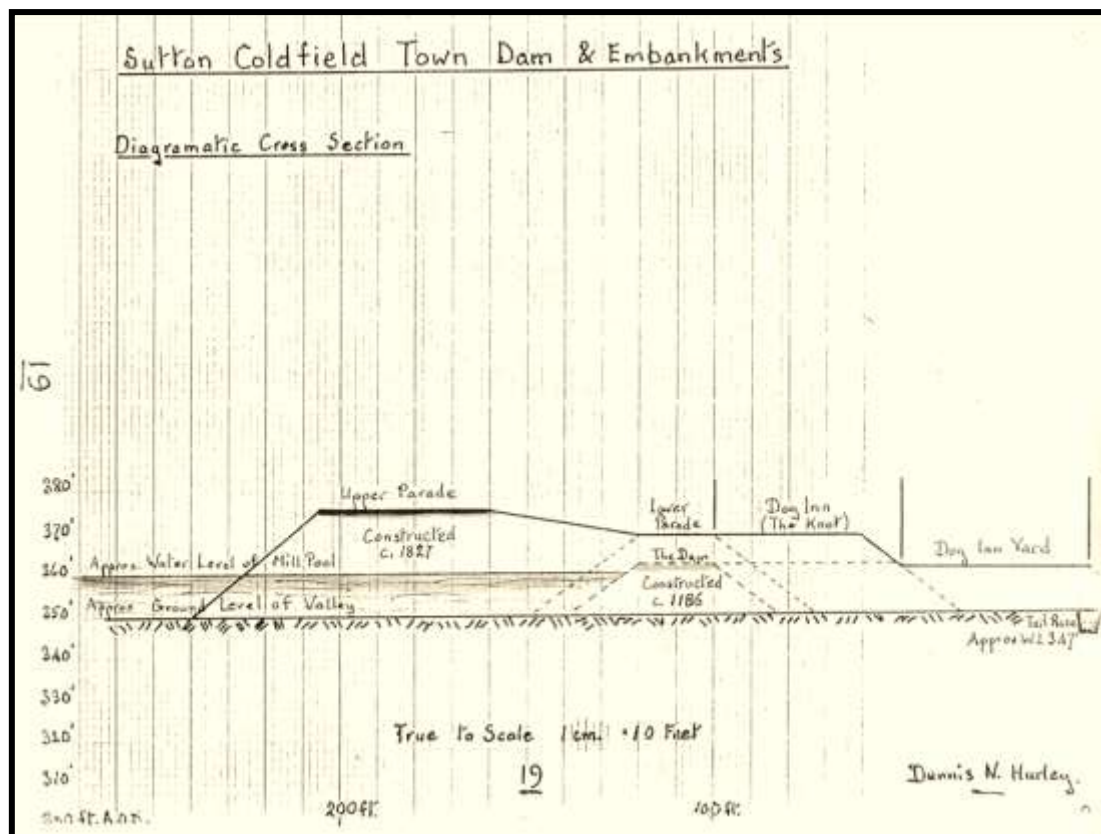


Fig. 29 Cross Section Drawing through the area of what is now the Parade, showing the original height of the Dam and the water level of the mill pool, circa 1186 and later alterations which took place in 1827, by Dennis Hurley, April 1994.

MILL STREET (Continued)



Fig. 30 The Dam in 1865, showing how the road had been straightened and the incline up Mill Street reduced. The area on the right hand side is now known as Lower Parade.

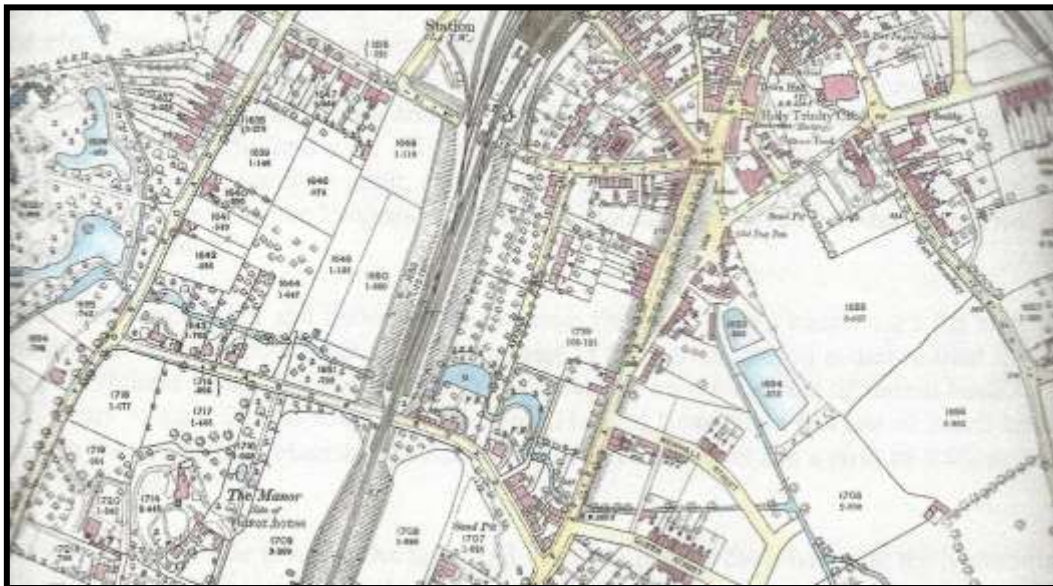


Fig. 31 1886 Ordnance Survey Map of Sutton (Coloured) by Alan Godfrey, showing the revised paths of the Longmoor Brook and the Ebrook south of the town and where they converge on the park side of Clifton Road.

