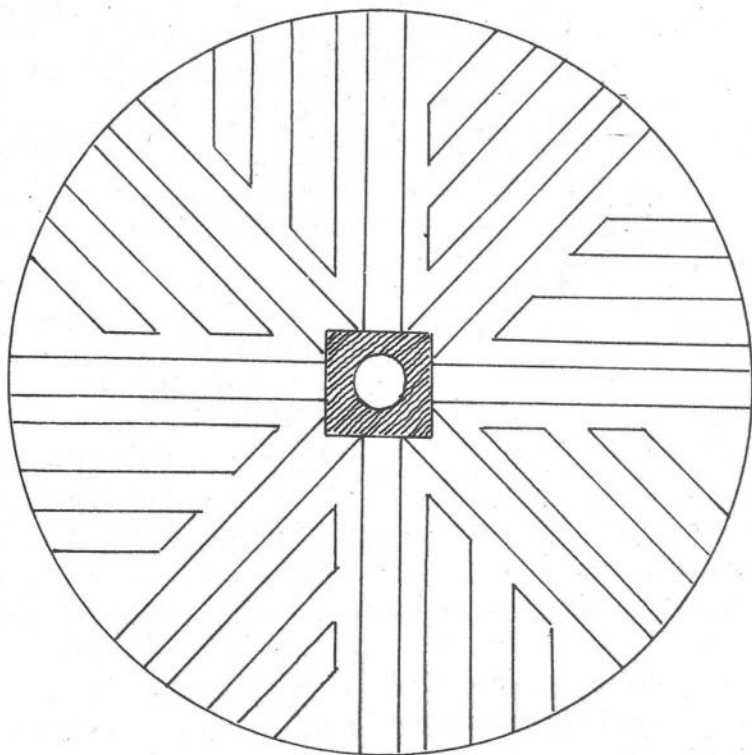


TOWN MILL



WATER CORN~MILL
SUTTON COLDFIELD

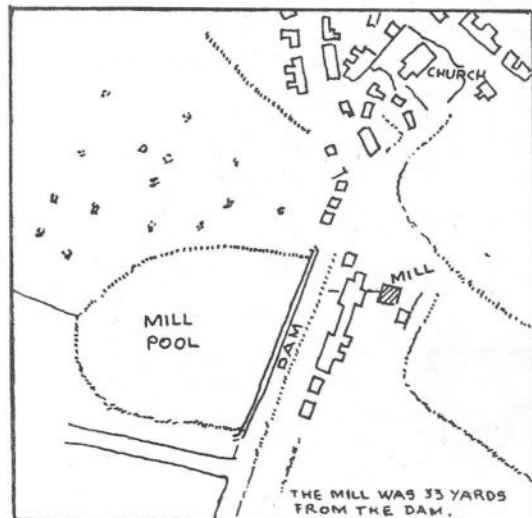
BY

K. J. WILLIAMS.

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THE FIRST WATER-MILL TO BE BUILT IN SUTTON COLDFIELD BELONGED TO THE LORD OF THE MANOR AND WAS SITUATED NEAR WHERE THE KNOTT INN (PREVIOUSLY THE DOG INN) NOW STANDS IN THE LOWER PARADE.

A STONE FACED DAM WAS ERECTED SPANNING THE VALLEY BELOW THE PARISH CHURCH



AND HELD BACK THE WATERS OF THE EBROOK TO CREATE A MILL-POOL THAT EXTENDED OVER AN AREA NOW OCCUPIED BY THE GRACECHURCH SHOPPING PRECINCT AND THE RAILWAY EMBANKMENT.

DOCUMENTS SHOW THAT THE LORD'S MILL WAS WORKING IN THE YEAR 1126 WHEN THE

MANOR OF SUTTON WAS EXCHANGED BY HENRY I WITH EARL ROGER FOR THE MANOR OF HOCKHAM AND LANGHAM IN RUTLANDSHIRE. THE EXCHANGE INCLUDED "ONE WATER-MILL WITH SUITS"

THE TENANTS OF SUTTON WERE COMPELLED TO USE THE LORD'S MILL EXCLUSIVELY, A DOCUMENT DATED 1309 CONFIRMS THE MONOPOLY FOR MILLING HELD BY THE LORD OF THE MANOR:-

