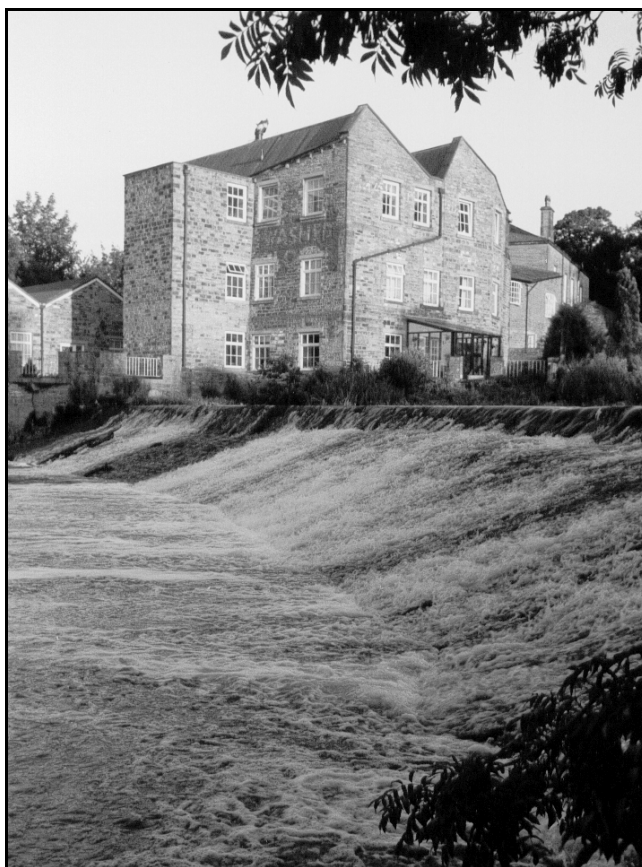


# **THE WATER MILLS OF SHIPLEY**



by  
**BILL HAMPSHIRE**

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**by**  
**BILL HAMPSHIRE**

With original drawings by  
Maggie Lambert \* & Bill Hampshire\*\*

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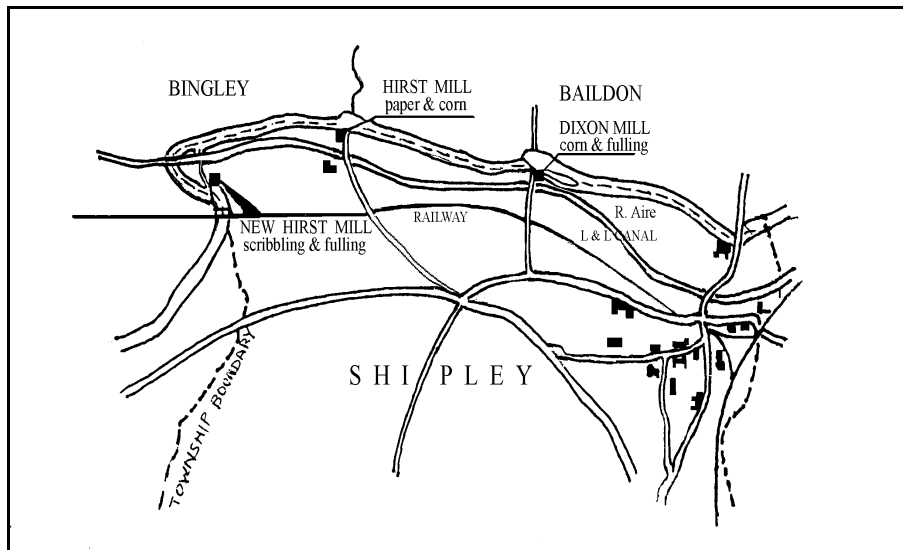
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## INTRODUCTION

That stretch of the River Aire forming the Northern boundary of Shipley once supported three watermills, namely Hirst Mill, Dixon Mill and New Hirst Mill. Hirst Mill may almost certainly be traced back to the thirteenth century. Dixon Mill and New Hirst Mill were built in 1635 and 1745 respectively.

The following is an attempt to piece together the history of the mills in terms of their owners and occupiers and the nature of their business.



*The sites of the three mills with their activities in 1850*

### The Mills Today

At the bottom end of Hirst Lane a swing bridge over the Leeds and Liverpool Canal leads to the houses of Hirst Crescent. Between those houses and the river stands the large three-storied stone-built structure of Hirst Mill, converted into dwellings in 1972. The old masonry-walled tail-race channel, or goit, is dry but still intact, and the mill dam or weir across the river is well maintained.

Half a mile downstream from Hirst Mill, at the end of Victoria Road, stands Salt's 'New Mill'. This mill was built on the site of the old Dixon Mill, standing in what was then Dixon Mill Lane. There is no trace of the old mill to be seen and the goit has recently been filled in, but the considerably augmented weir still stands boldly across the river.

Upstream from Hirst Mill, round the bend of the river and a little way beyond the aqueduct may be found the remains of New Hirst Mill, tucked into the side of Hirst Wood where the broken weir lies across the river. At times of low water there can be seen the scattered remains of stepping stones which once stood below the weir. On dry land near the end of the weir an iron trash rack can be seen, installed to protect the intake of the water wheel from floating debris, clearly indicating the initial water level before the weir was lowered.

Alongside is a head-race channel of somewhat later construction, standing in the middle of which is an iron column which may be the remains of some kind of water turbine. In the down-stream side of the ruins can be found two small masonry arches built to lead the tail-race from the waterwheel into the goit which, cutting across the bend in the river,

leaves an island of about two acres in extent. Beyond the footpath running above the ruins of the mill, a tangle of brushwood hides the sparse remains of a row of cottages once housing the workers of the mill

The following account of the three mills is drawn from public records, with particular help on the Dixon family from Sheila Coe and Sarah Costley, and from Ron Hartley on the Wright family.

Despite their limited power these early mills played their part in the transition of Shipley from a rural village to a thriving mill town.

## THE EARLY YEARS

### The Manorial Mill

In the Domesday Record of 1086, Shipley appears as a Manor, and part of the Honour of Pontefract held by Ilbert de Lacy. It was classed as waste and its value before 1066 was 10s. per annum. More detail is recorded in an Inquisition Post Mortem held in 1249 at the death of Sir Theobald le Buteller, late Lord of the Manor. Briefly there was in Shipley at that time a Capital Messuage (or Hall), 14 free tenants, nine cottars, a small wood and, *'one mill in common years is worth 20s, per annum'*. The whole 'Extent' is worth £8 - 13s - 10d. per annum.