DRUNKENNESS IN SUTTON COLDFIELD

After the railway extension to Sutton was completed in 1862, the town changed from a rather sleepy backwater to one of bustling activity.

Unfortunately, at the time, due to an inadequate water supply and the lack of any system for the removal of sewage water, the population sought out alcohol and particularly beer as being their preferred drink. It should be born in mind that Sutton

MILL STREET (Continued)

did not benefit from a tapped water supply until 1892 and had to rely on the town water pumps. In addition, life could be extremely harsh in mid-Victorian times and people drank to alleviate their everyday cares and woes, even if the benefits gained lasted for short periods of time only.

Because of this and the large increase in the number of visitors to the town during the 1870's and 1880's, drunkenness became a serious problem. Public houses provided ideal meeting places and Sutton had no shortage of them. Amongst the choices on offer were the 'Station Inn', 'Railway Tavern', 'Gate Inn', 'Dog Inn', 'Museum Inn', 'Emmanuel College Arms', 'Royal Oak Hotel' and 'Old Sun Inn', to name but a few. Three of the ones mentioned were situated in Mill Street.

Visitors from other neighbouring towns began using the railway more and more and brought added pressure to Sutton. Passengers alighting from the trains would very often pass from public house to public house and, in a relatively short space of time, the streets were lined with noisy, excited, half-intoxicated people who would be shouting, brawling and swearing.

Even Richard Holbeche, in his diary, was moved to mention the situation with an entry which stated;

"Next comes the dear old church. The churchyard was very badly kept and sheep grazed it. It was unenclosed and the Birmingham roughs used to sit and make a noise about Mary Ashford's grave during service."

Bearing in mind that Richard was talking about the Sunday morning church service and that individuals were already the 'worst for wear' does tend to highlight the problem Sutton had.

There would, of course, have been winners as well as losers and certain members of the town would have appreciated the fact that there was lots of money being generated.

On Easter Monday 1878, it was reported that;

'Trainloads of visitors descended on Sutton and transformed the quiet orderly streets into a den of rioting, blasphemy, obscenity and drunkenness. People initially went to visit Sutton Park but, when it began to rain, they searched for shelter and liqueur. It was estimated that 30,000 visitors came to the town that day and only two policemen were on duty.'

To make matters worse, drinking hours at the time were very generous and one could enter a public house on weekdays between 6.00 am and 10.00 pm. Sundays were slightly more restricted being between 12.30 and 2.30 pm and 6.00 pm to 10.00 pm.

Doctors did not help the situation either, as very often alcohol was prescribed as a sort of 'cure-all' remedy!

MILL STREET (Continued)

Behind the scenes, however, individuals were working hard to improve matters. In August 1877 the Independent Order of Good Templars organised a group of like-minded people in Sutton Coldfield and their first meeting took place in premises in Station Street, which was then one of the main drinking areas. Their main aim was to teach the young not to go down the same path as their parents.

The 'Good Templars' targeted children in school, rather than adults and they tried to teach them sobriety. The idea was to foster the frequenting of coffee houses instead of public houses.

In June 1878 a meeting was held at the Town Hall in Mill Street with the intention of the establishment of a Cocoa House and Temperance Society, which would be *'far better for the women and children.'* The idea, however, proved rather hard to get across and it was not until December 1879 that a Coffee House was opened in Mill Street.

The hours of opening were from 6.00 am to 9.00 am, noon to 2.00 pm and 4.00 to 10 pm. This then gave customers a direct choice between going into a pub or a coffee house. It advertised coffee & cocoa at 1d per cup, 2 slices of bread & butter at 1d. and also buttered buns.

By July 1880 the Temperance Society and Church no longer ran the coffee house themselves but allowed it to become a commercial enterprise. It was named the Sutton Coldfield and Erdington Coffee House Company Limited, later changed to the North Warwickshire Coffee House Company Limited.

The following year it moved its business from Mill Street to High Street, to be nearer to the Midland Railway Station. The property had a coffee room, ladies room, smoking/ reading room and bagatelle room, in addition to a room for draughts and chess and a spacious room at the rear for larger parties.

Gradually there began to be a decline in drunkenness in the town, perhaps in part to the advent of coffee houses but also perhaps due to an increased police presence, resulting in more fines and convictions.

PUBLIC HOUSES IN MILL STREET

The 'Museum Inn'

The 'Museum Inn', at the bottom of Mill Street, was the first building to be built on what was known then as the 'Dam', in 1870. It derived its name from the large collection of stuffed birds and animals which adorned the inside of the pub. The property survived for just over 100 years before being demolished to make way for the Gracechurch Shopping Centre in the early 1970's.

Someone stated that the building was numbered 1 Mill Street, but I do not think this can be correct. Looking south down Mill Street from the top of the hill, where it joins the High Street, the odd numbers were always on the left hand side of the street and

MILL STREET (Continued)

the even numbers on the right hand side. The 'Royal Oak' Hotel, almost on the corner where it joins Coleshill Street, for instance, was No. 3.



Fig. 32 The Museum Public House at the bottom of Mill Street and the commencement of the Parade in 1904.