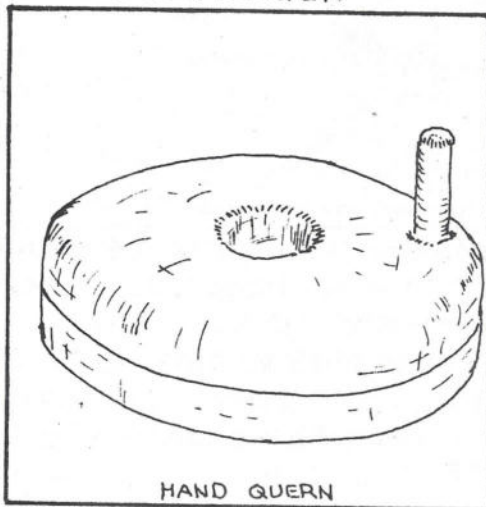
"AND NONE OF THESE CUSTOMARY TENANTS USED TO GRIND HIS CORN BUT AT THE LORD'S WATER-MILL SO LONG AS THE MILL WAS IN REPAIR FOR GRINDING UNLESS THEY FIRST DELIVERED THE WHOLE OF THE CORN TO THE LORD'S MILLER."

IT WAS A CONDITION THAT THE TENANTS OF SUTTON HAD ALL THEIR CORN GROUND AT THE LORD'S MILL OR THEY WOULD FORFEIT THE WHOLE OF IT. THEY WERE ALSO REQUIRED TO KEEP THE BANKS OF THE MILL-POOL IN GOOD REPAIR OR BE FINED.

THE DATE WHEN THE MILL WAS BUILT IS UNKNOWN. ALTHOUGH THE EARLIEST RECORD DATES BACK TO THE YEAR 1126 IT IS POSSIBLE IT EXISTED LONG BEFORE THAT.

WATER-MILLS ARE THOUGHT TO HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED INTO BRITAIN BY THE ROMANS. WHEN THE DOMESDAY SURVEY WAS COMPLETED IN 1086 A TOTAL OF 1526 WATER-MILLS WERE LISTED IN ENGLAND. THERE WAS NO RECORD OF ONE IN SUTTON IN THE SURVEY. THIS CANNOT BE CONCLUSIVE THAT NO MILL STOOD HERE FOR THE SURVEY INCLUDED SOME MILLS TWICE WHILST SOME EXISTING MILLS WERE LEFT OUT.

HAND QUERNS WERE USED TO GRIND CORN IN BRITAIN BEFORE WATER-MILLS CAME IN. THEY CONSISTED OF TWO LARGE CIRCULAR STONES PLACED ONE ON TOP OF THE OTHER. THE TOP STONE WAS ROTATED BY A STICK STUCK IN THE EDGE AS A HANDLE WHILST CORN FED THROUGH A CENTRAL HOLE EMERGED AS FLOUR FROM THE OUTER EDGE.



