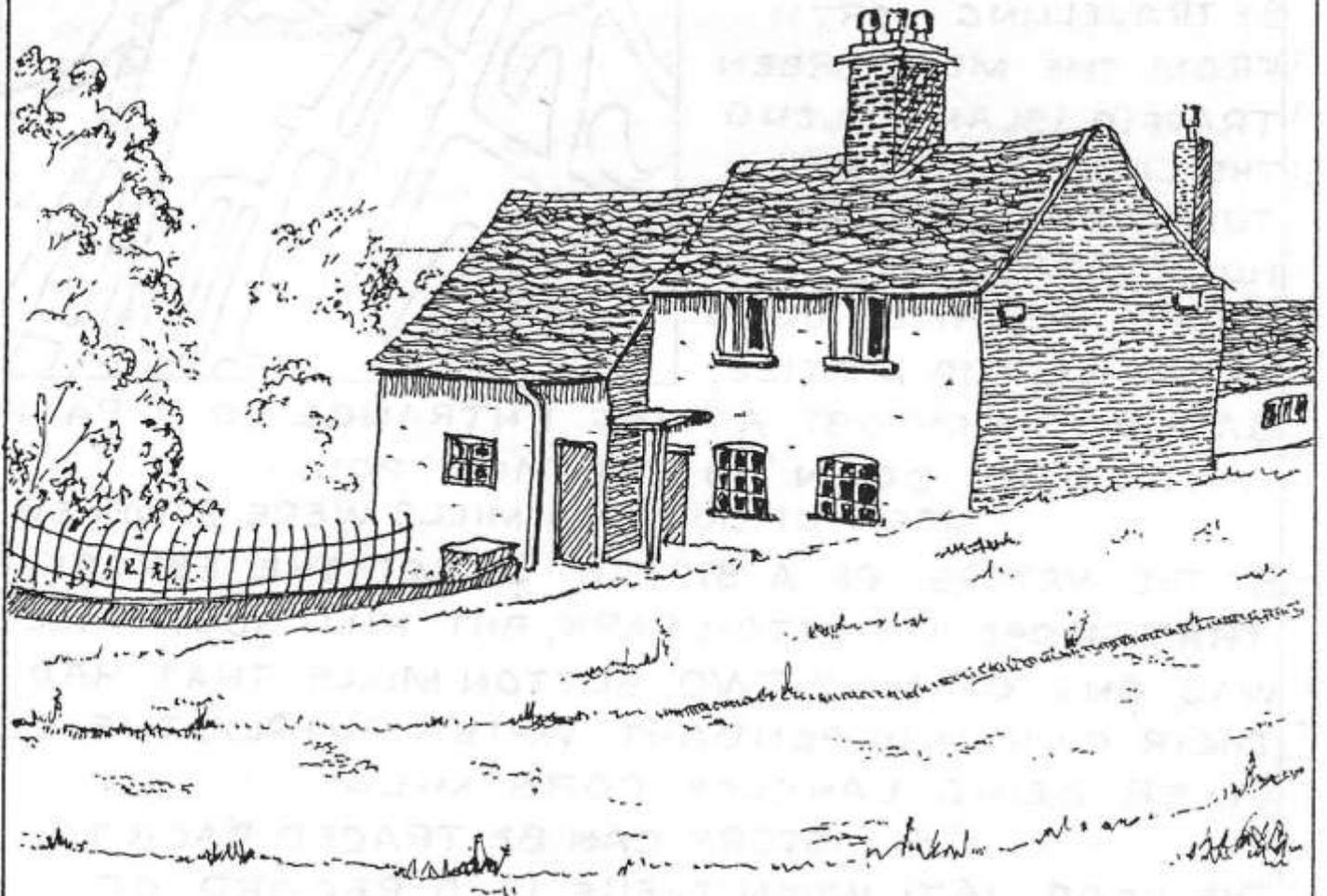


HILL HOOK

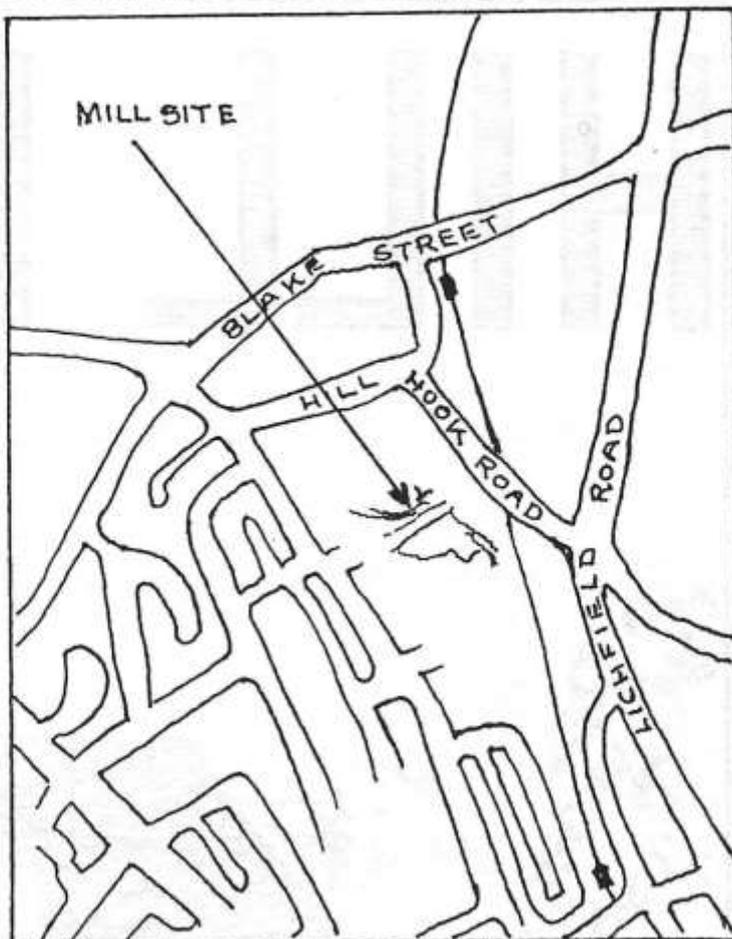


CORN MILL SUTTON COLDFIELD

BY
K. J. WILLIAMS.

A WATER MILL STOOD AT HILL HOOK SUTTON COLDFIELD FOR OVER 300 YEARS GRINDING CORN FOR LOCAL FARMERS AND NEARBY RESIDENTS.

ALTHOUGH THE MILL IS NOT NOW STANDING ITS SITE CAN BE FOUND BY TRAVELLING NORTH FROM THE MERE GREEN TRAFFIC ISLAND, ALONG THE LICHFIELD ROAD, TURN LEFT INTO HILL HOOK ROAD, AND A SHORT DISTANCE DOWN ON THE LEFT IS A STILE,



GATE AND SIGNPOST AT THE ENTRANCE TO A PATH THAT LEADS DOWN TO THE MILL-POOL.

MOST OF SUTTON'S MILLS WERE POWERED BY THE WATERS OF A STREAM CALLED THE EBROOK THAT ROSE IN SUTTON PARK, BUT HILL HOOK MILL WAS ONE OF ONLY TWO SUTTON MILLS THAT HAD THEIR OWN INDEPENDANT WATER SUPPLY, THE OTHER BEING LANGLEY CORN MILL.

ITS HISTORY CAN BE TRACED BACK TO THE YEAR 1671, WHEN THERE IS A RECORD OF "OLIVER CARTWRIGHT, MILLEUR AT HILL". AT THAT TIME THERE WERE 7 OTHER WATER MILLS OPERATING IN THE SUTTON AREA.

THE ORIGINAL MACHINERY IN THE MILL WOULD HAVE BEEN CONSTRUCTED ENTIRELY OF WOOD AND IN SUBSEQUENT YEARS GRADUALLY REPLACED BY CAST IRON AND STEEL WORKING PARTS.