The 'Gate' Inn

The 'Gate' Inn, which was established circa 1810, can still be found in the same position at the bottom of Mill Street today. Its name was changed at some point to 'The Case is Altered' but it has since reverted back to its original name.



Fig. 33 The 'Gate Inn', Mill Street, January 2000.

MILL STREET (Continued)

Emmanuel College Arms

In 1764, there was a public house in Mill Street named the 'Bull's Head'. It formed part of the Sutton Coldfield Estate of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. In 1594, when the college purchased the estate, it was listed as a private house. By 1764 the 'Bull's Head, an ancient timber-framed building, was in a poor state of repair. The Master and Fellows of Emmanuel College renewed the lease of their Sutton Coldfield Estate to a Mr John Kendrick, on condition he maintained the estate in good order. Amongst other things, they stipulated that he:

"Pull down the 'Bull's Head' and the adjoining tenement and, within two years, erect on the site a new house of the length of 40 feet fronting onto the street and of the width of 22 feet, with five bedrooms, all of good quality materials and all at the cost of at least £150."

In 1824, the new building was referred to in the Corn Rent Schedule as belonging to Emmanuel College and tenanted by Robert Betts and further described as 'The Sun and yards'. This would account for another inn in nearby Coleshill Street being known as the 'Old Sun' Inn. Robert Betts continued to run the hostelry for a long period of time, as his name appeared in the Sutton Coldfield Poor Rate Book for the year 1845 and it was only in 1850 that his name was superseded by his Widow Martha Betts.

It is difficult to ascertain who took over from Martha in the interim years and it was not until 1866 that the name of Miss Elizabeth Brockas can positively be associated with the inn.

The Sutton Coldfield Directory for 1868 confirmed that Robert Green had become Landlord and he brought stability to the position, as the Census Return for 1881, indicated that a Robert Green, aged 52 and from Birmingham was still the Landlord. He was married to Elizabeth, aged 47, from Leamington in Warwickshire. They had four children namely; Florence, aged 16, Alfred, aged 13, Percy, aged 11 and Ellen, aged 8. With the exception of Florence, who had been born in Birmingham, the other children were from Sutton Coldfield and all attended school. Robert Green employed two servants, Harriet Howells, aged 20, from Worcestershire and George Yeomans, aged 19, who was a stable boy.

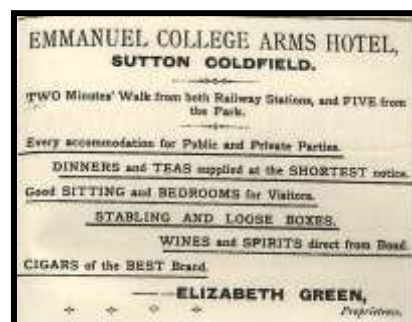


Fig. 34 Advertisement for the Emmanuel College Arms Hotel, 1890.

MILL STREET (Continued)

By the time the 1891 Census Return was compiled, Robert Green had died and his wife Elizabeth had taken over the running of the inn, now called the 'Emmanuel College Hotel'. Alfred had moved away, but her other three children were still living with her and probably assisting with the business. Mary Lawson, aged 18, from Bridgetown in Staffordshire was employed as a general domestic servant.

The Census Return for 1901, showed that a Mrs Emily Price had become the Landlord. She was a Widow, aged 49, from Wolverhampton. Living with her were her three children; Amy, aged 20, a Teacher, Tommy, aged 15 and Ethel, aged 9, all from Wolverhampton.

The Emmanuel College Arms was eventually demolished in 1908 and a new Post Office was built on the site, which opened for business a year later.

In 1828 Emmanuel College received a figure of £189 12s 0d in compensation from the Turnpike Commissioners for a Blacksmith's Shop and Land at the bottom of Mill Street, to enable the Commissioners to complete a road widening scheme.



Fig. 35 Mill Street 1890. The 'Emmanuel College Arms' was situated further down the road, adjacent to the street lamp.

MILL STREET (Continued)

'Royal Oak' Hotel

For full information on the 'Royal Oak' Hotel, please refer to **PART 2** of this research.



Fig. 36 High Street, looking towards the top of Mill Street, with the 'Royal Oak' on the left hand side and Reuben Willett's Buttery & Creamery shop on the right, 1902.

SHOPS & SHOPKEEPERS IN MILL STREET

During most of the 1800's, any shops in Sutton were centred in the High Street. However, Mill Street was populated by working class families living in close proximity to one another in unhygienic conditions. The Census Return for 1841 showed that tradesmen, with a multiplicity of skills, resided there. For example, there was a Tailor, a Cordwainer, a Cooper, a Wire Drawer, a Saw Maker, a Bricklayer, a Skinner, a Shoemaker, a Wheelwright and a Button Maker's Apprentice, to name but a few. In addition, there was a fair scattering of labourers, agricultural labourers and female servants mixed in. In fact, on the 1861 Census Return, of the 20 houses listed, nearly 50 of the occupiers were born in Ireland, mostly labourers, increasingly drawn to the area by the prospect of work on the new branch line being built between Birmingham New Street and Sutton.

During the latter part of the century, however, things gradually changed as more and more shopkeepers began to open up for trade and by the 1920's most of Mill Street was taken up by shops, with accommodation above.

MILL STREET (Continued)

High Street also retained its shops, but a local resident described it at the time as;

“A thriving area, considered to be used exclusively by the gentry of Four Oaks and the shops catered mainly for monied people.”

