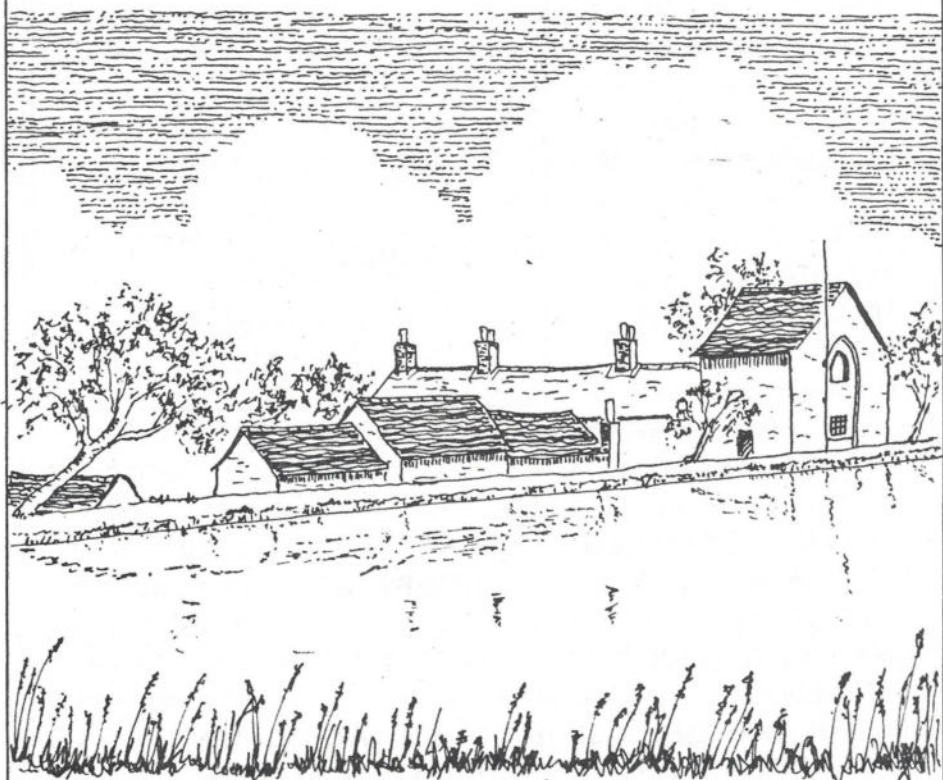


# LONGMOOR



## CORN MILL SUTTON PARK

BY

K.J.WILLIAMS.

SUTTON COLDFIELD LOCAL HISTORY RESEARCH GROUP.

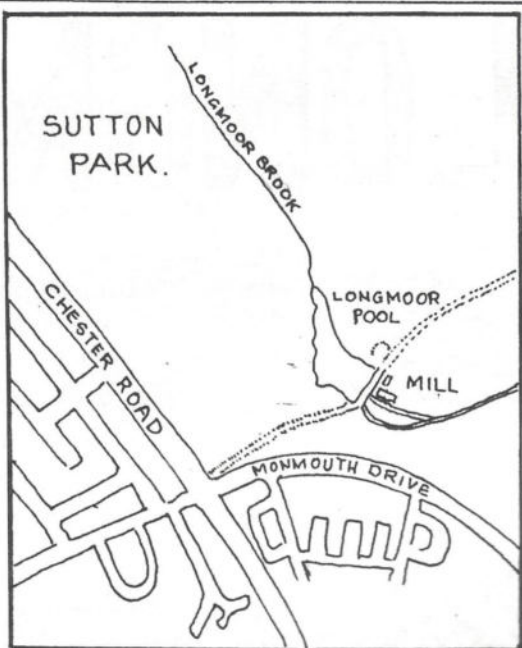
LONGMOOR CORN MILL IS ONE OF THE FEW SUTTON MILLS FOR WHICH WE HAVE ITS DATE OF CONSTRUCTION AND ITS DATE OF DEMOLITION.

THERE ARE ALSO A FEW SUTTONIANS AROUND WHO CAN REMEMBER IT AND SOME WHO CAN RECALL HAVING PARTAKEN OF THE TEAS AND REFRESHMENTS THAT WERE SERVED THERE

ALTHOUGH THE MILL HAS NOW GONE ITS SITE CAN BE FOUND JUST INSIDE SUTTON PARK ABOUT 440 YARDS FROM BANNERS GATE ENTRANCE.