Such a mill would be water-powered, built and owned by the Lord of the Manor and leased to a 'milner' or miller. By custom the tenants would be bound to bring their grain to be ground at the Lord's mill.

Nothing survives to show how the Manor of Shipley was administered but we can turn to the records of neighbouring manors and see how their Lords maintained pressure on the tenants by ancient custom.

Court of Sir Thomas Ros, at Baildon, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1427:

*'A pain of 40d is assessed on each tenant who ought to repair and roof the mill, that he does so according to his tenure before April 25<sup>th</sup> next. Also a pain of 40d on each tenant who ought to make and repair the mill dam, that he sufficiently repair his part before May 3<sup>rd</sup> next.'*

Court of Robert Stansfield, at Idle, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1757:

*'Six tenants within the manor have severally withdrawn their soke from the Lord's mill and carried their corn to be ground at other mills, and we do amerce them severally 6s - 8d.'*

In the heavy soils of Shipley, the main crop was oats, yielding oatmeal at the mill for making porridge and oatcakes in the home. The miller took an agreed fraction [mulcture] of the meal as payment in kind.

An Extent [survey] taken in 1285/6 of the lands and tenements of Theobald le Boteler - deceased son of the above Sir Theobald - shows the annual value of the Manor of Shipley to have increased to £10 - 2s - 11d, including:

*'... two mills, one for corn, the other a fulling mill, which are worth yearly 46s - 8d.'*

Fulling is an essential part of the finishing process for woollen cloth, serving to mat the fibres and cleanse the cloth. In earlier times fulling was performed by treading or 'walking' the cloth in a trough of water to which had been added a simple detergent such as stale urine, fuller's earth or, more recently, soft soap.

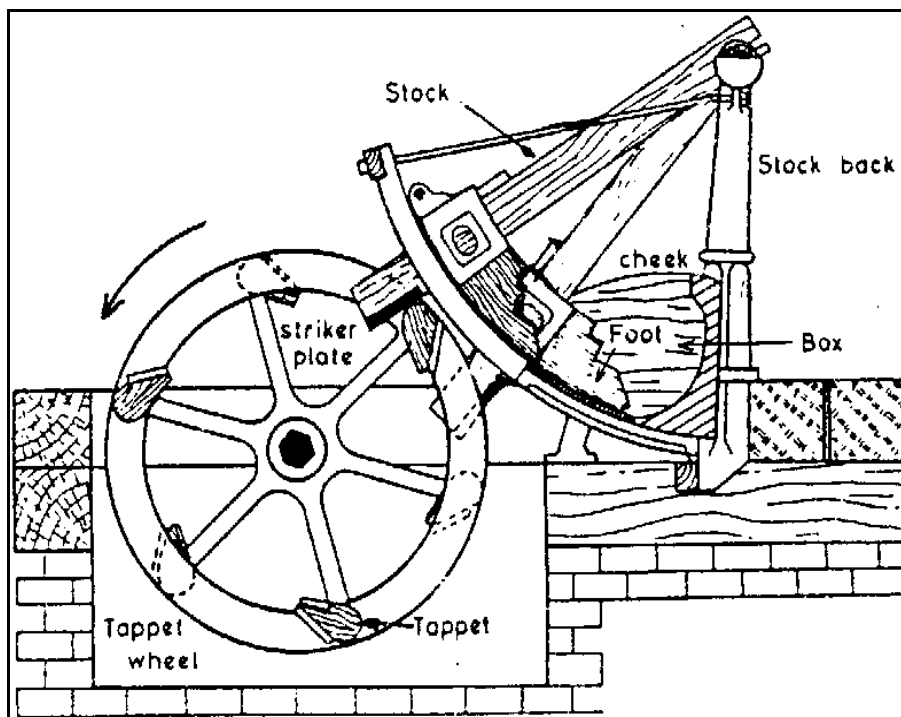
Towards the end of the twelfth-century water-powered fulling mills or 'walke-milnes' began to replace the manual work of the 'walker', marking the very beginnings of mechanization within the industry.

The stocks are heavy wooden hammers, lifted, then allowed to fall on the wet cloth in the rounded box below. The wheel carrying the tappets is fixed directly to the axle of the waterwheel. Clearly a fulling mill and a corn mill may easily be driven from the same waterwheel, as was probably the case in Shipley.

At this period Shipley was quite a small village. For example a Poll Tax levied in 1379 shows Shipley taxpayers comprising only 16 married couples and 12 single adults, all taxed at the lowest rate. Yet there was sufficient domestic production of woollen cloth to justify the fulling mill.

An Inquisition Post Mortem on the death, in 1422, of Sir William Gascoigne, of Gawthorpe, in the parish of Harewood, found that his real estate included the Manors of

Thorp Arch, Cottingley and Shipley. His son inherited the estate, and Shipley remained in the hands of the Gascoignes, finally passing to the last of the Gawthorpe line William Gascoigne Esq., who died in 1566/7. Several Fines are recorded under his name in the last few years of his life, and here we find the next record of the Shipley mills.



*Drawing of a Fulling Driving Stock*

A Fine, or Final Concord, is the summary of a collusive lawsuit once used to convey property. Each party received a copy of the fine while, more importantly a third copy called the Foot of the Fine was held by the Court for future reference. In 1559 we find William Gascoigne Esq. levying a Fine granting or leasing to one THOMAS POLLARD, 'a messuage and two fulling mills with lands in Shipley'.

This suggests that the growing needs of the domestic woollen trade in Shipley may have been met by adding on a second set of fulling stocks adjacent to the first and powered by the same waterwheel. At this stage there would almost certainly be a mill dam across the river. There is no mention of the corn mill - either it was leased separately or it was defunct, leaving the Lord's tenants to take their grain elsewhere.

William Gascoigne Esq. in a Fine, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1567, conveys, 'The Manor of Shypley with appurtenances. seven messuages, three cottages, one water mill, one fulling mill\* . . . with orchards, etc.' [all fully itemized] to two Trustees William Paslewe and Thomas Feylde.

In an explanatory deed of 1566, 'to lead the Uses of a Fine', the Manor of Shipley is itemized in full, just as it is in the Fine of 1567, except that the mills are once again described as 'two water fulling mills'. This deed sheds light on how the Manor of Shipley passed from the Gascoignes to the Rawsons.