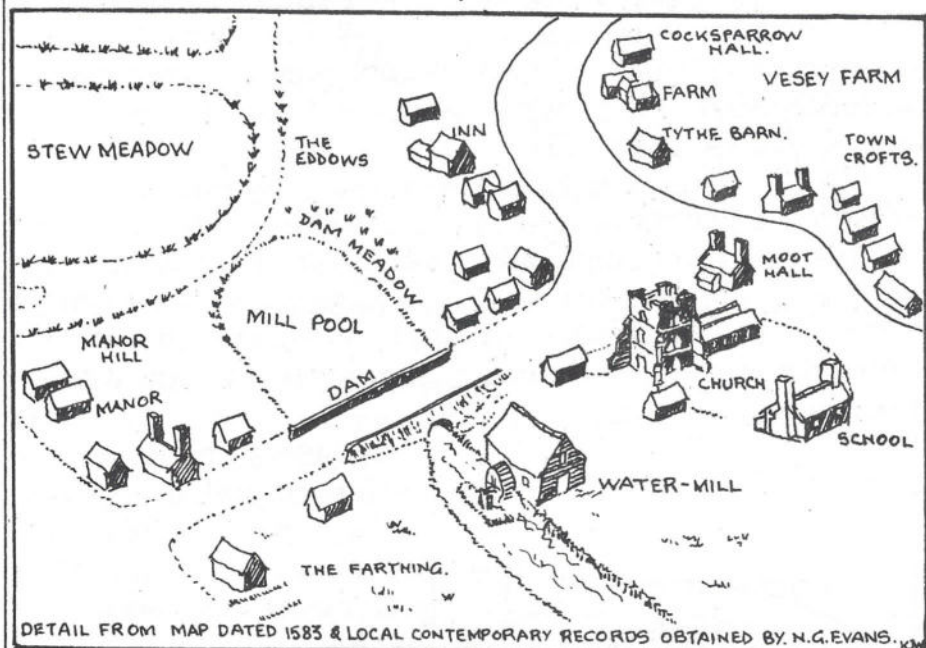
HAND QUERN

THERE IS NO DOCUMENTARY RECORD OF QUERNS USED IN SUTTON, BUT BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM HAS PART OF ONE FOUND AT HENLEY-IN-ARDEN, WHICH WOULD INDICATE THAT THEY WERE IN USE IN THE MIDLANDS PRODUCING FLOUR FOR THE FAMILY.

PERHAPS A SUTTON QUERN AWAITS DISCOVERY.

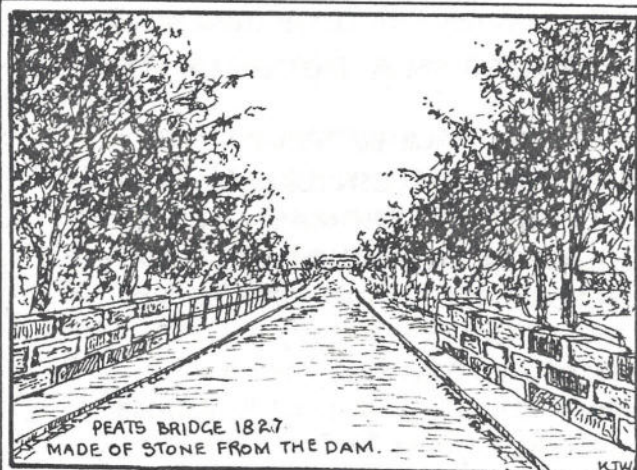
DUGDALE CITING CUSTOMS OF THE MANOR SAYS TRADITION MAINTAINED THAT FROM THE TIME OF KING. ATHELSTAN (895-939) THERE HAS BEEN A WATER-MILL IN THE MANOR OF SUTTON, THIS WOULD PRE-DATE THE DOMESDAY SURVEY AND INDICATE THE MILL WAS AT LEAST 200 YEARS EARLIER THAN 1126.

JOHN LELAND CHAPLAIN TO HENRY VIII TRAVELLED OVER ENGLAND RECORDING ANTIQUARIAN LORE, WAS GIVEN THE TITLE "KING'S ANTIQUARY". HE VISITED SUTTON IN 1535 AND RECORDED IN HIS "ITINERY" THAT A MILL AND POND PERTAINED TO THE MANOR OF SUTTON IN 1298 AND 1317.



THE STONE DAM ERECTED ACROSS THE VALLEY SERVED TO CREATE NOT ONLY A MILL-POOL BUT ALSO CARRIED THE ROAD FROM MANEY TO MILL STREET.

SO SUBSTANTIAL WAS THIS MEDIAEVAL DAM THAT IT SURVIVED FROM THE 12TH TO THE 19TH CENTURY WHEN IT WAS EVENTUALLY REMOVED TO MAKE WAY FOR THE PRESENT PARADE.



THE FIRST RECORD OF A SUTTON MILL DATES BACK TO THE YEAR 1533 WHEN THE MILL CHANGED HANDS.

A DOCUMENT DATED 29TH JUNE 1533 INFORMS US HIS NAME WAS NICHOLAUS MILLER ALIAS ROBINSON.

FROM THIS DOCUMENT WE ALSO LEARN THAT THE WARDEN AND SOCIETY WERE SO GRATEFUL FOR THE BENEFITS AND GIFTS BESTOWED UPON SUTTON BY BISHOP VESEY (JOHN HARMAN), A NATIVE OF THIS TOWN, THAT THEY WISHED TO SHOW THEIR GRATITUDE IN A MORE TANGIBLE WAY. THIS THEY DID BY A GIFT OF THE TOWN MILL TO THOMAS KEENE WHO WAS MARRIED TO JOAN, NIECE OF BISHOP VESEY.