THE NEXT MILLER WAS EDWARD DICKMAN WHO IN 1676 WAS DESCRIBED AS "MILNER AT HILL HOOK"

TODAY'S HOUSE VALUES AND POSSESSIONS CAN RUN INTO MANY THOUSANDS OF POUNDS, SO IT IS INTERESTING TO COMPARE THE WORLDLY POSSESSIONS OF WILLIAM BICKLEY SENIOR, MILLER, AS REVEALED IN AN INVENTORY COMPILED ON HIS DEATH IN 1683.

FEBRUARY 11th 1683.

	£	s	d
ONE COW, TWO HEAFERS	4	13	4
TWO CALVES	1	0	0
ONE OLD MARE TWO COOLTES	4	0	0
ONE LITTLE STORE PIG	0	4	0
BRASS AND PEWTER AND TWO LITTLE OYERN POTS	0	15	0
ONE LITTLE OULD TABLE AND BENCH, TWO STOOL'S AND ONE LITTLE KNEADING TRUFE	0	3	0
ONE FYERSHOVEL, ONE PAIR OF HINGES, ONE PAIR OF SALES AND A FRYING PAN AND POTHUKS	0	2	0
TWO PAIR OF BEDSTIDS AND ONE FEATHER BED			
ONE CEAVORLID TWO BLANKITS, THREE PEARE OF SHEETS AND ONE BOULSTER, ONE TABLE CLOTH	1	1	6
ONE CHEST AND THREE COUFORS AND TWO SHELVES	0	9	0
ONE TUB AND CUBORD AND A LITTLE BARRIL AND CHURNE WITH SOM OTHER SMALL THINGS	0	6	0
SUM PORKE, ONE BAG, ONE STRIKE O CORNE AND FORE LITTLE CHEESES	0	12	0
SOM HEA AND SUM MUK AND TWO OULD MILLSTONES.	1	3	4
SOM OLD OYORN	0	1	6
ONE CROO, ONE SLEDGE HAMBER WITH SOME PICKS	0	4	0
ONE AXE AND HUKK, ONE SPADE AND THREE NEAGENS WITH SOME OTHER SMALL THINGS	0	3	4
ONE LEATHER	0	1	6
HIS YARSAULL AYAILL	1	10	0
AND ALL THINGS FORGOTTON	0	5	0
	£	17	14
		6	

(BECAUSE OF AN ADDITION ERROR IT SHOULD BE £1. LESS - £16.72 1/2)

TO HIS ELDEST SON HE LEFT HIS WEARING APPARELL PLUS ONE SHILLING (5^p) TO BE PAID ONE YEAR LATER. THE MILL HE BEQUEATHED TO HIS YOUNGEST SON JOHN, WITH ALL TOOLS TO HIS MARRIED DAUGHTER ELIZABETH HE LEFT ONE SHILLING TO BE PAID WITHIN TWO MONTHS, WHILST HIS UNMARRIED DAUGHTER FRANCES HE ALLOWED HER TO LIVE IN HIS DWELLING HOUSE TOGETHER WITH HER POSSESSIONS UNTIL SUCH TIME SHE SHALL MARRY AND THEN JOHN SHALL TAKE POSSESSION.