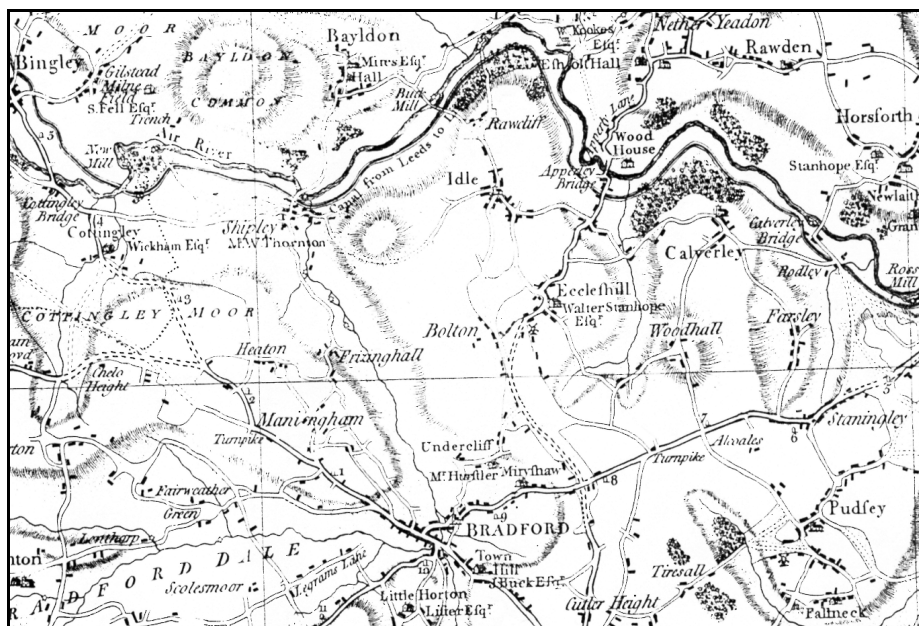
The Manor of Shipley (including the mills) is to be held in trust by Messrs Paslewe and Feilde, 'to the Use of Rosamonde Rawson now the wife of Robert Rawson of Shipley for (the) terme of (her) natural life . . . and after her decease then to the Use of William Rawson sonne of Robert Rawson and Rosamonde and of the heirs and assigns of William Rawson for ever'.



We may take it that Rosamonde was the daughter of William Gascoigne, although she does not appear on the published pedigrees of Rawsons or Gascoignes

\*Note here a discrepancy in the two descriptions of the mills.

Very little is recorded regarding the early members of the Shipley branch of the Rawsons. Fortunately we do have details of the will of the above William Rawson, made in 1599 and proved in July 1600, which shows him living in, *'the capital messuage in Shipley'*. In it he recites a Deed of Feoffment [trusteeship] of 1571 in which he has granted to his son-in-law William Garforth and to Anthony Walker of Keighley, *'a messuage . . . in Shipley, also one other messuage and two fulling mills and all the lands, goits, dams etc. in Shipley now in the occupation of GEORGE POLLARD to the Use and Beof of his eldest son William Rawson and his heirs and assigns forever'*.



*Shipley & Central Airedale - from Jeffery's 'Yorkshire Survey'd' 1775*

An indenture [a deed between two or more parties] of 1679, between Nathaniel Hitchin of Warley, yeoman and Sarah\* his wife (1), and Thomas Swaine of Sowerby (2), concerns, *'a moiety [a half share] of a messuage and lands in Shipley, the moiety of one fulling mill adjoining, and the moiety of one other fulling mill called POLLARD MILL and an adjoining croft called Milne Hill . . . in the occupation of Miles Rishworth'*.

\* The above conveyance of 1679 may have been merely a lease, because in 1696 we see an indenture from Nathaniel and Sarah Hitchin of Warley, with one Michael Firth, to Thomas Wightman of Mirfield concerning, *'all those two fulling mills commonly called HIRST MILLS . . . with a dwelling house, barn and croft in Shipley in the occupation of George Birch'*.

This is the first time that the name 'Hirst Mills' appears in the records. The name appears again in a list dated 1705, of sittings in Bradford Parish Church where we see: *'Hirst Mill - Hannah Weetman (cf. Wightman) Owner - - George Birch, Tenant'*.

We have now, therefore, traced a clear line of descent from the old Manorial mill to the present-day Hirst Mill. We can only speculate on why the Manorial mill was sited so far away from the old village centre. Perhaps there was a ford across the river linking Hirst Lane with a track running up beside Loadpit Beck? We may never know.

Sarah Hitchin was one of two daughters and co-heiresses of Laurence Rawson, grandson of our first William Rawson.

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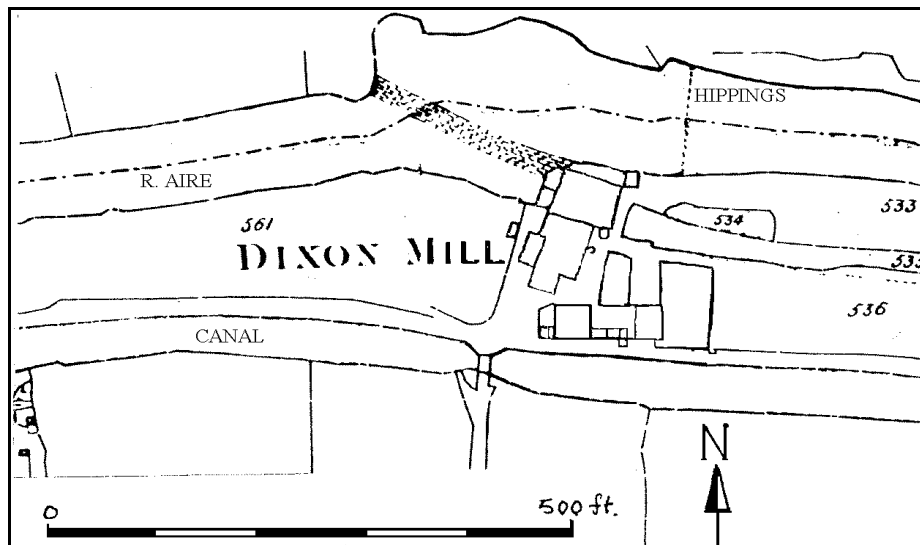
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## THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

### Dixon Mill

**D**ixon Mill, built by William Dixon of Shipley, remained in the hands of the Dixon family until its purchase by Sir Walter Calverley in 1712. The history of Dixon Mill begins with an Indenture, made on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1635 between John Drake of Pykedley in Al-lerton, clothier (1), and William Dixon of Shipley, yeoman (2), '*WHEREAS William Dixon is to build. . a water corn milne and a fulling milne in certayne . . . closes . . . of the now inheritance of William Dixon called the Eshalleys or Esholtleys . . . in Shipley . . . now in the tenure or occupation of the said William Dixon AND WHEREAS John Drake hath one other close called the Ealand in Baildon . . . opposite . . . Esholtleys . . . WITNESSETH that John Drake doth graunt to William Dixon . . . the close called Ealand . . . and permission to affixe one damme . . . for a yearly rent of tenne shillings*'. A deed of 1<sup>st</sup> October 1635 sees William Dixon in consideration of eighty pounds purchasing outright from John Drake the East end of the Ealand close in Baildon.