THEY WERE TO PAY AN ANNUAL RENT TO THE WARDEN AND SOCIETY OF SIX POUNDS THIRTEEN SHILLINGS AND FOUR PENCE (£6 '66½). THEIR GENEROSITY DID HAVE STRINGS FOR THEY ADDED THAT IF THE RENT WAS NOT PAID WITHIN 10 DAYS OF THE DUE DATE THE MILL WOULD BE ENTERED AND OCCUPIED "UNTIL THE RENT DUE PLUS ANY ARREARS THAT REMAIN UNPAID SHALL BE FULLY PAID UP."

THE WARDEN AND SOCIETY OF 1820 - 1828 WERE MORE LENIENT THAN THEIR PREDECESSORS, FOR THEY ALLOWED THE MILLER OF HILL HOOK TO GO FOR 8 YEARS WITHOUT PAYING HIS RENT BEFORE THEY TOOK ACTION.

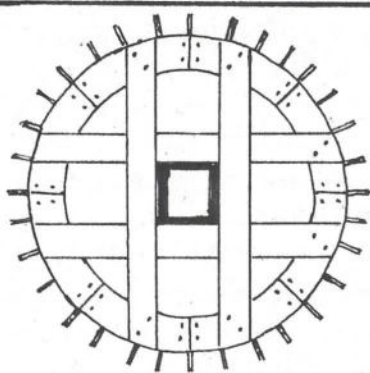
IN 1549 NO ONE WAS ALLOWED TO CARRY CORN OUT OF THE LORDSHIP UNLESS THEY PAID THE CUSTOMARY CHARGE. FAILURE TO DO SO RESULTED IN A FINE OF 6/8^P (33½^P).

THE MILL WAS SOLD IN 1582 AND THE TRANSACTION EVIDENCED IN A DOCUMENT STILL IN EXISTENCE, IT READS :-

"BARGAIN AND SALE BY THOMAS KENE OF SUTTON COLDFIELD, GENTLEMAN AND SYBELL HIS WIFE, TO THOMAS GYBONS OF NEWHALL IN THE PARISH OF SUTTON COLDFIELD, ESQUIRE, OF WATER-CORN MILLS CALLED THE MANOR MILLS OR SUTTON MILLS WITH ALL SPRINGS, STREAMS WATER COURSES, HOUSES AND BUILDINGS BELONGING TO THEM."

THE PURCHASE OF THE MILL AND BUILDINGS EXCLUDING THE MILL POOL COST THOMAS GYBONS £320 PLUS A YEARLY RENT OF £3-6-8 (£3.33).

BEING SUCH AN EARLY MILL THE MACHINERY INSIDE WAS PROBABLY MADE OF WOOD. THE WATER-WHEEL WOULD HAVE BEEN SITUATED OUTSIDE WITHOUT ANY COVER. LATER MILLS SOMETIMES INCORPORATED A WHEELHOUSE WITHIN THE MILL ITSELF SO PROTECTING THE WATER-WHEEL FROM THE ELEMENTS.



CLASP ARM WATER WHEEL

WE HAVE NO ACTUAL PICTURES OF THE MILL OR WHEEL. IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT THE FIRST WATER-WHEEL WAS A CLASP ARM WHEEL WITH OPEN PADDLES INSTEAD OF BUCKETS. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN UNDER-SHOT. THAT IS THE WATER-WHEEL IS

TURNED BY THE WATER PASSING BENEATH STRIKING ITS BLADES, NOT A VERY EFFICIENT TYPE OF WHEEL. THE MOST EFFICIENT KIND BEING THE OVER-SHOT.

ON 24th JULY 1668 A STORM BROKE OUT OVER SUTTON COLDFIELD WITH SUCH FEROCITY AS TO TURN STREAMS WITHIN MINUTES INTO RAGING TORRENTS.

IN SUTTON PARK PRESSURE BEGAN TO BUILD UP AGAINST THE DAM, WHILST LONGMOOR BROOK, SWOLLEN BY FLOODWATER AND WITH NO DAM AT EITHER LONGMOOR OR THE PRESENT POWELL'S POOL IN EXISTENCE 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 WAS TO OVERWHELM THE TOWN DAM THE PARISH REGISTER RECORDED THE INCIDENT :-

"THERE WAS A GREAT FFLOOD OF WATER SO GREAT HERE AT SUTTON POOLS THAT IT FFLOED OVER THE STONE WALL AT THE FURTHER END OF THE DAM BY REASON OF A SUDEN RAYNE WHICH DID BREAK DOWN WINLY-POOLE-DAM AND ALSO BRASSBRIDG POOL DAM."