An excellent review of this period was written under ‘Memories of Sutton Coldfield’ by an Old Resident. This was produced in the 1980’s and is an absolute mine of information about the shops in Sutton Coldfield and the people who ran them. Although it described Sutton a mere one hundred years ago, it seems a different age entirely to what we are used to today.

As this part of my research relates to Mill Street only, I have discounted all other information contained therein as it is not relevant to the matter in hand, but it would form the basis of a very interesting article in its own right at a later date.

The ‘Old Resident’s’ story commenced at the very top of Mill Street, on the corner where it merges with Coleshill Street.

NO. 1 MILL STREET.

“Situated on the corner, opposite the Y.M.C.A., was a shop with green painted windows obliterating vision inside, with living accommodation over. This was occupied by Mr White and used as a store, Mr White being an Agent for Brooke Bonds Tea. He could often be seen loading up his red, solid tyred, Trojan van outside the premises, before setting off on his rounds.”

FILE NOTE: Mr William Henry White lived with his wife Mrs Alice White and son Alfred Edward.

Much later on a Mr W Atkins Wood of Wylde Green, writing in the Sutton Observer, also remembered Mr White and gave a very similar description of the gentleman in question, as follows:

“Mr White, before he became blind, was an agent for Brooke Bonds Tea and drove a red Trojan van with solid rubber tyres distributing tea, which he stored in his premises, the windows of which were painted over with what looked like green paint.”

NO. 3 MILL STREET.

“Next door stood the ‘Royal Oak’ Hotel, with its old stabling and yard. The licensee, Mr Stanier, was a smart looking man, with a well groomed moustache. Mr & Mrs Stanier had several daughters and a son, all of whom I knew quite well, in fact, he named me ‘Wee Willy Woodbine’ because of my size.”

FILE NOTE: Mr James Stanier, his wife Mrs Clara Stanier and later their son George Edward Stanier, ran the ‘Royal Oak’ from 1919 until it was demolished to make way for Vesey Memorial Garden in 1939.

MILL STREET (Continued)

NOS. 5-7 MILL STREET.

“Adjoining their yard was a cycle shop owned by Mr Lee, who lived in Rectory Road. They had several sons, two of whom I knew and often met at Sunday School or Church.”

FILE NOTE: Mr Benjamin William Lee in the Sutton Coldfield Directory was mentioned as a Cycle Dealer and later on as a Cycle Maker & Agent. His wife was Mrs Mabel Nellie Lee.

NO. 9 MILL STREET.

“Beyond stood a second-hand clothes shop and two cottages, all at a level high above the steep incline of Mill Street, approached by four or five steps built in blue bricks, with the wooden barrier railing continuing to the corner of the roadway leading to the Church, known as Church Hill, where more steps and blue brick paving, with similar barrier rail extended in front of eight cottages, right up to the Churchyard. The approach road from Mill Street still exists, with the wide stone steps leading to Holy Trinity Parish Church, and the old Sunday School building, which has now been re-built, is used today by the Sons of Rest, for a Club Room.”

FILE NOTE: The shop was run by Mrs Mabel Pindard who, in the Sutton Coldfield Directory, was also described as a Wardrobe Dealer.



Fig. 37 Mill Street in 1890, showing the reduced level of the road and the steps and barriers referred to.

MILL STREET (Continued)

“Proceeding down Mill Street, the old Masonic Hall buildings have hardly changed, except for the removal of the Clock Tower. At the time of my story, part was used as a Masonic Temple. The area used as a cinema having been altered and occupied by Banks, Estate Agents, Solicitors and other offices. The remaining part of the building, occupied by many different companies, frequently changed around.

The Car Park area to the cinema and the old Fire Station extended as far as the old stone and brick Almshouses, each with a small front garden facing Mill Street and a garden area at the rear.”

FILE NOTE: When the Borough of Sutton Coldfield was established in 1886, the new corporation had to perform wider duties, one of them being the establishment of a fire brigade. Alderman Ansell chaired a public meeting on the 27th July and announced that the Borough Council had voted to give £350 to start a volunteer fire brigade. The fifty people who attended the meeting agreed to go ahead with this scheme and twenty seven attendees volunteered to be firemen. Shortly afterwards, on the 30th July, the committee chose twelve of the volunteers and six supernumerary firemen. The volunteers all lived in the town and were mostly tradesmen, plumbers, carpenters, wood turners, gas fitters etc. They elected a captain, who turned out to be Charles Browning, the station master of Sutton Town Station in Midland Drive. In June the following year the voluntary force had taken delivery of a new fire engine and uniforms. The fire engine was housed in a garage beneath the town hall in Mill Street.



Fig. 38 The Sutton Coldfield Volunteer Fire Brigade, with their engine, outside the town hall entrance to the garage in Mill Street, circa 1890.

NO. 2 MILL STREET.

“The shops on the right-hand side of Mill Street, commencing at the top of the hill, opposite the Banks and extending to Dr. Evans’ surgery were mainly converted residences. The first was Perkins Ladies Outfitters and Haberdashery.”

FILE NOTE: The shop was run by Mr Arthur Watson Perkins, designated a Draper in the Sutton Coldfield Directory for 1924.

MILL STREET (Continued)

NO. 4 MILL STREET.

“This was followed by Tailbys the Property Repairers and Painters, with large double doors leading to their yard, residence and workshop.”

