

This is the Sixtieth of an occasional series of articles by David Stone about incidents in the history of Swanton Morley and its church

SWANTON MORLEY WATERMILL

Early watermills in Swanton Morley

At the time of the Domesday Book there were some 580 recorded watermills in Norfolk, but no windmills; one of these watermills was in Swanton Morley, but I do not know if it was on the site of later mills. In those days it would have used a horizontal wheel to power a single set of stones set directly above the wheel.

The fulling mill

In his *Short History of the Village of Swanton Morley* Steer states that he was able to discover from the parish registers and other records that weaving was carried out in the parish in the 16th century, and that this led to the erection of a fulling mill "At the north-west end of Swanton Morley on the banks of the River Wensum." Now fulling is a step in the making of woollen cloth; it first cleanses it to remove impurities such as oils and dirt. The second function of fulling is to thicken the cloth by matting the fibres together to give it strength and to increase waterproofing. A water mill would have been used to drive machinery so that the cloth was beaten by wooden hammers. After this stage, water was used to rinse out the foul-smelling liquor used during cleansing.

Papermaking in Norfolk began in about 1695

To see what happened next I shall turn to *The Early History of Paper-Making in Norfolk* by David Stoker who says that there was no paper made in East Anglia until the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Until then the English papermaking industry had been on a very small scale. There were two main factors which changed this. Firstly the price of imported paper increased markedly because of war and civil strife in France and this encouraged production in England, and secondly the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 caused the widespread immigration of Huguenot refugees, many of them papermakers. Two other factors combined to increase the demand for paper in the locality of Norwich. The lapse of the "Licensing Acts" in 1695 meant that printing was able to spread to the provinces, being established in Norwich in 1701, closely followed by the publication of three newspapers. The demand for white paper suitable for printing must have increased considerably in the area at this time.

The earliest reference to paper-making in Norfolk appears to be a deed in the archives of the Howard family of Castle Rising dated 1695 which refers to a fulling mill which was converted into a paper- mill.

However, paper and board were not only required by the book trade, but were also used in large quantities by the woollen industry for pressing, finishing, packing and wrapping purposes.

However, the watermill in Swanton Morley began life as a flour mill

I obtained a great deal of useful information about this mill from the "Norfolk mills" website and I should like to thank Jonathan Neville for his kind permission to quote from this; my thanks also to Oliver Diggle for lending me other material.