IN THE YEAR 1733 THE WARDEN AND SOCIETY GRANTED PERMISSION TO JOHN RILAND TO MAKE A DAM AND A POOL IN A CROFT AT LONGMOOR BROOK TO HOLD FOR 21 YEARS AT ONE SHILLING (5<sup>p</sup>) YEARLY AND HAVE THE LIBERTY TO RENEW AT THE SAME RENT IF HE OR HIS HEIRS SHOULD THINK PROPER. JOHN RILAND ENTERED INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH JOHN GIBBONS ON THE ONE PART AND WILLIAM RAWLINS ON THE OTHER, BY WHICH THE LATTER AGREED TO MAKE A GOOD AND SUBSTANTIAL DAM OF TURF AND GRAVEL WHICH WAS TO BE COMPLETED AT A COST OF SEVEN POUNDS.

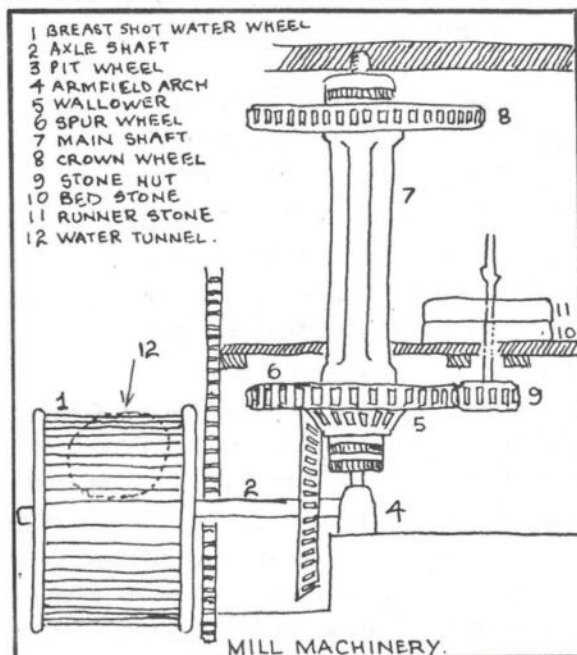
THE EMBANKMENT WAS 50 YARDS LONG 11 FEET HIGH, 10 YARDS BROAD AT THE BOTTOM AND 5 FEET AT THE TOP. THE DAM WAS COMPLETED BY RAWLINS AND A POOL OF SEVEN ACRES WAS FORMED WHICH REMAINS TO THIS DAY.



IN THE YEAR 1754 IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY AGREED BY ALL MEMBERS OF THE WARDEN AND SOCIETY THAT A LEASE BE GRANTED TO RICHARD REYNOLDS, WHEELWRIGHT, TO ERECT A HOUSE AND WATER CORN MILL AND DRESSING MILL BELOW THE DAM OF LONGMOOR POOL BELONGING TO JOHN RILAND. THIS PIECE OF LAND WAS SITUATED IN SUTTON PARK.

THE MILL WAS TO BE USED "FOR THE MORE COMODIOUS GRINDING OF CORN FOR THE INHABITANTS OF THE PARISH AND OTHER ADJACENT PARISHES AND FOR NO OTHER USE WHATSOEVER, AND THAT RICHARD REYNOLDS SHALL HAVE LIBERTY TO INCLOSE FOUR ACRES OF LAND BY THE SIDE OF THE POOL, WITH A LEASE FOR 63 YEARS AND A YEARLY RENT OF FORTY SHILLINGS" (2)

HE WAS TO ERECT THE MILL WITHIN THE SPACE OF TWO YEARS AND TO USE IT FOR GRINDING OF GRIST OR ELSE THE GRANT BE VOID.



THE LEASE OF THE POOL HELD BY JOHN RYLAND EXPIRED IN 1754 SO THE WARDEN AND SOCIETY AGREED TO RENEW IT FOR A FURTHER TERM OF 21 YEARS AT THE SAME RENT OF ONE SHILLING (5<sup>p</sup>) YEARLY AND A DISH OF FISH FOR THE WARDEN AT EVERY GENERAL FISHING OF THE POOL.