FILE NOTE: The business was run by Mr Sidney Joseph Tailby. He was married to Mrs Edith Amelia Tailby.

NO. 6 MILL STREET

“Then followed two old houses, one with the front converted to a small Jewellers and Watch Repairers.”

FILE NOTE: The full title, according to the Sutton Coldfield Directory for 1924, was the Royal Sutton Watch & Clock Repair Company.

NO. 8 MILL STREET

“Next door were Bird & Raine, Soft Furnishings & Upholsterers.”

FILE NOTE: Mr Raine lived at 34 Amesbury Road, Moseley. No mention was made of Mr Bird, so it may be assumed that he had either left the firm or was deceased.

NO. 10 MILL STREET

“Then followed Nickols the Butcher. Nickols had a large yard and outbuildings and most of the meat he sold was killed on the premises and I recall the constant bellowing of the cattle and bleating of the sheep during the night from animals awaiting slaughter, sounds quite audible, even though we lived quite a distance away.”

FILE NOTE: The shop was run by Mr Thomas Henry Nickols.

NOS. 12 & 14 MILL STREET

“Adjoining the gateway to the butcher’s yard, was the residence of the Durants, with their Newsagents and Bookshop.”

FILE NOTE: The shop was run by Mr William John Durant and Sarah Elizabeth Durant. The business had originally been founded in 1845 by Mr S Brentnall. It is interesting to note that included in their advertisement they highlighted the fact that they sold ‘The History of Sutton Coldfield’ by the Rev. W K R Bedford M.A., (45 years rector) bound in cloth 1/-. They also delivered Newspapers, Periodicals and Magazines to all parts of Sutton, as well as selling Fancy and Plain Stationery by the best makers, a good variety of Picture Books and a selection of Local Post Cards. Mr Durant was also the Sutton correspondent of the Sutton Coldfield and Erdington Times (part of the Birmingham News Group) and took in Advertisements for the paper.

MILL STREET (Continued)

NO. 16 MILL STREET

“Neales Stores and Adcocks Tobacconists and Hairdressers Shop followed.”

FILE NOTE: The Sutton Coldfield Directory for 1924 describes the business as Neale's Tea Stores Limited, Grocers and Tea Dealers.

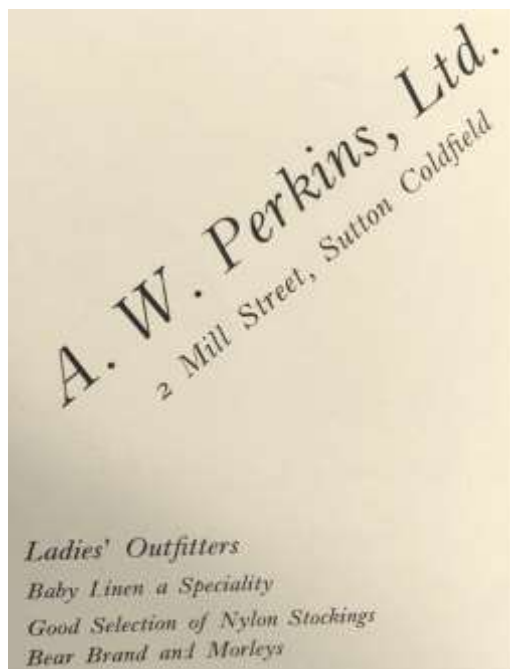


Fig. 39 Advertisements for A W Perkins Limited, S J Tailby, Sutton Watch & Clock Repair Depot and T H & L M Nickols.

MILL STREET (Continued)

NO. 18 MILL STREET

“Mr & Mrs Adcock had two daughters and two sons. Robert and Dudley were my constant playmates. The latter, who was a little younger, was a born comedian and kept us amused often with his comical antics.”

FILE NOTE: The shop was run by Mr James Adcock.

NO. 20 MILL STREET

“We come now to Grannie Middleman’s Sweet Shop, a favourite haunt of most children. It was a real old fashioned tuck-shop, up three or four stone steps. The tiny window added to its quaintness and she was a real grannie, loved by all the kids. I remember her for a short time only before the shop was eventually taken over by Mr Walmsley.”

FILE NOTE: The shop was run by Mrs Sarah Middleman. Another source stated that “All we children derived a lot of pleasure when we visited to spend our half-pennies and pennies on a Saturday. It also added character to the area.” The Register of Electors for 1924 mentioned a change of ownership to Mr Joseph Arthur Walmsley and his wife Louise May Walmsley.

NOS 20-24, 30, & 32 MILL STREET

“The next four shops were merely small cottages, converted for use as shops. Two were occupied by Mrs Gibbins senior, dealing in second hand furniture, one by Coles the Leather Worker and Shoe Repairer and the fourth by Gibbins as a Greengrocery Store.”

FILE NOTE: 20-24 Mill Street was run by Mr William Gibbins and his wife Martha, whose address was given as 160 Lichfield Road, Aston.

30 Mill Street was run by Mr Thomas Coles, who also noted as a Saddler.

32 Mill Street was run by Mr Frederick Gibbins.

NO. 36 MILL STREET

“Adjoining the latter and on the corner of the roadway leading to the Reddicroft was the ‘Gate’ Inn, unchanged today, and on the opposite side of the roadway was Wares Limited for unlimited wares, a hardware shop from which I usually bought the paraffin for our lighting and the glass chimneys for the lamps.”

