

CHAPTER XIII

VANISHED INDUSTRIES

MILLING

By far the most ancient of the vanished industries of Milton is that of the miller's craft. In the extracts from *Domesday Book* on page 31 will be found, relating to the manor held by Goisfrid Alselin :

“ There is a mill rendering thirty pence.”

Where that mill stood, and whether it was a water-mill or windmill, are things difficult to conjecture.

A mill was once connected with the Church Cottages, the “ toft ” granted by Thomas Rage to the church of Milton. In 1517, the feoffees granted to Richard Hut of Blisworth a lease of the tenement, “ with a horsmylle and a close to the same perteynyng, togedir as they byn sett in the Town of the forseid Middylton.” Richard Hut was promised what seems like preferential treatment. He was to grind for three days in every week, “ yt is to sey Monday, Wednysday and Friday to serve the seide Town of Middilton. And all the seide Town of Middelton promysith and granntith to grynde at the seide mille before any other as long as they may be as well served there as thei can be in any other place by thise presentes.” For the lease see page 248.

Close to Stockwell, where the Church Cottages stand, is a field known as Mill Banks. Its name tells us there was a mill standing here at one time, and Mr. Wm. Clarke informed me he was told one stood there until the time of the Enclosure of the Commons, when it was pulled down. A windmill stood in Mill Close on the Collingtree Road, where there is now an orchard to the east of the railway. This in its turn was demolished about the middle of the last century.

Amongst the manuscript notes about Milton written by Wm. Taylor, the schoolmaster of Heyford, who collected information for Dr. Bridges when compiling his history, is a description of the brooks. Of the "Blysworth Brook" he writes that it "rises from Dykes and small springs in Blisworth field, Drives an Overshott Mill, makes a small Brook on ye west side of this town."

Taylor wrote his notes in 1718-21, so there was a water-mill working in those days, but where?

The following old advertisement, taken from the *Northampton Mercury*, dated Saturday, May 26th, 1798, may be of interest. It refers to the mill that stood in Mill Close.

A WINDMILL

FOR SALE BY AUCTION

By Benjamin Mason

At the Dolphin Inn, in Northampton on Sat. the 9th. of June, 1798, at Four o'clock in the afternoon, subject to such conditions as will be produced.

A substantial well-built Windmill, standing

and being at Milton, otherwise Middleton Malsor, in the County of Northampton, in the occupation of Mr. William Bray, at the yearly rent of Ten Pounds, clear of all Deductions.

For further particulars, or to treat by private contract, apply to William Bellamy, or Joseph Bennett, both of Hasely, near Warwick, and for a view of the premises apply to the Tenant.

N.B.—Milton is three miles from Northampton.

In the parish registers are references to Wm. Bray, Miller, in 1817 and 1821. Then in 1825 we find that Widow Bray “failed in her business with ye windmill and disposed of the lease for £20 and her horse and cart for £15.” So in 1837 we find “Wm. Marks, Miller” and his son “George Marks, Miller”; but the Bray family seem to have resumed the business, as in 1849 and 1851 John Bray is described in the registers as “Miller.”

There seems to have been some dispute as to the ownership of the mill in Mill Close, and for several years it stood idle and tenantless, being used only by tramps as a shelter at night. Bits of it were taken away by stealthy hands for firewood, and at last, about 1864, some half-dozen Milton boys daringly removed one of the four brick piers on which it stood, leaving one brick on end as a temporary support. At this, from a safe distance, they hurled stones until the brick was shattered and the huge structure toppled over with a resounding crash. Some of those boys, old men by this time, are still in Milton. The two millstones are now in the garden at Mortimers.

WEAVING

This seems to be one of the earliest recorded of the other industries that once flourished in Milton. We know that in the fifteenth century the weaver's craft flourished in Northampton and, being so near the town, Milton must have possessed its share of woollen weavers. This idea is supported by the existence of St. Catherine's Chapel in Milton Church, because the weavers had their annual festival on St. Catherine's Day. In all probability this was the Guild Chapel for the Weavers' Guild in Milton, but although such a Guild undoubtedly existed, no reference to it has yet been discovered.