THE MILL WAS BUILT OF BRICK AND ITS LESS USUAL BREAST-SHOT WATER-WHEEL STOOD OUTSIDE. THE AXLE SHAFT PASSED THROUGH THE WALL OF THE MILL WHERE JUST INSIDE A CAST IRON PIT WHEEL ATTACHED TO IT.

CONNECTING WITH THE PIT WHEEL WAS ANOTHER CAST IRON TOOTHED WHEEL CALLED A WALLOWER. THIS WAS ON A LARGE VERTICAL SHAFT WHICH WENT TO THE CEILING OF THE FLOOR ABOVE.

JUST ABOVE THE WALLOWER ON THE SHAFT WAS ANOTHER LARGER DIAMETER WOODEN TOOTHED WHEEL WHICH TRANSMITTED ITS POWER THROUGH ANOTHER SMALLER TOOTHED WHEEL TO TURN THE MILLSTONE ON THE FLOOR ABOVE.

ON THE STONE FLOOR THE SHAFT HAS A FURTHER LARGE DIAMETER CROWN WHEEL WHICH WORKS ANCILLARY MACHINERY AND THE SACK HOIST.

LONGMOOR CORN MILL NEVER APPEARED TO SUFFER FROM LACK OF WATER, AS LANGLEY CORN MILL DID, IN FACT AT TIMES THERE WAS MORE THAN THE POOL COULD COPE WITH.

DURING SUMMER MONTHS WHEN THE GROUND IS DRY AND DUSTY, A SUDDEN STORM CAN CAUSE CONSIDERABLE PROBLEMS. THE RAIN WILL RUN QUICKLY OFF THE DUSTY GROUND INTO THE POOL CAUSING A RAPID RISE IN THE WATER LEVEL. IN THE YEARS 1824, 1831 AND 1923 FLOODS CREATED BY VIOLENT STORMS CAUSED DAMAGE TO BOTH THE MILL AND DAM.

FLOODWATER RUSHING DOWNSTREAM FROM THE BREACHED DAM PUT PRESSURE ON POWELL'S AND WYNDLEY DAMS, CAUSING THEM TO OVERFLOW. THE RESULT OF ALL THIS SURPLUS WATER WAS TO CAUSE FLOODING IN THE TOWN AND LOCAL AREA.

SOME OF THE STORMS WERE SO SUDDEN THE MILLER HAD NO TIME TO OPEN THE SLUICE GATE.

IT WAS NOT LONG AFTER RICHARD REYNOLDS BUILT THE MILL IN 1754 HE REALISED THERE WERE SO MANY COMPETITIVE MILLS THAT HIS WAS NOT GOING TO PAY ITS WAY.

TO MAKE IT PROFITABLE HE DECIDED HE MUST PUT IT TO OTHER USES, SO HE APPLIED TO THE WARDEN AND SOCIETY TO RELEASE HIM FROM THE VERY RESTRICTIVE GRANT AND ALLOW HIM TO DIVERSIFY.

CONSIDERATION WAS GIVEN TO HIS REQUEST AND HE WAS ALLOWED TO ERECT A SHED OR LEAN-TO AT THE MILL FOR THE PURPOSE OF DRESSING LEATHER.

ANOTHER TRADE CARRIED ON AT THE MILL WAS THAT OF POLISHING BUTTONS, IN THE YEAR 1762 THE GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE REFERRED TO ONE OF SUTTON'S WATER-MILLS POLISHING METAL BUTTONS.

A MAP DATED 1779 SHOWS LONGMOOR MILL AS A BUTTON MILL AND THE POOL AS, BUTTON MILL POOL, WITH MR POWELL AS MILLER.