NO. 38 MILL STREET

“Next door, right opposite the old almshouses stood Mrs Frank Bennett’s exclusive large double-fronted Ladies Lingerie, Satin and Silk Shop, called ‘Paris House’. Its windows displayed models and garments, all highly attractive.”

MILL STREET (Continued)



Fig. 40 Top Photo – William Gibbins ran a shop in Mill Street, which he kept until his death in 1927. The shop sold antiques and had a cottage and stabling for a pony and trap at the rear.

Fig. 41 Bottom Photo – Frederick Gibbins, the son of William Gibbins. He ran a Greengrocers shop just down Mill Street from his father. It was said that the quality of his produce was renowned. Frederick also went into partnership with a local builder with whom he built many houses in the neighbourhood, including the development of the Old Rectory site. The photograph shows Frederick Gibbins on his wedding day, circa 1919.

MILL STREET (Continued)



Fig. 42 'Paris House,' High Class Ladies Outfitters, Mill Street, circa 1930's.


FILE NOTE: Another source stated that 'Paris House' was possibly the most exclusive ladies' wear and lingerie shop in town.

Telephone 2553

Mrs. Frank Bennett Ltd.

Ladies' and Children's
High - Class Outfitters

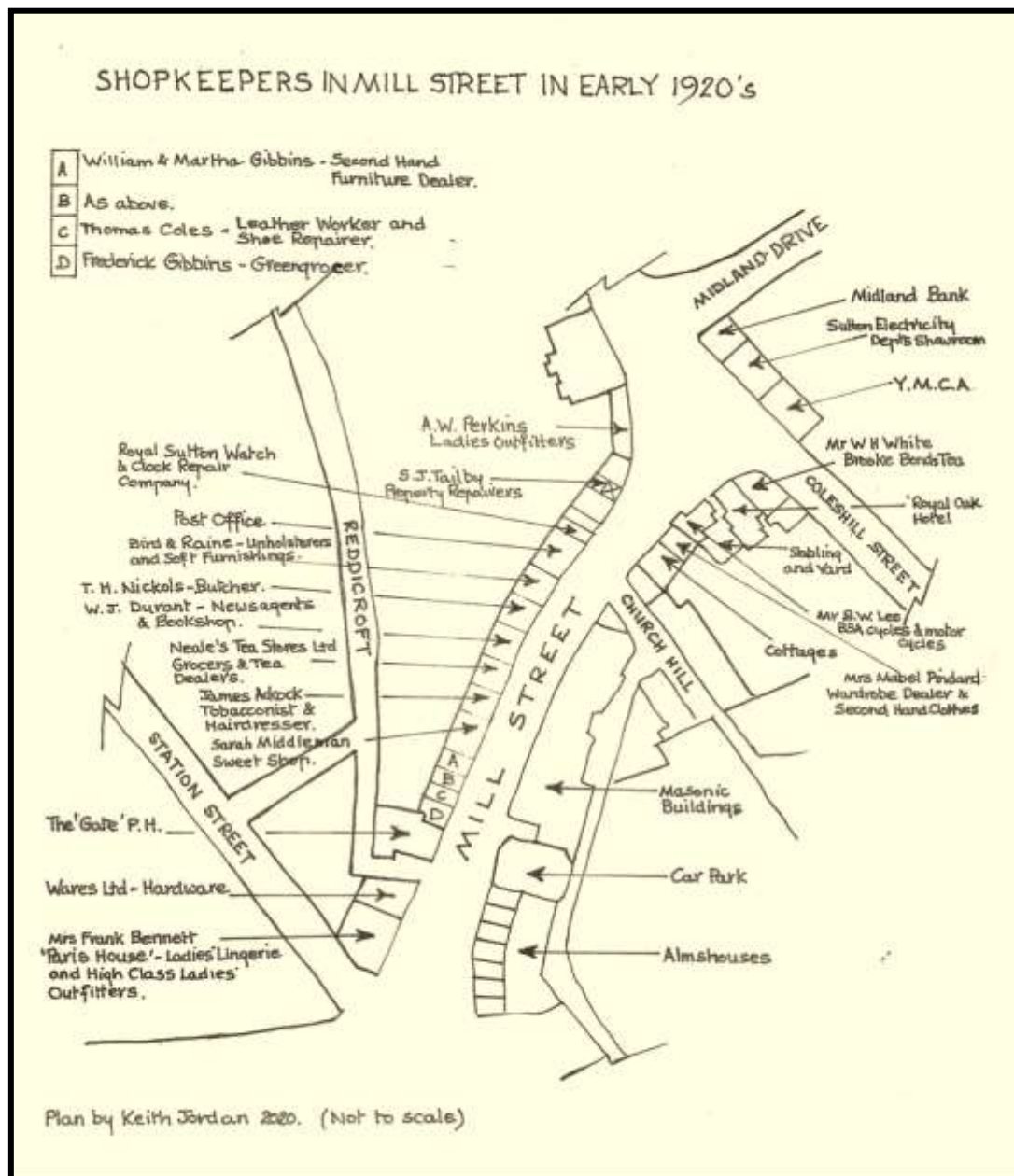
PARIS HOUSE . Sutton Coldfield.