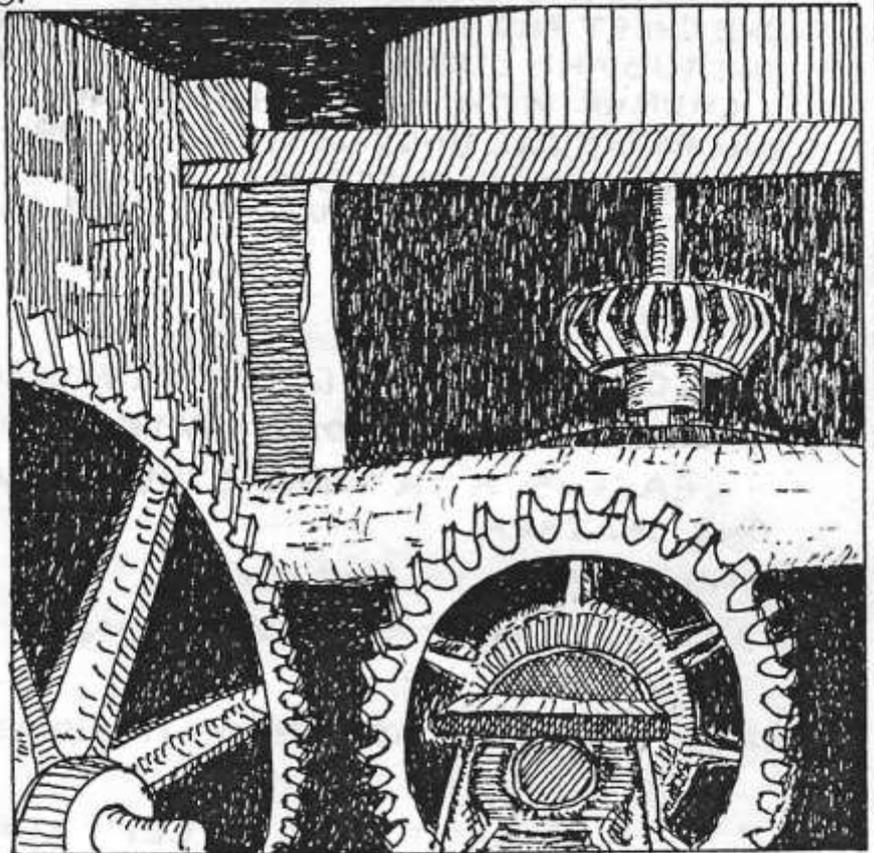
WE HAVE NO EXACT DATE WHEN THE MILL WAS BUILT, BUT SOME OF THE BRICKS FOUND ON THE SITE BEAR MARKS OF A BRICK MOULD KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN USED DURING THE 17th CENTURY.

THE MAN MADE POOL PROVIDED THE POWER TO WORK THE MILL. IN 1767, THE WARDEN AND SOCIETY ALLOWED SIMON BICKLEY, THE MILLER TO ENLARGE IT TO 3 ACRES.

FISH WERE LATER STOCKED IN THE POOL AND IN THE YEAR 1713 WE LEARN THAT IN ADDITION TO PAYING HIS RENT OF 2 SHILLINGS (10^P) p.a., THE TENANT MILLER WAS ALSO REQUIRED TO PROVIDE A DISH OF FISH TO THE WARDEN AND SOCIETY WHENEVER THE POOL WAS FISHED.

A CAST IRON AXLE SHAFT FROM THE OVER-SHOT WATER-WHEEL OUTSIDE THE MILL PASSED THROUGH THE CELLAR WALL TO WHERE THE MACHINERY WAS SITUATED.

THEN A CAST-IRON PIT WHEEL TURNED A HORIZONTAL SHAFT WHICH TRANSMITTED ITS POWER THROUGH A VERTICAL SHAFT TO THE MILL-STONES ABOVE.