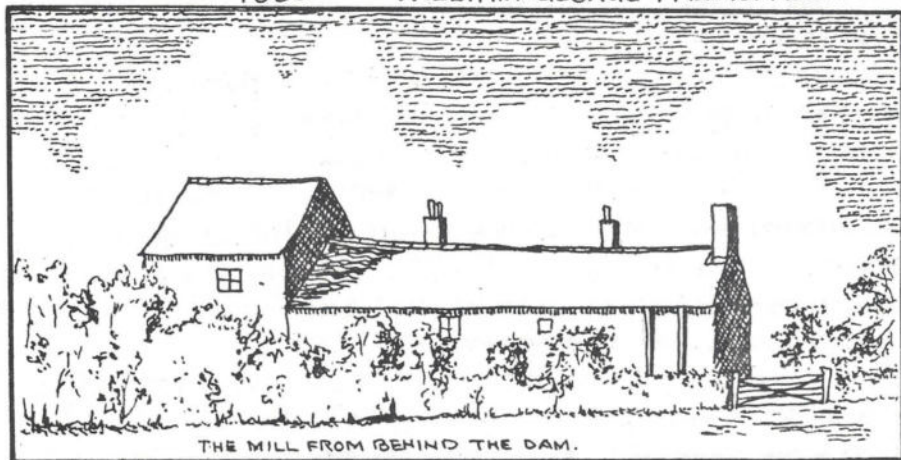
THERE WAS A SUBSTANTIAL BUTTON TRADE IN BIRMINGHAM AT THAT TIME AND IT WOULD SEEM THAT SOME OF THE METAL BUTTONS, USED POSSIBLY ON VARIOUS KINDS OF UNIFORMS, WERE SENT TO LONGMOOR MILL FOR POLISHING.

THE METAL BUTTONS WOULD HAVE BEEN PUT IN A LARGE DRUM WITH A MIXTURE OF WATER AND FINE ABRASIVE AND TURNED BY A BELT DRIVEN INDIRECTLY BY THE WATER-WHEEL. THEY WOULD EVENTUALLY EMERGE BRIGHT AND SHINING.

SIMILAR MACHINERY WOULD BE REQUIRED FOR DRESSING LEATHER. AFTER THE HAIR AND FAT HAD BEEN REMOVED, THE SKINS WOULD BE PUT INTO A LARGE ROTATING DRUM HOLDING TANIN, AFTER WHICH THEY WOULD BE REMOVED AND SPREAD OUT TO DRY.

THE NAMES OF AT LEAST 13 MILLERS OF LONGMOOR CORN MILL HAVE TO DATE BEEN RECORDED, THEY ARE :-

1754	RICHARD REYNOLDS.
1776	JOHN SUDBURY
1779	MR POWELL.
1802	MR BOWE.
1811	SAMUEL REYNOLDS.
1825-50	MR DUTTON.
1851	WILLIAM BOWE.
1855-60	JOHN BRIDGE & WILLIAM LOACH.
1860	JOHN BRIDGE.
1861-4	T. JAMES.
1869-75	HOWARD BETTS.
1876	MR BOUGHTON.
1885	WILLIAM GEORGE PALMER BOND.



MRS DAVIES OF MIDDLETON WHOSE FATHER WAS BORN AT THE MILL COTTAGE IN 1901 RELATES HOW ONE NIGHT A MADMAN TORE OFF HIS CLOTHES AND LEAPT NAKED INTO THE POOL, HER GRANDFATHER RESCUED HIM TOOK HIM TO THE MILL-HOUSE AND DRIED HIM OFF HE THEN LOADED HIM INTO THE FAMILY CONVEYANCE, A PONY AND TRAP, AND TOOK HIM TO THE LOCAL POLICE STATION.



OVER THE YEARS MANY REPAIRS HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT AT THE MILL. IN 1823 IT WAS REBUILT AT A COST OF £700 AND IN 1824 THE DAM WAS REPAIRED WHICH COST £40. AFTER BEING DAMAGED BY FLOODS IN 1831 THE DAM WAS AGAIN REPAIRED.

AN INSPECTION OF THE MILL BY MR. G. BROWN THE MILLER OF PARK HOUSE BLADE MILL, AND MR OUGHTON OF HOLLAND GUN BARREL MILL IN 1832 REVEALED THE WATER-WHEEL BADLY DAMAGED, WITH MANY BROKEN ARMS AND THE WHEEL WORKING THE DRESSING MACHINE IN AN IMPROPER STATE. THE MILLER AT THE TIME WAS MR DUTTON WHO WAS ASKED TO EXPLAIN WHY HE HAD ERECTED A BUILDING WITHOUT PERMISSION.

BY THE YEAR 1851 REPAIRS WERE AGAIN NEEDED AND £198.16.0 (£198.80) WAS SPENT BY THE WARDEN, AND IT WAS RECOMMENDED THAT THE WATER-WHEEL BE REPLACED, THE WORK TO BE CARRIED OUT BY MR HILL.