William Dixon senior of Shipley, yeoman, father of the above William Dixon, and apparently acting for William junior in his absence, appears in an indenture dated 9<sup>th</sup> July 1639 between himself and his son and heir Nathan Dixon. The Indenture, '*WITNESSETH that William Dixon in consideration of the sum of £140 paid by Nathan hath leased to Nathan all that water corn mill and a fulling mill . . . in Shipley . . . now in the occupation of Nathan Dixon with appurtenances etc., closes of land in Shipley and Baildon . . . for 99 years at £19 -10s - od per annum*'.



Dixon Mill - from the 1846 Shipley Tithe Map

On a more serious note we next have the report of an Inquisition Post Mortem dated 19<sup>th</sup> July 1642, taken at Bradford before the Escheator\* of York, on the death in 1640 of William Dixon junior, late of the town of Newcastle on Tyne. '*The jury find that William Dixon was seized of one water corn mill and one fulling mill in Shipley . . . late in the tenure or occupation of William Dixon or his assigns . . . and one close of land called Ealand in Baildon . . .*

\* Escheators were appointed to keep a close eye on all lands held of the Crown and to seize such lands where the holder died under age or intestate.

\*\* Nathan Dixon, who lived in Shipley with his new bride Elizabeth Sale of Woodhall, inherited the mill.

*They find that the premises in Shipley were held by William Dixon junior of the King and the Honour of Pontefract by Military Service, to the value per annum of 3s 4d, and the close in Baildon was held of Franco Baildon Lord of the Manor in free socage [non-military holding] to the value of 1s 6d. They also find that Nathan Dixon\*\* is the brother and next heir, and that he was aged 25 years and more at the time of the death of William Dixon junior.'*

Nothing more of note arises until we see the Will of Nathan Dixon, dated 26<sup>th</sup> July 1655, in which he recites a deed of Feoffment entered into earlier whereby James Sale of Pudsey and Jeremy Dixon of Heaton Royds are appointed trustees of his estate, which comprises: *'all my messuages, buildings, lands etc. in Shipley and one water corn milne and two fulling milnes in Shipley in my own occupation and all to the milnes belonging and one close of land, the Eland, in Baildon, and a close in Shelfe . . . and after my decease, the East end of the Great House wherein I dwell, garden, closes of land etc. to the USE and BEHOOF of my wife Elizabeth and after her decease, the (majority of) the estate and mills to the Use and Behoof of Abraham Dixon of Newcastle on Tyne. The sum of ten pounds to be paid at the feast of Pentecost and St. Martin to the Bishop; and Abraham to pay the present and successive preaching Minister of the Parish Church of Bradford the sum of ten shillings yearly for ever . . . on condition that he shall preach on some seasonable part of the Holy Scriptures for the better instruction of the people there'*. There are also various bequests of sums of money to his immediate family.

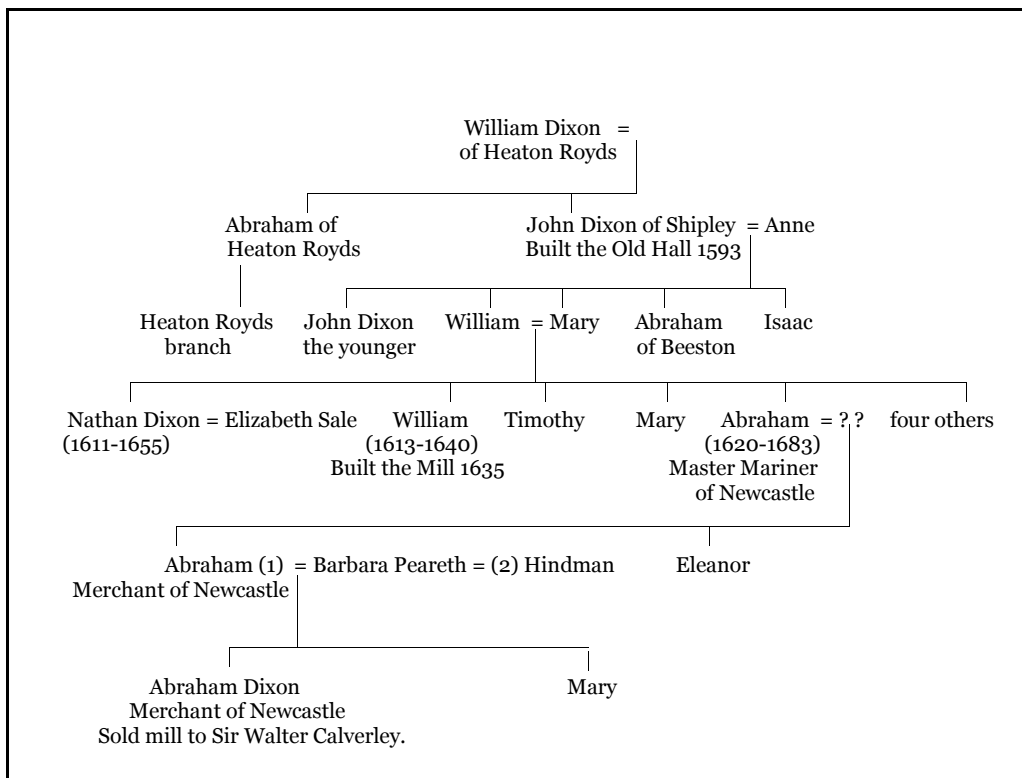
An indenture dated 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1656 shows William Dixon, in consideration of the sum of £50, leasing to Thomas Hill of Shipley the mill and sundry closes, for 99 years at ten shillings per annum.