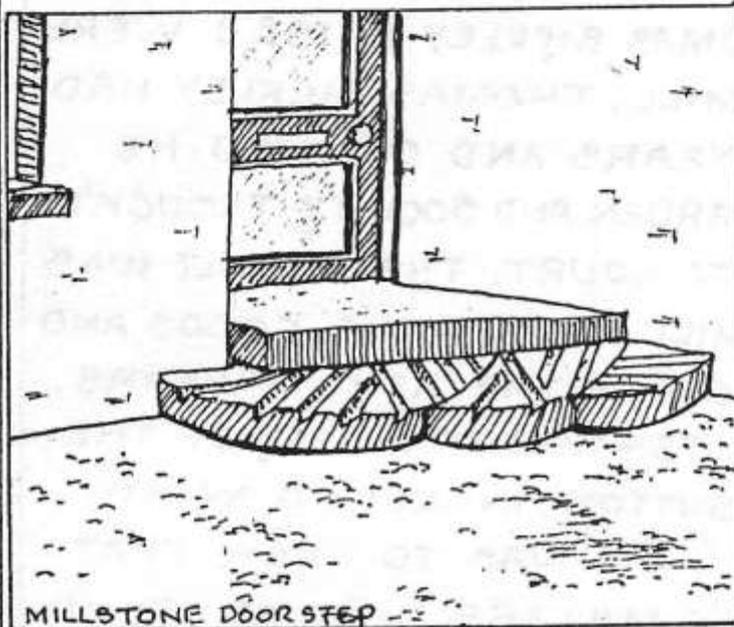


ALL THE CORN WAS STORED ON THE FIRST FLOOR WHICH WAS FED DOWN A CHUTE TO THE MILL-STONES ON THE FLOOR BELOW. THE GROUND FLOUR THEN PASSED DOWN ANOTHER CHUTE FILLING AWAITING SACKS IN THE CELLAR.

A SACK HOIST WOULD LIFT THE FULL SACKS, EACH WEIGHING ABOUT 280 lbs (127 kg) BACK TO THE GROUND FLOOR READY FOR COLLECTION OR DELIVERY.

DURING THE WORKING LIFE OF A MILL MANY MILL-STONES ARE WORN OUT AND ARE DISCARDED. A VISIT TO ANY CORN MILL WILL USUALLY REVEAL WHOLE OR PARTS OF MILL-STONES PUT TO VARIOUS USES. THEY CAN BE FOUND AS PATHWAYS, EDGING STONES FOR THE GARDEN AND DOORSTEPS ARE NOT UNCOMMON.

FROM THE DISCARDED REMAINS WE ARE ABLE TO DETERMINE THE TYPE AND QUALITY OF THE STONES USED ALSO THE PURPOSE OF THE MILL.



WHEN HILL-HOOK MILL WAS DEMOLISHED IN 1970 ITS MILL-STONES WERE TAKEN AWAY.

ONE WAS SET IN THE LIVING ROOM HEARTH OF A BUNGALOW IN FOUR OAKS PARK ESTATE, ANOTHER WAS CUT INTO THREE PARTS AND MADE INTO THE FRONT DOOR

STEP OF A HOUSE IN STREETLY ROAD, SUTTON COLDFIELD.

BOTH THE MILL-STONES ARE DERBY PEAKS. THESE COME FROM THE NORTH EASTERLY PART OF DERBYSHIRE AND ARE HEWN OUT OF A SINGLE PIECE OF STONE.

WHEN NEW A MILL-STONE CAN WEIGH UP TO $1\frac{1}{2}$ TONS (1524 kg), EACH STONE HAS GROOVES CUT INTO ITS FACE. WHEN ONE STONE IS PLACED ON TOP OF THE OTHER THIS PROVIDES A SCISSOR TYPE ACTION TO CUT AND GRIND THE CORN.

AFTER A WHILE THE FACE OF THE STONES WEAR AND REQUIRE RECUTTING. A MILLWRIGHT IS EMPLOYED TO "DRESS" THE STONES. HE RENEWS THE GROOVES USING A TOOL CALLED A MILL-BILL. THIS HAS A SPECIALLY HARDENED CUTTING EDGE.

MILLERS WERE VERY ADAPTABLE AND RESOURCEFUL MEN, ABLE TO TURN THEIR HAND TO MOST JOBS AROUND THE MILL, FROM REPLACING WOODWORK OR REPAIRING THE WATER WHEEL TO DRESSING THE MILL-STONES, WHICH IS A HIGHLY SKILLED JOB. WILLIAM BICKLEY WHO DIED IN 1683 WAS, IN ADDITION TO BEING A MILLER, DESCRIBED AS A WHEELWRIGHT A MOST USEFUL TRADE FOR A MILLER.