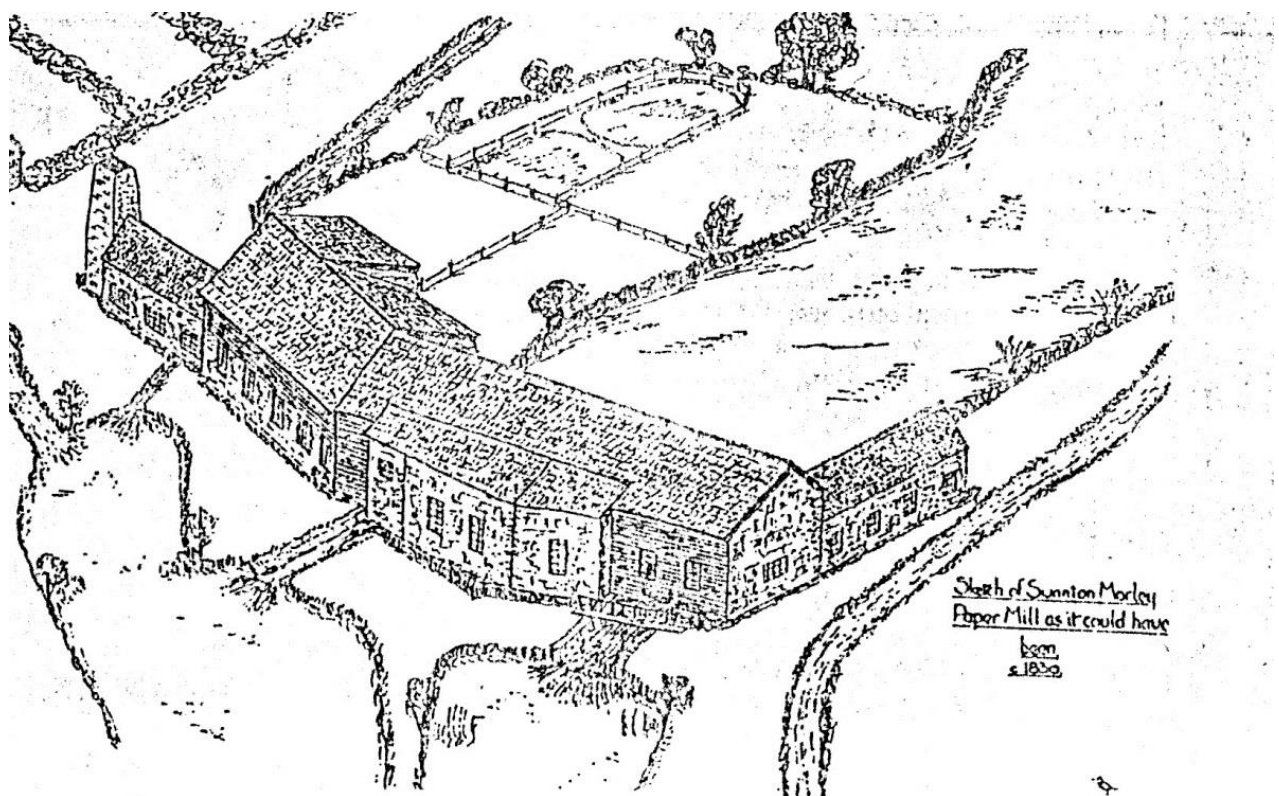
Now, the watermill at Swanton Morley started life as a flour mill. We first read of a certain Bacon Hibgame as being the flour miller in 1775. In the same year there then appears to have been a fire and the mill was rebuilt (still as a flour mill) in 1776. Bacon Hibgame was still the miller from 1776 to 1780.

The flour mill was rebuilt as a paper mill before 1783

We know that there was a paper-mill at Swanton Morley in 1783, because in this year Ralph Buck of Stoke Holy cross and Robert Mackglashan of Norwich insured a paper-mill in Swanton Morley. However, Ralph Buck died the following year and Mackglashan joined in partnership with John Edwards. This mill seems to have mainly produced glazed paper for the use of "hotpressers" to the wool trade. Here the textile product was pressed between glazed boards and hot metal plates to obtain a smooth and shiny surface.

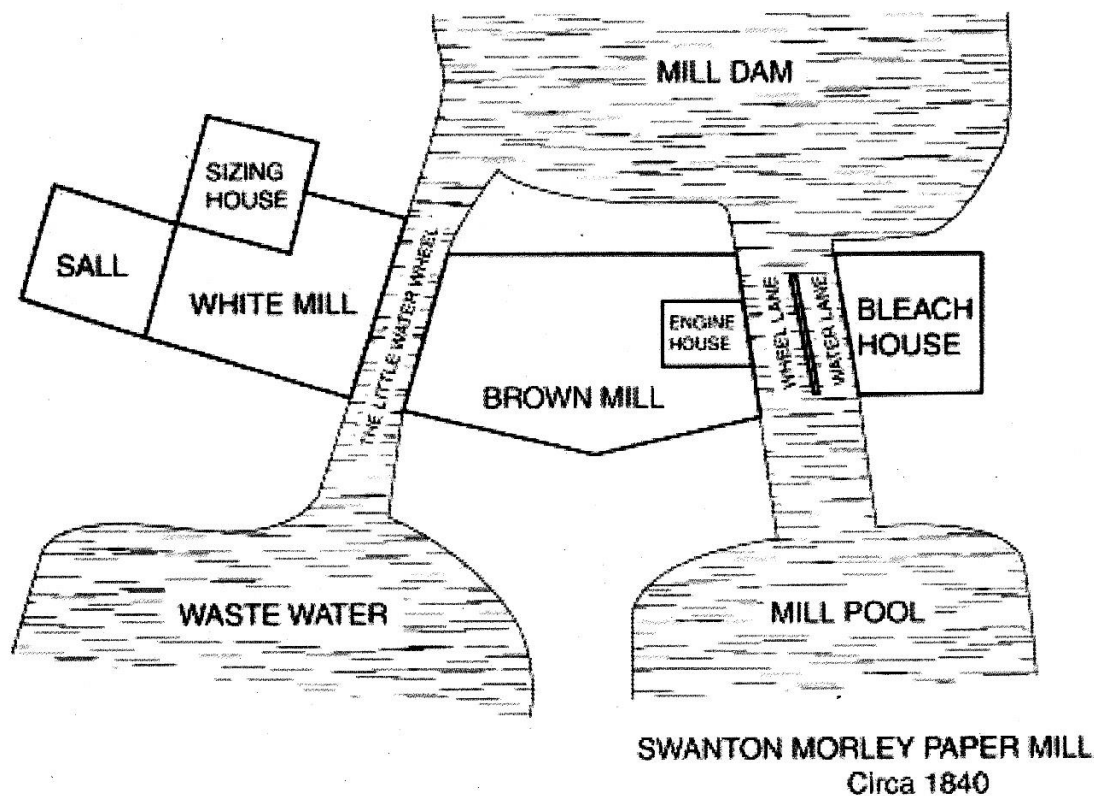
Unfortunately there was another fire in the glazing mill in 1784 and the insurers went bankrupt. Throughout the 18th century, paper-mills were particularly vulnerable to fire, largely due to the combustible nature of the rotting rags used in the production process.