In the time of Henry VIII there was perhaps more sheep-farming than agriculture in the country districts, and the cottagers would possess their spinning-wheels both for woollen and linen yarn. It was the woman's work to spin, and the wheels would be handed down from mother to daughter. Thus Alice Gaddesden, widow, of Milton bequeathes by Will dated October 26th, 1599 :

“ I give and bequeath to Katherine Gadsden my daughter . . . one woollen wheele, one lynnne wheele.”

And Mary Hooton, of Milton, November 26th, 1688 :

“ I give to Ann Hooton my youngest Daughter . . . one woollen whele.”

The Will of William Dry, Lord of the Manor,

October 10th, 1677, shows us how Milton ladies passed their time :

“ Item. I do geve and bequeath unto my sd. loving wife all the linnen & other goods she brought to me with her & also all the linnen yarne, which is in my house, which she lately span with her own hands.”

In his Will dated July 1st, 1676, Richard Dix describes himself as “ of Milton, Weaver,” which is the first reference we have to the weaving industry in Milton.

The church registers give very meagre details of the persons entered therein until we come to the eighteenth century, and then we find men described by their occupations. Amongst them are the following connected with the weaving industry :

- 1729. Jonathan Rowlatt, fell-monger.
- 1734. Edmund Rogers, weaver.
- 1737. James Bibswell, weaver.
- 1739. Henry Garriot, Jersey-comber.

The latest entry of a weaver is that of James Bibswell, which occurs again in 1744.

So it is evident that there were some cottages in Milton where the hand-loom was worked, and very many where the whir of the spinning-wheel was heard. The linen that was spun on the wheels of the cottagers was of home production. Flax was cultivated in the neighbourhood up to about fifty years ago and provided employment for many, as an entry in the school Log Book for July 31st, 1865, explains that several children were absent “ Gleaning peas and pulling flax.”

LACE-MAKING

The art and craft of lace-making is another vanished industry. This art was introduced into the neighbouring county of Buckinghamshire by Henry VIII's first wife, Queen Katharine of Arragon, who lies buried near the High Altar in Peterborough Cathedral. Immigrants from Flanders were the persons principally engaged; but by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it had become the chief local industry and had spread to Northamptonshire. During the last century pillow lace was made in almost every cottage in Milton, and there were schools in the village where little girls were taught how to ply the bobbins. One near the Green was kept by Mary Caswell about fifty years ago, and in the school Log Book we find occasionally a note to the effect that some girl had left school "to learn lace-making," e.g. in 1873, May 23rd, "Mary H—— left. Gone to learn lace-making," and in 1874, March 20, "Ann S—— gone to the lace school."

The lace-makers had a very ingenious contrivance by which they could ply their art at night in the light of a home-made rushlight. They had what was called a "candle-stool," something in shape like a three-legged stool, but not quite so high as a table. On this the rushlight would be placed and, to intensify its feeble glimmer, glass globes filled with water were placed in position, one for each lace-maker. These globes had long narrow necks sealed with a cork, and the necks were inserted in wicker

holders that were fastened to the table. Thus the globe-shaped part of the bottle was uppermost and the rays from the rushlight, or candle, streaming through became brilliant enough, when focussed on the pillow, to enable the lace-makers to see their delicate task. The work was, of course, done on the ordinary lace pillow, which was placed on a small crescent-shaped table, commonly called a "horse."

A curious inventory of the effects of a poor man, found pinned in one of the overseers' books, mentions a candle-stool among the rest :

" 1816. May 21st. Lace pillow, meat fork, tinder box, flag basket, candle-stool, boot legs."

From an entry in the register it would seem as if some men employed several lace-makers to work for them.

" 1705. John Bandidge, Lacemaker, died on ye 7th. and was buried on ye 8th. day of May."