Frocks . . Alexon, Coats and Suits, Telemac, Matland Knitwear.
Lingerie . Smedleys, Kayser Bondor, Chilprufe.
Corsetry . English Rose, La Gant, Gossard.
Hosiery . . Aristoc, Berkshire, Charnot.
Children's Lindsay, Maid Frocks, Kamella and Chilprufe.

Fig. 43 Advertisement in the Sutton Coldfield Directory.

MILL STREET (Continued)



**Fig. 44 Details of the various shopkeepers trading in Mill Street in the early 1920's.
Plan by Keith Jordan 2020 (not to scale).**

POST OFFICE

Another building worth mentioning was the Post Office in Mill Street. Mr W Atkins Wood of Wylde Green stated;

“One can clearly see the Post Office on the right hand side at the top of Mill Street. This adjoined Dr. Evans's surgery and residence. The Postmaster at the time was Mr H R Bromwich, although he never remembered himself the Post Office there in his time, the shop in question being run by a Mr Perkins for ladies' wear and haberdashery.”

MILL STREET (Continued)



Fig. 45 Post Office at the top of Mill Street, circa 1900.

The Post Office Mr Wood may have remembered would have been the later one, situated slightly further down the hill in what was a very attractive building built in red brick with white stone facings in around 1909. Sue Bates in her book *'Sutton Coldfield – A Pictorial History'* commented that during the 1920's and 30's telegraph boys on bicycles could be seen coming and going, collecting and delivering messages.

The Postmaster he referred to was Mr Harry Richard Bromwich who, on the 1901 Census Return, was aged 36 and married to Sarah Bromwich, who originated from Wybunbury in Cheshire. At the time, he was employing a General Domestic Servant from Stratford-upon-Avon named Gertrude Inns, a single girl, aged 16.

Harry had taken over the business from his father, who had been the Postmaster before him. The 1881 Census Return had mentioned him as being aged 44, a local man from Sutton Coldfield. He was married to Annie Bromwich, also the same age, who had been born in Nottinghamshire. They had two children, Harry Richard Bromwich, aged 16 at the time, and his younger brother John W Bromwich, aged 10 and attending school. They had a lodger named Clara Downes, aged 30, from Middlesex, who worked for them as a Telegraphist. There was also a Domestic Servant named Annie Mills, aged 18, from Derby.

MILL STREET (Continued)



Fig. 46 The renovated Post Office building can be seen on the right hand side of the photograph. July 1990.

Between 1989 and 1990 this whole side of Mill Street was re-developed but, possibly because of its design features, this particular property was retained and enhanced and can still be seen today.

Unfortunately, Sutton no longer has a Post Office building, only a counter tucked away at the rear of a W H Smith store in the Gracechurch Centre.

NEWSPAPER OFFICE

During the latter part of the 1800's, Mill Street had a Newspaper Office situated at the top of Mill Street. The Reverend W K Riland Bedford in his book commented;

“In 1869 a weekly newspaper entitled the Sutton Coldfield and Erdington News was started by a few gentlemen, who thought that a local organ of public opinion would be useful. This newspaper, after a chequered existence of about 15 years passed into the hands of the proprietor of the Sutton Coldfield and Erdington Times which published every Thursday under the banner of the Warwickshire Herald.”

MILL STREET (Continued)



Fig. 47 The 'Sutton Coldfield & Erdington Times' office in Mill Street. 1890.

Finally, some among us may remember Thomas Barratt, who opened the first Radio & Electrical Shop in Sutton during the 1920's in the Parade and moved to the former gas showrooms in Mill Street in the 1930's. The building was demolished in 1969, a year after the photograph was taken.



Fig. 48 T. Barratt & Co., Radio and Electrical Shop, at the bottom of Mill Street, 1968.

MILL STREET (Continued)



Fig. 49 Looking up Mill Street towards the High Street, May 1968.

From this research, we have seen that Mill Street has undergone several major changes during its lifetime. In the early 1800's the street was a densely populated area which changed, towards the latter end of the century, to a trading area with multiple shopkeepers offering their wares and services. This changed again towards the end of the 20th century to a street mainly centred upon commerce with an office based culture.

With the exception of the never-ending traffic, Mill Street is a much quieter thoroughfare than before, as there is no private housing or shops. The only pedestrians being mainly younger people, making their way to and from the Parade and Gracechurch Shopping Centre from Bishop Vesey Grammar School and Sutton Coldfield College, situated further up the Lichfield Road.

MILL STREET (Continued)

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Photographs

(The following photographs are all taken from Keith Jordan's Photographic Collection)

- Fig. 2** A typical stage coach of the period, laden with passengers.
Fig. 3 Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations at the bottom of Mill Street, 1897
Fig. 4 Trinity Monday procession in Mill Street, circa 1900.
Fig. 6 Omnibus waiting at the terminus outside the 'Royal Oak' Hotel on the Sutton Coldfield to Walsall route, 1925.
Fig. 7 Another Trinity Day procession, with the Fire Brigade engine and firemen in their best uniforms, driving up Mill Street in the late 1920's.
Fig. 8 Vesey Memorial Garden at the junction of Coleshill Street & Mill Street, circa 2000.
Fig. 9 Mill Street, as the crowds disperse, following the arrival of Queen Elizabeth II when she came to visit the World Scout Jamboree being held in Sutton Park on the 3rd August 1957.
Fig. 10 Looking up Mill Street towards the High Street in the early 1980's.
Fig. 11 Mill Street, February 1989, with demolition work in progress.
Fig. 12 Mill Street, July 1990, after completion of the work.
Fig. 13 Mill Street, October 1989, with building work in progress.
Fig. 14 Mill Street, July 1990, after completion of the work.
Fig. 16 The old Workhouse in Mill Street, circa 2005.
Fig. 17 The Old Market Hall, Warwick. Built in 1670, it provided a large open plan Ground Floor with large arches all round for easy access for stallholders. The First Floor housed a number of meeting rooms and a small lock-up. The arches were glazed during the 1880's. It has now been adapted as a Museum.