ALTOGETHER IN THE LIFE OF THIS MILL THERE HAVE BEEN 14 MILLERS RECORDED. TWO OF THEM, SIMON BICKLEY IN 1713 AND THOMAS BICKLEY IN 1829 WERE GIVEN NOTICE TO QUIT THE MILL. THOMAS BICKLEY HAD NOT PAID ANY RENT FOR 8 YEARS AND CLAIMED HE OWNED THE FREEHOLD. THE WARDEN AND SOCIETY THOUGHT OTHERWISE AND TOOK HIM TO COURT. THE RESULT WAS HE WAS TOLD TO QUIT THE MILL, WHILST HIS GOODS AND CHATTELS WERE SOLD OFF TO PAY THE RENT ARREARS.

MR JOHN LUNN, WHO IN 1734 WAS OVERSEER OF THE POOR FOR HILL AND LITTLE SUTTON, INCLUDED IN HIS LIST OF EXPENSES AN ITEM THAT WAS TO SHOW THAT AT LEAST ONE OF HILL HOOK'S MILLERS DID NOT SPEND ALL HIS TIME GRINDING CORN. IT READS "LOOKING FOR THE MILLER, THE FATHER OF WIDDOW WHITE'S BASTARD CHILD."

IN 1797 TRAGEDY STRUCK THE BICKLEY FAMILY YOUNG JOHN BICKLEY WAS RIDING HIS HORSE DURING A THUNDERSTORM WHEN THEY WERE BOTH STRUCK BY LIGHTENING AND KILLED.

STEPHEN BRACEBRIDGE, WHO WAS MILLER IN 1911 SUCCESSFULLY APPLIED ARTIFICIAL RESPIRATION TO A YOUNG MAN WHO FELL INTO THE POOL AND ALMOST DROWNED. PROMPT ACTION BY STEPHEN SAVED THE MAN'S LIFE. HIS OWN LIFE WAS, HOWEVER, SOON TO BE TAKEN FROM HIM FOR LIKE OTHER YOUNG MEN OF HIS TIME HE DIED IN FRANCE IN 1918 OF WOUNDS SUSTAINED DURING THE GREAT WAR.

HIS WIDOW AND TWO CHILDREN AGED 10 AND FIVE YEARS STAYED ON AT THE MILL FOR A FURTHER YEAR, EVENTUALLY SELLING THE LEASE TO MR HOLT

IN THE YEAR 1898, MR AUSTIN PINFOLD, MILLER PUT UP THE MILL AND LAND FOR PUBLIC AUCTION INCLUDING FARM IMPLEMENTS, LIVE AND DEAD STOCK, TWO FISHING PUNTS, ANCHORS AND A CAPASCIOUS LIVE BAIT KETTLE FOR THE LAKE.

THE MILL CONTINUED TO WORK UNTIL RECENT YEARS WHEN ALL PRODUCTION FINALLY STOPPED. DURING THE 1960'S THE WHEELS WERE OCCASIONALLY SET IN MOTION BY MR MEDLAM, THE OCCUPIER, FOR THE BENEFIT OF VISITORS.

EVENTUALLY MR MEDLAM WAS FORCED THROUGH ILL HEALTH TO LEAVE THE MILL WHICH WAS LEFT VACANT AND UNPROTECTED. VANDALS BROKE IN, STARTED A FIRE CAUSING THE MILL-STONES TO FALL INTO THE CELLAR.

DERELICT AND DAMAGED THE MILL AND HOUSE WERE PULLED DOWN IN 1970. ONE OF ITS CRUSHING MACHINES WAS TAKEN TO NEWHALL MILL WHERE IT WAS PUT TO USE, BUT THE REMAINS OF THE OLD WATER-WHEEL PROTRUDING FROM THE GROUND AND THE MILL FOUNDATIONS ARE THE ONLY REMAINS TO MARK THE SPOT WHERE THIS OLD HISTORIC MILL ONCE STOOD.

