

Wind and Water Mills

The Occasional Journal of the
Midland Wind and Water Mills Group

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The editors will be pleased to consider contributions of articles and drawings
for inclusion in future issues.

MILLS AND FORGES ON THE WANNERTON BROOK IN NORTH WORCESTERSHIRE

by H.W. GWILLIAM

The five mile range of the Clent Hills stretches from Wychbury Hill to Wasely Hill. This area has seen many changes in the county borders, parts having been at times in Worcestershire, Staffordshire and Shropshire. In 1832, an Act of Parliament transferred Clent from Staffordshire to Worcestershire. The Clent district thus returned to Worcestershire after 800 years.

The stream that eventually becomes the Wannerton Brook rises on the Clent Hills and runs between the Four Stones Hill and the Walton Hill, above Clent Church. (See map.) The stream was used from medieval times to power cornmills and, later on, ironworks, for by the 16th and 17th centuries the chief trades in Clent village were scythe-making and nail making. Usually the scythe-smith was a farmer as well, but some families specialised early on scythe making. One, Waldron of Clent, died in 1541, leaving a hearth to each of his four sons, and the widow to receive the benefit of a blade mill. He left 650 scythes valued at £53, and a total estate of £120. A great sum in those days.

In 1790 Thomas Waldron, whose works on the Belne Brook at Belbroughton were flourishing, still had control of the family works at Clent, and moved his scythe-smiths to his main works at Belbroughton which had a better water supply. Waldron appears to have had other works downstream on the Wannerton Brook, for about 1790 he built the dam above the church to create Clatterbach Pool, and so harnessed the stream to provide a better water supply for their use.

In 1827 Clatterbach Pool burst its dam. The pool was two acres in extent and very deep. The damage done throughout the valley was tremendous. Waldron's forges and a 34ft. diameter wheel were swept away. Only quick action by warning mills and forges further down saved greater damage. Hurcott Paper Mill especially, being very vulnerable in its position above the stream, was saved by warnings and the opening of all the floodgates and sluices.

The mills on the Wannerton Brook will now be discussed in order, working downstream from Clent, and taking the mills on each tributary stream before continuing down the main brook. Much of the information was gleaned by the author from documentary and field research before the papers of the late H.E.S. Simmons became available for study at the Science Museum Library. Recently Dr. Gordon Tucker has made available his notes on these mills abstracted from the Simmons papers, and these have been incorporated into the descriptions below.

Early mill at Clent

Simmons records that Mr. Edward Moore of Middle Forge, Belbroughton, had heard people speak of an earlier mill at Clent, standing above the one next listed below, in what is known as "The Glen". It was supposed to have been washed away many years ago.

Clent Mill SO 931796

Simmons referred to this as Spout Mill, but this name may possibly pertain to the mill at Hagley (see below). A less ambiguous name is Vine Mill.

The old mill dam and pond (the latter rather derelict) still remain immediately above the Vine Inn, north of the village of Clent. The mill was adjacent to the inn. Simmons stated that built on to the watermill was a small steam mill and



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