On the other hand, John Bandidge may have been himself a lace-maker. Buyers of lace made periodical visits to the village and the lace-makers took their wares to them, when there would be much chaffering. In the registers, under date 1698/9, January 11th, we find mention of " John Stanton, lacebuyer," and farther on we read that " John Staulton, lacebuyer, was buried April ye 13th. 1699," very likely one and the same person. Probably his successor in the business was " Richard Robinson, a lace buyer, of this parish," who was married " Feb. ye 26th. 1703/4." In the Parish Vestry Books for 1823 mention is made of Wm.

Turland, Milton, Lace Merchant. From 1700 onwards we find lace-makers frequently mentioned in the registers, the last entry being in that for marriages under date February 3rd, 1868.

There was no picture palace or "Palais de Danse" in those days, no parish dances or whist-drives for long winter nights. Bobbins furnished one means of recreation, not only for winter nights but also for summer evenings, as the poet Cowper describes it :

" Yon cottager who weaves at her own door,
Pillows and bobbins all her little store."

About sixty years ago the Milton lace-makers used to bake an ornamented cake, called a "Tander's Cake," for St. Andrew's Day. This day was observed in Milton as the lace-makers' festival, and an old bellringer told me it was customary to ring our church bells on "Tander's Day," i.e. St. Andrew's Day.

Lace-making declined during the last century, when machine-made Nottingham lace flooded the market, so that now it is, if at all, only practised as a pastime in Milton.

BREWING AND MALTING

These industries are not now carried on in our village. In olden days the aleman brewed his own liquor. The names of some who kept an alehouse here in years gone by are found in the register: 1719, "Sarah Duncley, widow, who sold ale"; 1720, "Wil Burman who sold ale," and "John Bull, aleman." In 1739 is men-

tioned a representative of an allied trade, "James Harris, Cooper," and in 1824 we find "William Marks, Brewer."

The first maltster referred to as being of Milton is James Palmer, who in his Will dated January 3rd, 1683, describes himself as "of Milton alliis Middleton Malzor, Maulster."

At the beginning of the last century a malting business was carried on in Milton by Mr. Thos. Cockerill, who kept the Greyhound Inn, where he sold his own home-brewed ale. In 1806 he began operations on a larger scale and built a brewery close to his inn, called the Hope Brewery. He carried on the business of brewer and maltster for many years, being succeeded about 1825 by William Minards. In 1835 Minards sold the business to James Lilly, who kept the business going until 1866, when it was purchased by the late Mr. Wm. East. His son, the late Mr. Herbert East, became a partner in the business in 1880. Mr. East was a man of some enterprise: the old brewery was considerably enlarged and new plant added, and in 1888 a new brewery was built adjoining the old one. There is a well on the premises, thirty-five feet deep, from which water is pumped to an iron tank in the roof, which holds 3000 gallons. When the well was made, the workmen who were digging at the bottom suddenly came upon the spring. The water poured in so rapidly that they had to be drawn up at once, leaving their working tools behind.

In 1905 the Hope Brewery was sold to the Northampton Brewery Company, who dis-

mantled the premises and possess the "Greyhound" as a tied house.

The maltings connected with the business were considerably older than the brewery, and once belonged to Mr. John Marriott, a Baptist minister. "The Stackyard Malting," as it was called, has since been converted into a row of eight cottages, bearing the name of "Maltings Terrace," situated at the back of the Little Green. A description of it published before the alteration may be of interest :

"This ancient malthouse is 153 feet long, and is, in part, two storeys high. It is built of brick and stone, and, with its old-fashioned outside stairs, has a quaint appearance. It comprises, besides a growing floor, barley stores, malt-bins and a kiln. The basement of the building contains the pale ale cellar, and a large portion of the upper storey has been converted into a hop store."

This malthouse evidently existed long before the time of Mr. Marriott, and from it the farmers and villagers obtained their malt to brew their ale.

