

From the Chair

As the society's season draws to a close, we can look back on a second successful year. We have had some excellent speakers, talking to us on a very wide range of topics. The Christmas social was a great success, as should be the garden party at Colin Cohen's on 21 June. We are all grateful to Colin for generously (foolishly?) offering to host the event.

During our third season, which will commence on Wednesday 13 September, we shall again offer a mix of lectures and social events. We also intend to continue our practice of promoting links with neighbouring societies such as those at Adderbury and Cropredy, with whom we have already exchanged visits. On Saturday 12 May 2001 we shall be hosting a day school at the Windmill Centre devoted to the subject of Deddington Castle.

So, there is plenty to look forward to. In the meantime, enjoy the summer (when/if it arrives), and thanks to you all for your support this year.

Chris Day—Chairman

Provisional programme 2000-01

We are already working on a full programme for our next season, and details will be published in the next issue of 224 which will be available at our first meeting on 13 September 2000.

Meanwhile don't forget our mid-summer social at The Old Vicarage, Barford St Michael on Wednesday, 21 June at 7.30. For tickets call 01869 338637.

Editorial

Now we have reached our third issue it is perhaps time to set out our aims for 224.

From now on I hope that we will be able to manage three issues each season, one to be published for our first meeting of the season in September, one in the spring and a final issue in the summer at the time of our last meeting.

This does rather depend on members' contributions, because I do not want it to become just a list of future meetings, or summaries of those that we have held. I would like to see some original research included, as was the case in our first issue with Frances Wakeman's description of Deddington Mill. In this issue we start an architectural history of Clifton Mill, which I hope members will find of interest.

Colin Robinson has kindly provided a photo from his collection which I hope will prompt members to let us reproduce photos that they may have, or perhaps to comment on the subject matter.

As well as longer items I would also welcome letters and snippets to help fill the odd corner!

I hope to hear from you—contact details are on the back page.

Colin Cohen—Editor

Clifton Mill: part 1

'A record of the existing Mill building and mill machinery and an assessment of existing information including an historical report. Plans with locations marked of items photographed and plans of proposed changes.' Prepared by Architectural Historian Dr Alison Maguire for Mr Aubrey and Dr N Allison in November 1998, to whom the Society is most grateful for permission to

reproduce it.

Clifton Mill is recorded as being new built in 1483. It is possible that this is what we see. It is certainly likely that ground floor 'door' openings date from this time. Blocked windows on the east elevation are also dateable to the 1483 new build. Mouldings of the small rectangular windows on the south side, ground floor, fit better with a late 16th century date.

There is a question as to whether the present mill stands on the foundations of the earlier mill which is mentioned in the Domesday Book. A careful survey of the water engineering might produce firm evidence. A factor to be taken into account is that the meadows each side of the Cherwell at this point are liable to flooding; it would be important to site the mill on firm ground.

The mill has undergone many improvements over the centuries and much repair: two 16th century windows on the south indicate some new thinking probably when Christ Church acquired the mill. The 17th century work is visible in the various doors and windows. There is also a 17th century chamfered post, now cut into three posts and used to support the floor above.

Strengthening action and repairs were undertaken throughout the 19th century and in the 20th century. The paddle wheels and mill machinery, the supporting brickwork, and the staging on the first floor was all put into the building in the mid 19th century. This replaced two wooden paddle wheels with wooden mill machinery.

There is no visible sign from the building that the present stone structure has been heightened, extended or rebuilt—except for the

changes will anyway by now be well-weathered.

Evidence to consider is that the 15th century openings are on the ground floor. There is a stone plinth which can be clearly seen on the north side. The 15th century opening rests on this plinth. 17th century window openings with wooden lintels are found on the north side ground and north and south first floors. One south door with wooden lintel may also date to the 17th century. There is no evident disturbance of the stonework around these 17th century openings. More research on the likely 1483 mill wheel and mill machinery would help to clarify some of the questions which are raised by the 17th century improvements.

Reading through the Christ Church archives, it is clear that the miller was always searching for ways to maximise his income from the mill, by increasing capacity—adding another wheel, wanting to improve the waterwheels by replacing them with iron, wanting to convert the mill to steam—or by improving quality.

Now, the winnowing machine in the attic is the only indication left of the miller's desire to speed up the process of milling. Stanley Freese talks about 'flour dressing' whereby the dressing process and the drying process would have enabled the miller to command a better price for his flour (Freese 1957, p56, 57).

HISTORY

In Wilfred Foreman's list of Domesday mills (Foreman 1983 p2), Deddington is entered as having three mills. As Clifton was one of the estates which made up Deddington, it can be assumed that the Mill at Clifton was one of those recorded in the Domesday Book.

By 1271, Clifton Mill had passed to Bicester Priory—although the Priory continued to pay rent to Eynsham Abbey which had acquired a third from Maud de Chesney in 1180 and another third from Ralph Murdac in 1192 (VCH p107). By 1276, Bicester Priory owned the Clifton Manor, which

included a farm and the Mill (VCH p90).