THE YEARS 1877 AND 1878 SAW FURTHER REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS TO THE MILL.

RILAND BEDFORD WRITING IN 1889 SAYS THAT THE MILL WAS STILL IN OPERATION BUT IT WOULD SEEM THAT ALL PRODUCTION WAS SOON TO STOP.

DURING THE EARLY 1900'S TEAS AND REFRESHMENTS WERE SERVED AT THE MILL COTTAGE.

FINALLY THE DERELICT MILL WAS PULLED DOWN IN 1938. PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY MR N. G. EVANS OF THE DEMOLISHED MILL SHOW SOME FINE FRENCH BURR MILL-STONES AND THE MAINSHAFT WITH ALL ITS WHEELS IN PERFECT CONDITION.

THE MAINSHAFT WAS REMOVED TO BLACKROOT GRAVEL PIT AND WHILST IT STILL CAN BE SEEN HAS DETERIORATED BEYOND REPAIR. ALL THAT REMAINS IS THE LARGE WOODEN SHAFT AND ITS BROKEN WALLOWER.

ONLY THE POOL REMAINS AT LONGMOOR TO REMIND US OF THE OLD MILL THAT GREETED VISITORS TO THE PARK SO MANY YEARS AGO.

## SUMMARY OF EVENTS.

- 1733 JOHN RILAND, JOHN GIBBONS, & WILLIAM RAWLINS ALLOWED TO CONSTRUCT DAM AT LONGMOOR. COST £7. LEASE 21 YEARS.
- 1754 RICHARD REYNOLDS, BUILT CORN MILL AND HOUSE.
- 1754 LEASE OF POOL RENEWED FOR FURTHER 21 YEARS.
- 1757 RICHARD REYNOLDS ERECTS SHED FOR DRESSING LEATHER.
- 1762 MENTION OF MILL USED FOR POLISHING METAL BUTTONS.
- 1762 MILL UNECONOMICAL RICHARD REYNOLDS WANTS FRESH LEASE.
- 1763 NEW LEASE FOR 54 YEARS, LESS RESTRICTIVE OF TRADE.
- 1773 POOL LEASE RENEWED FOR HUMPHREY GIBBONS & EX'S OF LATE JOHN RILAND. RENT 1/- (5<sup>p</sup>) P.A. PLUS A DISH OF FISH
- 1776 RICHARD REYNOLDS ASSIGNS LEASE OF MILL TO JOHN SUDBURY.
- 1779 MAP SHOWS BUTTON MILL & BUTTON MILL POOL.
- 1779/87. MR POWELL, MILLER.
- 1802 MR BOWE, MILLER.
- 1811 SAMUEL REYNOLDS, MILLER.
1823. MILL REBUILT. COST £700.
- 1825 MILL LET BY AUCTION.
1832. MR DUTTON, MILLER, WATER WHEEL IN BAD STATE OF REPAIR.
- 1840-50 WILLIAM DUTTON, MILLER.
- 1851 WILLIAM BOWE, MILLER, AGED 24. BORN IN BIRMINGHAM.
- 1851 WATER WHEEL REPLACED BY OAK WHEEL.
- 1854 MILL TO BE LET ON BEST POSSIBLE TERMS.
- 1855-60 JOHN BRIDGE & JOHN LOACH, MILLERS.
- 1861-64. T. JAMES, MILLER.
- 1869-75 HOWARD BETTS, MILLER.
- 1876 MR BOUGHTON, MILLER, WORKS MILL AS FLOUR & BATCH MILL.
- 1885 WILLIAM GEORGE PALMER BOND, MILLER.
- 1898 WILLIAM PERRY, OCCUPIER OF HOUSE & BUILDINGS.
- 1904 ARTHUR KITCHEN, OCCUPIER OF HOUSE, BUILDINGS, LAND & POOL.
- 1923 JULY, DAM BREACHED DURING THUNDERSTORM.
- 1938 MILL DEMOLISHED, MAINSHAFT REMOVED TO BLACKROOT GRAVEL PIT.
- 1982 MAINSHAFT NOW IN BADLY DILAPIDATED STATE.
1982. POOL STILL REMAINS AFTER 249 YEARS.