By 1660 Abraham Dixon, Master and Mariner of Newcastle on Tyne, appears to have inherited the mill, and is leasing it to William Rawson of Shipley and William Dixon of Bowling for five years at £65 per annum - a strange contrast between this and the previous rental.

Abraham Dixon the Master Mariner died in 1685. His son, also Abraham, and a Merchant of Newcastle on Tyne, inherited all his father's property. He and his wife, Barbara Peareth, had a son, also Abraham, who also became a Merchant in Newcastle, and inherited his father's estate in 1694.

In 1709 we see Timothy Dixon of Shipley, acting for Abraham, granting to Samuel Denison of 'Hunterscliffe' (Undercliffe), Bradford, clothier, a lease on certain messuages and the mill for nine years at £59 per annum.

At the foot of this deed is an inventory. It reads as follows: **'NOTE: that the instruments vessels and tooles are as follows (viz) A Scrue Nutt & a chain a water Fan & an Iron hoope three . . . mill picks, a Dusting Sive, a Stroake a peck & one half of a peck, a Mulcture Ark one Miln chissill, one Iron Mulcture Dish, one new Kilne Haire, three Iron Stroakes, certain Iron Boulls belonging the fulling mill, a Wash Tubb, a Wash Barrell, a Kitt, a Flock Baskett & a Crudle a Grindle stone with an Iron Swape & a Gavelook of Iron, one Iron Range in the mill house, three locks one of Miln Door, one of Kilne Door, one of Mulcture Ark, one pair of Iron Tongs & one fire poyte one Iron Maule and a Nadge'**. (See appendix)



*THE DIXON FAMILY TREE*

## The Calverley Purchase

Sir Walter Calverley of Esholt purchased both Shipley water mills in 1712. Sir Walter was born in 1669 at East Esholt. His father had died in 1691, leaving young Sir Walter, as Lord of the Manors of Calverley, Yeadon and East Esholt.

In 1712 Sir Walter, contemplating the purchase of Dixon Mill, sought the opinion of a barrister on the validity of the title of the then owners, namely Abraham Dixon and his mother Barbara Hindman, formerly Barbara Peareth.

The opinion was satisfactory and we read in Sir Walter Calverley's diary for the 1<sup>st</sup> March 1712: '*I got Mr. John Ord of Newcastle, attorney, to article for me with Mr. Abraham Dixon about his estate in Shipley, for the purchase thereof he was to pay £1,050 (£250 down and £800 in two years time)*'

The Indenture of Lease and Release from Dixon and Hindman to Calverley, dated 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of March 1711, CONCERNS, '*all that Capital Messuage, farmland, two barns, three cottages, one water corn mill, two fulling mills and the messuage near to, and the several fields and closes . . . lying in Shipley and in Baildon*'.

The purchase of Hirst Mill was carried out by an indenture of lease and release bearing date 30<sup>th</sup> May 1712 between William WIGHTMAN, yeoman, of Dewsbury and son of Thomas Wightman, deceased, of Mirfield (1), and Sir Walter Calverley, Bart. (2), CONCERNING, '*those two fulling mills commonly called Hirst Mill together with one dwelling-house and barn adjoining, and one parcel of ground belonging to the same mill, and all the dams, floodgates, goytes etc. in Shipley and Bingley*'.

Sir Walter's diary for April 1712 reads: '*I sent William Long over to William Weightman of Dewsbury and he articulated with him for Hirst Mills on my account; for the purchase thereof I was to pay £338. The Deeds were sealed 4<sup>th</sup> June 1712*'.

In 1714, Sir Walter Calverley purchased the Lordship of the Manor of Idle including the Manorial Mill, usually called Buck Mill after the name of the family who ran the mill for many years. By this action he became the owner of five fulling mills on the River Aire, namely Hirst Mill and Dixon Mill, Buck Mill in Idle, Calverley Mill and Ross Mill in Rodley, in order, it is believed to encourage his tenants in the domestic woollen trade.

An indenture dated 8<sup>th</sup> April 1727 from Sir Walter Calverley to a John Coke of Leicestershire conveys from Calverley to Coke the Dixon lands and Mill and Hirst Mill, '*. . . all which premises are or late were in the occupation of Samuel Denison by virtue of a lease to him by indenture dated 9<sup>th</sup> March 1716 for a term of 21 years at £120 per annum*'.

On the death of Sir Walter in 1749, his son and heir, also named Walter, having previously inherited valuable estates from his late uncle in Newcastle, and taken the surname Blackett, began selling off the Airedale property. In 1755 Mr. Robert Stansfield of Bradford purchased the Manor of East Esholt, along with Hirst Mill and Dixon Mill, from Sir Walter Calverley Blackett.

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## New Hirst Mill

The third mill on the river, New Hirst Mill, was built in 1745 by Samuel Denison. The first reference to him in Shipley was in the deed of 1709 mentioned above. A later deed, of 1716, shows Denison leasing Dixon lands and Mill, and Hirst Mill, for 21 years at £120 per annum.

Denison, apparently having moved to Shipley from 'Hunterscliffe' (see above), was well accepted in the Shipley community. The Shipley Town Book shows him as Overseer of the Poor for 1722-23, Surveyor of the Highways for 1724-25, Constable for the year 1727, Surveyor of the Highways again in 1736, and Overseer of the Poor again for 1743.

The records show that Denison was engaged in a series of property transactions in Shipley, involving quite large mortgages. Despite his somewhat shaky finances, Samuel Denison made a start on building what we know today as New Hirst Mill.