MILL STREET (Continued)

- Fig. 18** An official Invitation to the opening of the Town Hall in Mill Street, 1859.
- Fig. 19** Sutton Town Hall, Mill Street. Note the fine clock tower. Circa early 1900's.
- Fig. 20** Silver Mace of the Corporation and the Charter of 1528. The mace has been in use since 1590 and bears the inscriptions; '*Gardianus et Societas Ville Regie de Sutton Colfede*' and '*John Harman Fecit Hoc Ano. Dom. 1590*'.
- Fig. 21** Police Station, including the Magistrates Court and Cells, circa 1890.
The site was used from 1888 until approximately 1960. It was finally demolished in 1967.
- Fig. 22** Masonic Hall, Mill Street, with its Italian Gothic design, minus the clock tower. September 2007.
- Fig. 25** The Town School, Mill Street from a stereoscopic photograph taken by William Grundy 1858.
- Fig. 26** The Town School at the bottom of Mill Street, 1939. Note the red brick and stone facings, similar in style to that of the Town Hall.
- Fig. 28** A sketch of Sutton in 1863 by Miss Agnes Bracken.
- Fig. 32** The Museum Public House at the bottom of Mill Street and the commencement of the Parade in 1904.
- Fig. 33** The 'Gate Inn', Mill Street, January 2000.
- Fig. 34** Advertisement for the Emmanuel College Arms Hotel, 1890.
- Fig. 35** Mill Street 1890. The 'Emmanuel College Arms' was situated further down the road, adjacent to the street lamp.
- Fig. 36** High Street, looking towards the top of Mill Street, with the 'Royal Oak' on the left hand side and Reuben Willett's Buttery & Creamery shop on the right, 1902.
- Fig. 37** Mill Street in 1890, showing the reduced level of the road and the steps and barriers referred to.
- Fig. 38** The Sutton Coldfield Volunteer Fire Brigade, with their engine, outside the town hall entrance to the garage in Mill Street, circa 1890.
- Fig. 39** Advertisements for A W Perkins Limited, S J Tailby, Sutton Watch & Clock Repair Depot and T H & L M Nickols.
- Fig. 40** William Gibbins, who ran a shop in Mill Street.
- Fig. 41** Frederick Gibbins, the son of William Gibbins. He ran a Greengrocers shop just down Mill Street from his father.
- Fig. 42** 'Paris House', High Class Ladies Outfitters, Mill Street, circa 1930's.
- Fig. 43** Advertisement in the Sutton Coldfield Directory.
- Fig. 45** Post Office at the top of Mill Street, circa 1900.
- Fig. 46** The renovated Post Office building can be seen on the right hand side of the photograph. July 1990.
- Fig. 47** The 'Sutton Coldfield & Erdington Times' office in Mill Street, 1890.
- Fig. 48** T. Barratt & Co., Radio and Electrical Shop, at the bottom of Mill Street, 1968.
- Fig. 49** Looking up Mill Street towards the High Street, May 1968.

(The following photographs are taken from the Norman Granville Evans Collection, courtesy of Sutton Coldfield Local Studies Section).

- Fig. 23** The Sutton Almshouses in Mill Street can be seen on the right hand side of the photograph, circa 1870.
- Fig. 30** The Dam in 1865, showing how the road had been straightened and the incline up Mill Street reduced. The area on the right hand side is now known as Lower Parade.

(The following photograph was taken from the internet.)

- Fig. 5** A typical steam wagon of the period, 1924.
(www.prestonservices.co.uk/item/leyland-steam-wagon)

MILL STREET (Continued)

Maps & Plans

Cover Page. 25” Survey Map 1886 enlarged to scale 1:1250 by Norman Granville Evans 1979. Sutton Coldfield Local Studies Section.

Fig. 1 A section of John Snape’s map of 1765. The original ‘A Survey of the Lands of Andrew Hacket’ is housed in the County Record Office at Warwick.

Fig. 15 Plan of Mill Street, from the 1811 Corporation Survey, showing the position of the Workhouse.

Fig. 24 A Sketch Plan of the interior of the Town School by Janet Jordan, with schoolmaster’s accommodation, circa 1826.

Fig. 27 A Sketch Plan of the Mill Pool, Dam and Corn Mill at the bottom of Mill Street, by K J Williams.

Fig. 29 Cross Section Drawing through the area of what is now the Parade, showing the original height of the Dam and the water level of the mill pool, circa 1186 and later alterations which took place in 1827, by Dennis Hurley, April 1994.

Fig. 31 1886 Ordnance Survey Map of Sutton (Coloured) by Alan Godfrey, showing the revised paths of the Longmoor Brook and the Ebrook south of the town and where they converge on the park side of Clifton Road.

Fig. 44 Details of the various shopkeepers trading in Mill Street in the early 1920’s. Plan by Keith Jordan 2020 (not to scale).