It is likely that the Priory 'farmed' the Clifton estate and mill until the end of the 14th century, when it was more economic to lease. 1395-6, it is recorded that Andrew Draper of Oxford held the Bicester Manor and Clifton Mill at farm for 20 years at £40 per year (VCH p101).

The site of Bicester Priory's manor house is north of the main road, between the village and the mill. There is no indication in the existing records of its date of construction or of its appearance.

It is apparent that Bicester Priory maintained and developed its property: it is recorded that 'in 1377 the canons of Bicester were buying dressed stonework from the Castle walls' (at Deddington). This may have been connected with the building of the manor house at Clifton (VCH p88-90).

By 1483 there is a new built Clifton Mill. The Priory is recorded as paying 20s per annum for 'New Clifton Mill' to Eynsham Abbey rather than the earlier rent of 40s (VCH p107). Possibly this cut in rent reflects the fact that Bicester Priory undertook the building of the mill.

It is significant that good stone was

sold when old buildings fell into disuse. The dressed stone surrounds on the ground floor of the mill may have also come from some part of Deddington Castle, as more of the building was sold off. 'In the early 16th century Leland found no more to say than 'there hath been a castle at Deddington' (VCH p90). In assessing the likely movement of these dressed stones, it is known that they were 'dressed' before 1377 when the castle was described as 'an old demolished castle' (VCH p90). The depressed arches on the ground floor of the Mill and the east blocked windows do not visibly belong to such an early date.

The dressed stone surrounds are unlikely to have come from the old chapel at Clifton. There is an engraving of the chapel made in 1791 (OCL I 1292) which shows the building still standing and presumably in use.

The archives at Christ Church (Ms Estates 69 p150) reveal that after Bicester Priory was dissolved in 1536, the manor passed first to Anthony Busterd gent. On 6th June, 1536 there is a grant by Anthony Busterd gent to Thomas Pope, Treasurer of the Court of Augmentation, of his property at Deddington, including the old Bicester manor—for the sum of £635. Clifton



A fifteenth-century opening on the south elevation of Clifton Mill on the roadway—formerly the Burford to Buckingham Turnpike

is mentioned in this grant.

1 November 1540, there is a copy of the lease by Sir Thomas Pope of Bermondsey to John Edmondson of Dedyngton, gent of the manors including Clifton and 'also the watermill at Clyfton, now or late in tenure of John Manning, yeoman'. This was a 60 year lease at a rent of £52.5 per annum.

In 1545 the King 'regained' the manor from Pope by exchange and the following year, he granted Bicester Manor to Christ Church (VCH p94). At Christ Church, there is a 17th century copy of an account made on 18th February 1536 for Henry VIII of 'manors, lands and tenements in which Sir Thomas Pope is bound to the King'. The manor of Deddington is valued at £52.5 per annum.

Deddington, Clifton and Hempton formed one of the largest of Christ Church's estates and were endowed for the maintenance of college and cathedral. The land and rents at Clifton included Clifton Farm and the mill. The parcel was leased usually for 21 years. After 1782, the parcel was divided and the farm and mill leased separately.

To be continued.

Bibliography

Christ Church Archives = Calendar of Estate Papers, Oxfordshire 7, Caversham to Overy, Ms Estates 69, 70, 71 containing the history of the Mill from 1536 to 1885, when it was exchanged for other property with W C Cartwright.

Foreman = *Oxfordshire Mills*, Wilfred Foreman. Philimore, 1983.

Freese = *Windmills and Millwrighting*, Stanley Freese. David & Charles, 1957.

VCH: *Victoria History of the Counties of England*, Volume XI, Oxfordshire: Wootton Hundred.

John Minchin of Clifton, miller

Among the wills and inventories studied by the local history class

that met at the school last autumn were those of John Minchin of Clifton, miller. It seems appropriate to include some extracts to accompany the account of Clifton Mill.

John's will was drawn up on 19 November 1618. It is clear from the will that he and his wife Alice were sharing the mill with relatives named Parsons. Bequests to William Parsons included the lease of the mill, and three hives of bees for the use of William's children. William's daughter Margaret received a cow and a calf. John signed the will by making his mark. It is likely that he could not write, though he may simply have been too ill to sign! We should never regard such people (the majority) as in some way lacking in intelligence. We should even be wary of describing non-writers as illiterate: it does not mean that they could not read. Very often someone who could read accounts, for example, and the Bible, would have little need for writing and might never bother to acquire the skill.

An inventory of John's goods and chattels was made 13 December, by when, of course, he had died. The total value was £63. 2. 6, suggesting that he was comfortably off but not wealthy. Animals included 3 horses, 5 cows and a calf, 2 hogs (plus 2 flitches of bacon), and 4 pigs. No luxury goods were recorded, but he owned quantities of pewter and brass, furniture, bedding, and linen ware. The appraisers proceeded through the building as follows: the hall, the buttery, the chamber over the hall, the mill, the stable. At first sight, if those were the only rooms, then the mill complex would seem to have been much smaller than it is today. It is possible, though, that John had made over some rooms to his wife and/or relatives and that they were consequently excluded from the appraisal. So we might not be seeing the whole picture.