In this connection a mortgage indenture between Denison and Robert Stansfield of Bradford dated 17<sup>th</sup> February 1745 is most revealing. It recites, '*. . . a demise by indenture dated 19<sup>th</sup> April 1744 made to Samuel Denison by Cyril and Judith Jackson\*, of . . . so much of that parcel of ground called the Silver Hills . . . near Hyrst Wood as is set out South of a cartway leading from Hirst Wood to a parcel of land called the Forge Holm adjoining the River Ayr, and an adjoining . . . parcel of ground called Old Forge Goyt\*\* with . . . liberty during the term of 170 years . . . to widen and wall . . . the said Goyt . . . and to start a mill dam . . . over (the Shipley) half of the River.*

*And also to erect a mill . . . for the fulling of cloth . . . upon the said dam or goyt . . . And with liberty to get . . . stones . . . for any buildings and future repairs . . . in those woody grounds called the Hyrst. And with liberty to pass and repass with carts . . . horses or on foot . . . on the lane leading from Shipley Moor . . . to Hirst (Farm) and along the cartway through the Hirst to Silver Hills. And reciting a purchase by Samuel Denison of William Lister of Bingley of lands including Great Elland in Bingley opposite Silver Hills. And his having built a fulling mill and another building there. And by which indenture Samuel Denison granted unto . . . Robert Stansfield . . . during the said term . . . the new fulling mills containing EIGHT STOCKS . . . and a new erected building . . . and a house and barn intended to be erected. And other lands and premises in the said . . . indenture . And such part of the said close Great Elland . . . as the dam stand upon . . .'*

By 1747 Samuel Denison was declared bankrupt, although we do not know who instituted proceedings. An Indenture of Bargain and Sale dated 16<sup>th</sup> September 1747 from Richard Lepton and others, Commissioners in Bankruptcy to Samuel Denison late of Shipley, maltster and chapman, to Jeremy Marshall and Joseph Thornton, shows that: *'Moortop Farm and other properties of Denison's in Shipley were mortgaged to Richard Strother of Leeds for £800. The fulling mill and its half-acre of ground were under mortgage to Robert Stansfield of Bradford for £600. And that Samuel Denison was possessed of a messuage called Dowley Gap in conjunction with William Lister'*.

Despite Robert Stansfield's claims to the mill, a Fine levied in 1749 declares the mill to be the property of the Lord and Lady of the Manor, Cyril and Judith Jackson; they leased it to Robert Stansfield for a term of 170 years from 1<sup>st</sup> May 1745, at five pounds per annum.

Another reference to Denison comes in an entry in Shipley Town Book about the year 1747, and reads: *'Samuel Denison, a statute out against him'*; while an indenture of 1750 referring to Samuel Denison, describes him as *'Bankrupt, Deceased'*.

\*Judith Rawson was the widow of Dr. William Rawson of Halifax, the last of the Rawsons to hold the Manor of Shipley. He had died in February 1741/2, age 21, and Judith inherited the Lordship. She later married the Rev. Cyril Jackson of Stamford, who then became Lord of the Manor.

\*\*The names 'Forge Holm' and 'Old Forge Goyt' stem from an unsuccessful iron smelting venture in the 1590s. [see W.P.Baildon, *Baildon and the Baidons*; Catherine Collinson, *Enterprise and Experiment in the Elizabethan Iron Industry; The Career of Thomas Procter*, Y.,A.J. Vol. 68 (1996)]

Apparently the mill was thriving in 1765; the mill, and a close of land containing seven days work, was being let by Robert Stansfield of Esholt, son of the above Robert, at the rent of £52 per annum.

### **Hirst Mill in Decline**

**T**he year 1767 sees Robert Stansfield of Esholt entering into an Indenture of Lease and Release, conveying to William Thornton of Shipley and his wife Martha: ‘ . . . a messuage in Shipley in the occupation of Joseph Gawkrodger with barn etc. and close belonging . . . Mill Hill Croft, the Mill Hill, the Upper Holm, the Lower Holm . . . and also all that Mill or Building near the said messuage in Shipley formerly used as a fulling mill and called Hirst Mill or Shipley Upper Mill together with the dam . . . goits, sluices, privileges . . . now in the tenure of Robert Stansfield . . . with all houses, out-houses, tythes, privileges etc.’

William Thornton was a lawyer with a practice in Bradford, who lived in the Low Hall on Otley Road, Shipley. For several years he made a practice of buying up land in Shipley; on his death his estate passed to his widow Martha. William Cudworth tells us that by her Will, dated 29 July 1784, Mrs. Thornton devised all her property in Shipley to her Uncle, William Wainman Esq. of Carrhead, who became one of the leading landowners in Shipley.

Prior to this time, however, by an Indenture of Lease and Release dated 28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> May 1771, Martha Thornton had conveyed to Joseph Overend of Horsforth, paper maker: ‘ . . . all that mill or building formerly used as a fulling mill known as Hirst Mill or Shipley Upper Mill in Shipley together with all the dam, attachments, goits, streams etc. now in possession of Martha Thornton or her Assigns And also that piece of ground adjoining the mill, staked out from a close commonly called Mill Hill Croft, Shipley containing one rood, now in possession or occupation of Joseph Harcastle . . . ’

By this transaction Joseph Overend brought to Shipley a new industry, paper manufacturing, and gave a new lease of life to the derelict mill.

### **Joseph Overend and the Wrights**

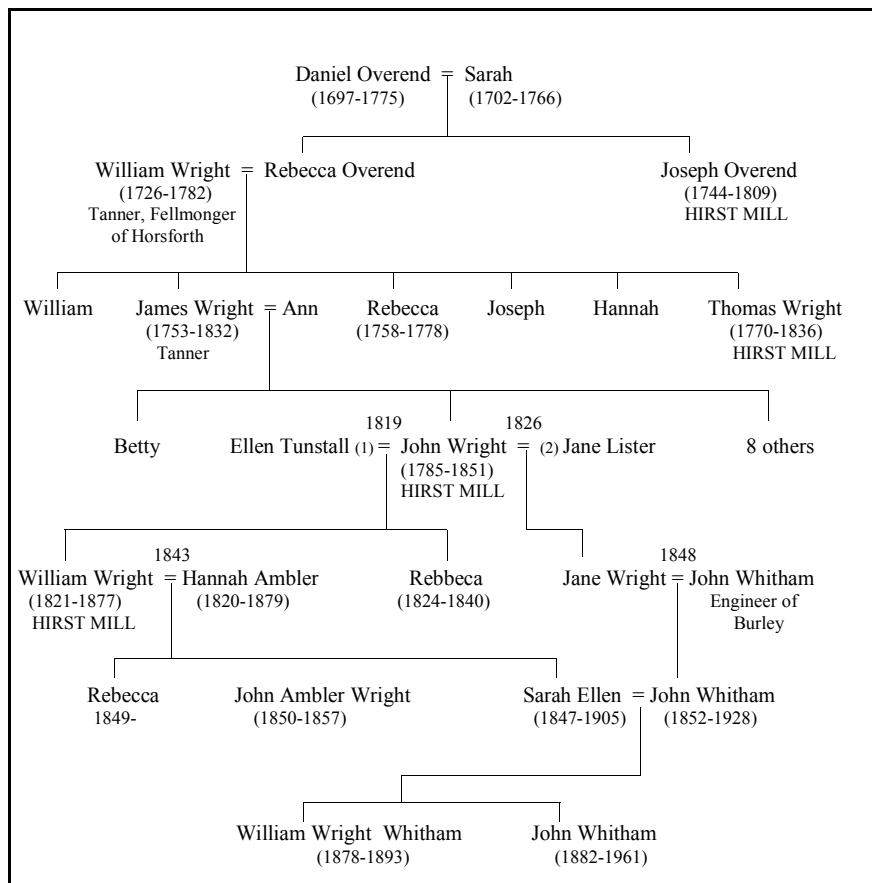
**H**irst Mill remained in the hands of Joseph Overend, and then his heirs, the three generations of the Wright family, from 1771 to 1872. An outline pedigree showing those of the Wright family of Horsforth and Shipley connected with Hirst Mill is shown opposite.