CONTROVERSY SURROUNDS THE FUTURE OF THE POOL, WHICH WAS ALLOWED TO RUN ALMOST DRY, NOW OVERGROWN BY WEEDS AND SILTED UP.

THE FOUR MILL-STONES FORMING THE SMALL BRIDGE OVER THE POOL'S OUTLET WERE SMASHED AND CAST ASIDE BY OFFICIAL VANDALISM.

HILL HOOK CORN MILL WAS SUTTON'S LAST BUT ONE WORKING MILL, A MONUMENT TO THE MEMORY OF ALL THE MILLS OF THE PAST. TO OUR ETERNAL SHAME IT WAS ALLOWED TO BE IRRETRIEVABLY SWEEP AWAY LIKE SO MANY OF OUR OTHER ANCIENT BUILDINGS. AFTER 300 YEARS OF FAITHFUL SERVICE TO SUTTON IT IS NOW JUST A MEMORY.

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

- 1671 OLIVER CARTWRIGHT, MILLER.
 1676 EDWARD DICKMAN, MILLER
 1683 WILLIAM BICKLEY SENIOR, MILLER, DIED. ESTATE VALUE £16.14.6.
 1683 JOHN BICKLEY, MILLER.
 1713 SIMON BICKLEY, MILLER, GIVEN NOTICE TO QUIT MILL.
 1713 RENT FOR MILL 2/- (10^p) AND A DISH OF FISH WHEN FISHED.
 1720 JOHN BICKLEY, MILLER.
 1734 RENT OF MILL 10/- (50^p) p.a. POOL 2/- (10^p) PLUS A DISH OF FISH.
 1767 SIMON BICKLEY, MILLER, ENLARGED POOL TO 3 ACRES.
 1786 THOMAS BICKLEY, MILLER, PAYS £1.1.0 (£1.05) RENT OF MILL & POOL
 1797 YOUNG JOHN BICKLEY AND HORSE KILLED BY LIGHTENING.
 1828 THOMAS BICKLEY OWES 8 YEARS RENT.
 1829 THOMAS & LYDIA BICKLEY, GIVEN NOTICE TO QUIT MILL.
 1833 LITIGATION OVER OWNERSHIP OF MILL.
 1833 THOMAS BICKLEY'S GOODS & CHATTELS SOLD FOR RENT ARREARS.
 1840 JOHN STEVENSON, MILLER.
 1855 MILL WHEEL REPAIRED.
 1860 THOMAS. B. MARSHALL, MILLER.
 1860 ONE OF SIX SUTTON MILLS OPERATING WITHOUT ASSISTANCE
 OF STEAM ENGINE.
 1896 AUSTIN PINFOLD, MILLER.
 1898 WILLIAM GEORGE GOLDSBY, MILLER.
 1904 HENRY. S. BRACEBRIDGE, MILLER.
 1911 STEPHEN BRACEBRIDGE, MILLER.
 1918 STEPHEN BRACEBRIDGE, KILLED DURING 1914 - 18 WAR.
 1919 WIDOW SELLS INTEREST IN MILL
 1919 MR HOLT, MILLER GRANTED 7 YEAR LEASE AT £60. p.a.
 1921 COST OF REPAIRS AT MILL £53.5.0 (£53.25)
 1926 MILLER REQUESTS PERMISSION TO USE MECHANICAL
 ORGAN WITH HIS ROUNDABOUTS.
 1960^{'s} CINCINATTI, MILL OWNERS. MR MEDLAM. TENANT.
 DEMONSTRATES MILL MACHINERY TO VISITORS.
 1970 MILL DEMOLISHED, MILL STONES TAKEN AWAY.
 1979 POOL DRAINED, DAM IN BAD STATE OF REPAIR.
 1982 £60,000 SET ASIDE FOR REPAIR OF DAM AND DESILT
 OF POOL.