One always hopes to find in a miller's inventory some evidence relating to his trade. In this case the appraisers note enigmatically, between recording the contents of the hall and the buttery, 'one paire of millstons at Dadington'. Why they chose to record them at this point in their inventory is a mystery. Why, moreover, were they at Ded-

dington? Were they newly purchased and waiting for delivery? The mill's contents included a cheese press, a shovel, a spade, a lantern, 2 bushels, 2 barrels, a pair of pulleys, 2 locks and a pair of fetters. Not especially enlightening, but most disappointing of all, the appraisers simply referred without itemisation to 'all his working tools'. The stables housed sacks, 'cogs and rounds' assessed at a valuable £2. 4. 0, two ladders, three wheels, and one 'collar of bells'. Hay was valued at £8, the single biggest assessment. In a hovel were peas and straw. Finally, there were four hives, a rat-trap, three stocks of bees, and a bedstead: clearly farmyards then were as cluttered as now.

The inventory reveals some of the fascinations and frustrations inherent in this historical source. At their most revealing, inventories can reveal much about the layout of houses and the changing use of rooms. We can see over time, for instance, how the hall shifts from being the main room and centre of the house to a mere entrance lobby. We can trace also the ceiling-in of open halls and the development of bedrooms, with their greater opportunity for privacy. Inventories are particularly valuable for the information they give us about people's belongings in the past, their clothing, furnishings, and valuables. They are an important major source of information about farming. It is worth noting that it was usual for millers also to be farmers.

Inventories can, however, obscure as much as they disclose. We would certainly have hoped for more information about Clifton Mill than we are granted. Appraisers sometimes didn't bother to record certain items, or they would take refuge in a portmanteau phrase such as 'sundry other items', or 'other lumber': books, for instance, were often ignored or simply lumped together. Inventories are, therefore, complex documents that need careful handling. They should not to be taken at face value.

As a long-term project members of the History Society intend to transcribe and analyse the wills of the trades- and crafts-people of this area from the 16th to the 18th centuries.

Chris Day

The North Oxfordshire Monthly Times

This newspaper enjoyed a brief success during the 1850s, published from the site of the present Deddington Police Office.

While its news values may not have been those of today there are those items that resonate down the years. This extract was published on 6 May 1851:

EXTRACT FROM A PARISH RECEIPT BOOK

How to make Churchwardens after the newest Deddington method.

(Continued.)

Get a Vestry Meeting called, if legally all the better, but if not, never mind, let it be held under any circumstances. Have ready some three or four dupes or dependants. Put the oldest woman of the party in the chair. Commence business exactly as the clock strikes *Seven* (if you have not begun before). Don't stay for any respectable parishioners, who may be five minutes past the hour, to be present. To save time, let the Chairman propose, second, and elect one Churchwarden for the Parish, then let him do the same for the Vicar. This will save him all trouble and care in the matter. While this is doing, let one of the party inscribe these proceedings on a sheet of paper, the back of a Lawyer's brief, or of a letter, (but don't wait for a Vestry Book,) and pocket them as soon as the Chairman has added his signature, or mark, fully believing that they have—held a Vestry! In *ten* minutes after the striking of the clock, the Chairman or his Nominator may dissolve the meeting, supposing that they have made two fancy Churchwardens, who will be found very light and puffy, if not squeezed too hard or handled too roughly.

NB—If these two made officials should be Feoffees, so much the bet-

ter, as Feoffees are, in some instances, accustomed to keep both accounts and money, and to enjoy good dinners at the expense of the public. The above receipt has been tried by

AN OLD KING'S ARMS COOK

*Deddington,
Sparrow Club Supper Night, 1851.*

In future issues of 224:

The history of Clifton Mill—part 2

The Deddington Pudding Pie Fair

The railways of north Oxfordshire

The diaries of Frederica St John Orlebar

Oxfordshire Family History Society open day

Saturday 21 October, 10am–4pm at Exeter Hall, Oxford Road, Kidlington

Displays by family history societies and other organisations.

Book, fiche and postcard sales.

Computer and Internet demos.

Research facilities.

Free admission and parking

Drinks and light refreshments on sale all day.

Details: Tony Chalky 01993 850685

e-mail: open-day@ofhs.org.uk—Web: www.ofhs.org.uk/

We are grateful to Colin Robinson for providing this photo and note: This is an example of the kind of snap for which I would encourage D&DHS members to dig around. The cows are entering Hopcraft Lane from Castle Street and going towards French's farm, which used to be where there is now a small development of new houses next to the Old School House. Behind the cows can be seen Sanders' van and sweet shop. I wonder what the bunting was to celebrate? The original was kindly lent to me by Joan Fisher, née French. I have quite a few more such snaps.



If undelivered please return to: Deddington & District History Society, c/o 37 Gaveston Gardens, Deddington OX15 0NX. **224** is the newsletter of the Deddington & District History Society, published three times a year and distributed free to members. The Society meets on the second Wednesday of the month during the season, normally at the Windmill Centre in Deddington. Membership £7/12 pa single/couples, or £2 per meeting at the door. Editorial address: 1 South Newington Road, Barford St Michael, OX15 0RJ. e-mail: c.cohen@printernet.co.uk