An indenture of 1777 shows Joseph Overend of Shipley purchasing from Martha Thornton three little closes of land adjacent to the mill. It is not clear just when Joseph finished his work on the mill. However, an Indenture dated 28<sup>th</sup> September 1779, from Joseph Overend of Hirst Mill, paper maker, to William Skelton of Leeds, Gentleman, concerns: ‘*Hirst Mill or Shipley Upper Mill, with the dam, goits etc. . . And also that parcel of ground adjoining the mill called Mill Hill Croft . . . And also those several parcels of ground of 170 yds, 60 yds and 50 yds . . . And all those new erected mills and houses lately built upon the above premises, consisting of a messuage or dwelling house with a paper mill, paper glazing mill, drying houses and other buildings for making paper, with a yard, garden and parcel of land belonging . . . And one dwelling house, a cottage, a water corn mill with a drying kiln, stable and other buildings in Shipley now in the several occupations of Joseph Overend, William North and Robert Craven, their heirs or undertenants And all other messuages etc. in Shipley belonging Joseph Overend.*’ Signed - Joseph Overend.

The above conveyance is almost certainly a mortgage transaction. The, ‘*new erected . . . messuage or dwelling-house*’ is almost certainly Hirst House which stands adjacent to the mill.



The names William North and Robert Craven deserve a special note. In 1768 William North leased Bradford Soke Mills from the then owner John Smyth for a term of seven years; Smyth died in 1771, his son, also named John, coming into possession. Within the Soke, which extended for a two-mile radius from Queen's Mill near the centre of Bradford, all persons were obliged to take their corn to the Soke mill – rather than being allowed to grind it themselves or take it elsewhere. Local businessmen increasingly opposed this restrictive practice, so in 1775 John Smyth opened proceedings to confirm the Soke on behalf of himself and William North.



**THE OVEREND & WRIGHT FAMILY TREE**

Part of the testimony reads: ‘Robert Craven of Hirst Mill said his uncle, William North, while at the Soke Mills of Bradford, was obliged to take the Hirst Mills at Shipley for two years on account of the drought which prevailed and prevented him from grinding all the corn brought to his mill in Bradford’.

The Right of Soke was confirmed at York Assizes, and was not extinguished until 1871, when Bradford Corporation paid £8,300 to buy the soke mill which they demolished.\* Part of the new thoroughfare of Sunbridge Road was then constructed over the site.

\* Historically, soke was land within the Danelaw owned by free peasants who owed suit to the lord of the manor. By the end of the Middle Ages it was simply an administrative division of a lordship. (from: The Oxford Companion To Local History, D.Hey, Oxford University Press. (1996)

William Wright, fellmonger of Horsforth made his Will on the 6<sup>th</sup> March 1782. In it he details the provisions he has made for his wife Rebeccah and their eldest sons William and James. To take care of his other three children then living he gives: ‘. . . to my brother-in-law Joseph Overend and Henry Stead, all my property and mills in Horsforth, my plate goods, my chattels, personal estate, *IN TRUST* to pay my debts and mortgages, to provide for my youngest son Thomas until he is twenty one years of age, and pay towards the clothing and education of my children Joseph and Hannah and Thomas during their minorities’.

Young Thomas was twelve years of age at the time of his Father’s death. The special relationship between the bachelor Joseph Overend and his nephew Thomas Wright lasted for the rest of Joseph’s life and is later reflected in Joseph’s Will.

It seems that Joseph Overend must have retained (or recovered) control over Hirst Mill, because in 1804 he is offering it for sale at auction, (as shown in the advertisement opposite). Two points in the advertisement are worth a comment. Firstly the provision of three pairs of stones all run from the waterwheel is a traditional practice. These consist of: French stones made up from blocks of French quartz for the finest flour; grey-stones (millstone grit) for meal; and blue stones for animal feed. Secondly the paper mill is producing glazed paper, very probably press paper for the textile trade.

On the death of Joseph Overend in 1809 the Mill was inherited by his nephew Thomas Wright – see below.

## References

- AD 1732 Wakefield Deeds Registry: Vol. EE/498/729
- 1732 as above: Vol. EE/499/731
- 1742 Y.A.S. Halifax: Robert Parker Papers, RP 2475
- 1745 Wakefield Deeds Registry: Vol. UU/132/174
- 1747 as above: Vol. XX/336/423
- 1749 W.Y.A.S. Sheepscar, Leeds: Stansfield Muniments, ST 509.
- 1750 Wakefield Deeds Registry: Vol. AD/361/464
- 1765 as above: Vol. BC/007/009
- 1767 Wakefield Deeds Registry: Vol. BG/611/833
- 1784 Cudworth, W. - *Round about Bradford*, 1876.
- 1771 Wakefield Deeds Registry: Vol. BM/729/929
- 1777 as above: Vol. CB/191/303
- 1779 as above: Vol. CF/379/972
- 1782 Borthwick Institute, York, Probate Registry: Vol. 126 no. 399

*Water Mills, at Shipley,*  
In the PARISH of BRADFORD, in the COUNTY of YORK.  
To be SOLD by AUCTION,  
*At the House of Mr. Joshua Roberts, in Shipley aforesaid, on  
Monday the Sixth Day of February next, between the Hours  
of Four and Seven o'Clock in the Afternoon, subject to certain  
Conditions,*

**A** Compact and Truly-desirable FREEHOLD ESTATE, situate at Shipley aforesaid, consisting of ALL those TWO large and commodious WATER MILLS, called HIRST MILLS, one of them used as a Corn Mill, containing Three Pair of Stones; Two Drying Kilns, and Flour Machine and roomy Granaries, and the other as a Paper and Glazing Mill, for making glazed Paper, with Drying Houses, Dry Workshops, Warehouse and several other spacious and convenient Outbuildings thereto belonging.—Also, One Stable, containing Stands for Five Horses, and Six Cottages or Dwelling Houses to the said Mills adjoining and occupied therewith, now in the Possession or Occupation of Mr. Thomas Wright, as Tenant thereof from Year to Year.