THE MILL WAS PUT OUT OF ACTION AND PROPERTY DAMAGED IN THE TOWN. THE DAMAGE WAS PUT RIGHT BY "THE VOLUNTARY SUBSCRIPTION OF THE GENTLEMEN."

ENTRIES IN THE PARISH REGISTER SHOW THAT THE MILL CONTINUED TO WORK FOR AT LEAST ANOTHER TEN YEARS "28th NOVEMBER 1671, JANE, DAUGHTER OF WILLIAM GOODALL O'TH MILL BAPTIZED", AND IN 1678 "JOAN POWER, WIFE OF JOHN POWER, MILLER, WAS BURIED."

AROUND THAT TIME THE MILL CEASED TO WORK AND THE MILL-POOL CONVERTED TO MEADOWLAND. TOWARDS THE END OF THE 18th CENTURY THE OLD MILL WAS PULLED DOWN.

THE STONE DAM WAS REMOVED IN 1826 AND THE NEW REPLACEMENT ROAD CONTINUED TO BE CALLED THE "DAM" BUT LATER CHANGED TO THE "PARADE". THE ONLY REMINDER WE NOW HAVE OF THE OLD MANORIAL MILL IS THE ROAD SIGN THAT STANDS AT THE BOTTOM OF MILL STREET.

SUMMARY OF EVENTS.

- ~~C 895~~
 939 DUGDALE SAYS A MILL IN SUTTON SINCE THE TIME OF KING ATHELSTAN
 1086 DOMESDAY SURVEY LISTS 5624 WATER-MILLS IN
 ENGLAND. NO MENTION OF SUTTON TOWN MILL.
 1126 FIRST AUTHENTIC RECORD OF THE MANORIAL MILL.
 1298 JOHN LELAND REFERS TO MILL-POND IN SUTTON.
 1309 CUSTOMARY TENANTS OBLIGED TO USE LORD'S MILL.
 1528 OWNERSHIP OF MILL TRANSFERRED TO WARDEN & SOCIETY.
 1533 WARDEN & SOCIETY GRANT WATER-MILL TO THOMAS KEENE
 HUSBAND OF JOAN, NIECE OF BISHOP VESEY.
 1535 LELAND DESCRIBES STONE DAM WITH ARCH THROUGH
 WHICH WATER FLOWED AND DROVE A MILL.
 1549 PENALTY FOR MILLING OUTSIDE LORDSHIP 6/8d. (33½^p)
 1573 LEASE BY THOMAS KENE & WIFE SYBELL TO ROGER
 CRESTE OF NORTHFIELD FOR 21 YEARS.
 1575 LEASE OF MYLNE CROFT & 3 PONDS TO HENRY FEELD.
 1582 THOMAS & SYBELL KENE SELL MANOR MILLS TO
 THOMAS GYBONS OF NEWHALL.
 1668 GREAT FLOOD IN SUTTON. BRACEBRIDGE & WYNDLEY
 DAMS BREACHED. TOWN MILL DAMAGED.
 1668 JOHN WOOD FROM THE MILL BURIED.
 1671 WILLIAM GOODALL 6TH MILL, DAUGHTER JANE BAPTIZED.
 1678 JOAN POWER, WIFE OF JOHN POWER MILLER, BURIED.
 1762 POPULATION OF SUTTON PUT AT 1,800.
 1765 MILL POOL DRAINED AND NOW MEADOW.
 1790^s MISS BRACKEN SAYS MILL STOOD UNTIL END OF 18th CENTURY.
 1826 STONE DAM REMOVED. REPLACED BY A NEW STRAIGHT ROAD.
 1827 PEATS BRIDGE BUILT OF STONE FROM THE DAM.
 1879 DAM FIRST CALLED "PARADE"
 1982 MILL STREET NAME PLATE THE ONLY VISIBLE
 REMINDER OF SUTTON'S ORIGINAL MANORIAL
 WATER-MILL.