Hops for brewing were once successfully grown in Milton, and a field bears to this day the name of "Hop Close." By the courtesy of Thomas Phipps Dorman, Esq., of Northampton, I am able to give the following extract of an Excise statement signed by his grandfather, the late Thomas Phipps, brewer and maltster, under date July 27th, 1852 :

"I, Thomas Phipps, of Bridge Street, Northampton, do hereby make an entry of

One Kiln or Oast, marked 2 K, for the purpose of drying Hops, the produce of my hop ground in Milton Field, in the parish of Milton &c."

PIN-MAKING

Curious though it may seem to us nowadays, this industry once flourished at Milton, the factory being situated at the end of a garden next to the Baptist Chapel. Here the Lever family made brass pins, employing a good many workmen in the time of business prosperity. A writer in the *Victoria County History*, Vol. II, page 339, states that the Lever family had a factory at Hardingstone and Stony Stratford as well. At Hardingstone the manufacturers were Edward Lever and his nephew William, and the latter continued making pins there after his uncle Edward's death. Another uncle, John Lever, manufactured pins at Milton and other members of the family at Stony Stratford.

Pins used to be imported into England, but in 1626 the industry was introduced into Stroud, from where it soon spread to London, Bristol and Birmingham. The pins then made were not all of one piece, the heads being formed of coiled fine wire, each head consisting of two complete twists. Thousands of these heads were softened by heat, and the "heading boy" pushed the "shanks" (the lengths of wire forming the pins) into the mass of heads. When the shanks had each a head stuck on, he passed them on to another person who put the finishing touches to the heads. As may well be supposed, these heads were very liable to come off. It was a

tedious business, for each pin had to pass through no less than eighteen processes, a man or a boy being responsible for each process. This is instanced by Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations* as a remarkable division of labour. In 1817 Seth Hunt patented a machine for making head, shaft and point in one entire piece, and various improvements in the machinery brought it about that by 1840 the machine-made pins had almost entirely driven those made by hand out of the market. So by degrees the smaller pin factories were extinguished.

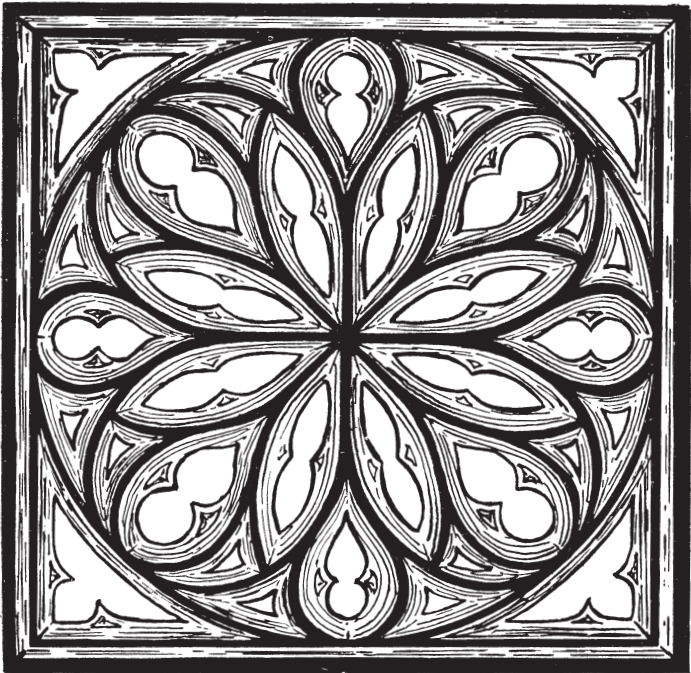
At Milton, the pins were, of course, manufactured by the old process of sticking on the heads, and there are some records of the factory in existence.

In the Overseers' Book, 1823, J. Houghton is referred to as working at the Pin Manufactory, and there is a Parish Vestry note on September 22nd, 1826, that two Milton men were "to be sent to Thomas Lever to head pins." In the parish registers there are entries concerning "Thomas Lever, Pin Manufacturer," on various dates from 1820 to 1843.



Photo, H. Walter Manser.

ST. CATHERINE'S CHAPEL.



J. A. TOWNSEND

PLAN OF WHEEL WINDOW.