The stock was sold off by auction in April 1787, and the mill was taken over by a partnership between William Tooke Robberds, a Norwich bookseller, and Joshua Furness, a paper-maker. They advertised the mill in 1790. This partnership continued into the nineteenth century, with the later addition of a third partner, George Furness. The watermark "Furness & Robberds" was in use in 1798, and this partnership was finally dissolved in 1809.



**A sketch of the mill as it could have been in about 1830
Compare this to the plan on the next page**

Other plans drawn up in the 1830s make it clear that the mill was the property of Edward Lombe, Esq. but James Rump owned buildings and land nearby and he was undoubtedly the tenant of the mill (see next page).



Now, the mill was located on a dam across the Wensum. There was a large main building measuring about 40ft x 150 ft. and in addition there was an attached drying house on the east bank of the river and an attached building called "The Sall" on the west bank. This appears to have contained a furnace, for you can see a tall chimney in the sketch. There were two water-wheels, the larger serving an "engine house" situated in the brown mill, and the smaller serving a separate small engine in the white mill. Note that the term "engine" does not mean a steam engine; it means machinery. Having said that, steam engines were later sometimes used elsewhere. When the mill at Taverham was at its zenith, between 1846 and the late 1880s, it had eleven steam engines as well as three water-wheels, but I imagine that the cost of transporting coal must have been very expensive.

Note also that this plan does not show the road bridge which replaced the ford near the mill in 1831. This bridge will be the subject of a further article.

James Rump

The next known paper maker at Swanton Morley was James Rump who had earlier been in partnership with a Mr Dusautoy at Lyng – the watermark "Dusautoy & Rump 1807" is quite commonly found. James Rump is listed as the proprietor of Swanton Morley Mill in directories for 1830 and 1836, but neither he nor the mill are mentioned in 1845

The workforce had greatly decreased by 1841

An article by Mr T F Garland of Toftwood says that between 1786 and 1841 there were fifty-two papermakers and 3 excise men working in a paper mill at the NW end of the village. (The excise men were required because there was a tax on paper.) However, by 1841, there were only 9 papermakers employed, and by 1851 there were none at all.

The Tithe apportionment in May 1846 shows the mill to be unoccupied

This apportionment was a rent charge confirmed by the Tithe Commission as payable to the rector in lieu of tithes. It shows, for each plot of land, the Landowner, the Occupier, a description of the land and the amount payable. It shows that Plots 438 to 444 were all owned by Edward Lombe. However, they were all occupied by James Rump, apart from Plot 438 (the Watermill & garden) which was unoccupied.