AND ALSO, All that MESSUAGE or DWELLING-HOUSE, likewise adjoining the said Mill, now in the Possession of Mr. Joseph Overend.

☞ The above Estate is advantageously situated on the River Aire, which affords a constant and abundant Supply of Water to the same, also adjoining the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, and is a most convenient and eligible Situation for carrying on an extensive Concern, being in the Centre of a populous trading Country. Distance from Bradford Four Miles, from Leeds Thirteen Miles, and from Otley Eight Miles.

† † The Tenant will shew the Premises, and further Particulars may be had by applying to Mr. John Brogden, Attorney at Law, in Kirkgate, Bradford.

LEEDS INTELLIGENCER 9th January 1804

## INTO A NEW CENTURY

### Developments in the Textile Industry

The introduction of small hand-operated spinning frames and the scribbling machine in the latter part of the eighteenth century, increased productivity within the woollen industry. The scribbling machine performed the work of several hand operatives and was well suited, like the fulling mill, to be driven from a waterwheel.

First introduced in Yorkshire in the 1770s the worsted trades saw rapid growth in the nineteenth century. While the waterwheel was adequate to meet the demands of the early worsted spinning mills, the development of the steam engine for use in the textile industry changed it out of all recognition. The patent on the rotative steam engine held by Boulton and Watt ran out in 1800, leaving local firms free to build and develop bigger, better and cheaper engines to power larger spinning mills.

Power looms had been introduced into the Shipley area by 1822. By 1842, the development of Lister's machine combs heralded the dawn of the large textile factory performing all operations under one roof. By then the old water mills with their limited power were in serious decline.

Nevertheless, New Hirst and Dixon Mills retained one attraction; they were available on lease, affording an entry into the textile trade for men who were short of capital.

Competition to the old mills came not only from the multitude of steam-powered mills in Bradford. The following list, while not exhaustive, shows the mills erected in the Shipley area. These included:

Gill Mill in Tong Park, Baildon - Built in 1778, it had been spinning worsted since 1790, then greatly enlarged by William Denby and Sons in 1853.

Providence Mill, Shipley - A little woollen mill built in 1796, later converted to worsted spinning.

Red Beck Mill, Shipley Fields, Shipley - Built in 1815, the first mill in Shipley to be built for worsted.

Old Whiting Mill, Shipley - Of no great significance until 1822, when James Warbrick, a Bradford worsted spinner, had a power loom built there. The same day a mob of local weavers destroyed the loom, parading the wreckage through the streets.

Union Mill, Low Well, Shipley - Built in 1823, with a 40 hp steam engine, by Wilcox, Bradley & Co. In 1833 it was employing 83 hands in scribbling and fulling for the domestic woollen trade.

Wellcroft Mill in the middle of Shipley - Built in 1845 by William Denby junior, and later enlarged.

Airedale Mills, Baildon Bridge, Shipley - A large factory built in 1850 by Joseph Hargreaves.

Sir Titus Salt's Mill, Saltaire - Built in 1853 as a self-contained factory for worsteds and many other fabrics.

Henry Mason's Victoria Mill, Shipley - Began operation in 1875.

According to Cudworth, by 1876 the big four worsted firms in Shipley, namely, Hargreaves, Salt's, Mason's and Denby's were in total employing 6,900 workers.

### Dixon Mill

In 1772 the Esholt estate, which owned Dixon Mill, passed into the hands of William Rookes. The Sun Fire Office issued Insurance Policy No. 471860, on 6<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1783, which reads as follows: *'William Rookes of Esholt, for eight shillings per year for the*

*sum insured of £300, Insurance on his Corn & Cloth water mills under one roof with a drying kiln communicating with the utensils and going gear situate at Shipley, in the tenure of Widow Wilson and others, not exceeding £100. On his utensils stock and goods in trust therein only, not exceeding £40. House only, near, in the tenure of the said Widow Wilson not exceeding £20. House only, separate, in the tenure of John Briggs, miller, not exceeding £40. On his cloth water mill at Esholt Spring, not exceeding £50. On utensils gear and stock therein only, not exceeding £50. All stone and slated’.*

In 1801 the same office issued an Insurance Policy to: ‘*JOSEPH LUPTON, ROBERT CRAVEN, TITUS BREAR & HENRY WRIGHT DAWSON of Shipley, Woollen Scribblers, for £9 - 19s - 6d.*

*On their Millwright works including all the going gears in their Scribbling Mill only, called Dixon’s Mill in the town of Shipley aforesaid, Stoned and Slated, Warranted to be conformable to the rules of the first class of Woollen Rates in their own tenure only and no process of Cotton business carried on therein, not exceeding £420. Clockmakers work, Carding and Breaker engines and all movable utensils therein, not exceeding £1210. Stock and goods therein not exceeding £270’.*

N.B.: There is no steam engine included in this Insurance.

An advertisement from the Esholt estate, then in the hands of WRC Stansfield, published in the Leeds Mercury 28<sup>th</sup> June 1823 (see opposite), shows Dixon Mills to be three separate establishments under one roof. Taking ‘*Chamber*’ to mean a room on an upper floor, we can visualize a three-storey building with a fulling mill and perhaps a scribbling machine on the ground floor with other woollen machinery on the two upper floors, and the warehouse and engine house adjoining. In the fulling mill, the ‘*Two Falling stocks*’ are vertical stampers, their function being generally known as milling. ‘*Driving stocks*’ are those shown in the diagram above (see page 4).

The Corn mill with its traditional three pairs of stones and drying kiln adjoins the woollen mill. The provision of an engine house gives the tenant the option of using steam power to supplement that of the waterwheels.

Whether there was any response to the advertisement I am unable to say, although we do find in the 1841 Census return a James Davison, cloth fuller, living at the mill. Cudworth mentions Edward Berwick of Cottingley and William Denby of Shipley as, at times, occupying Dixon Mill.

The Shipley Tithe map of 1846, (page 8) shows the layout of the mill and its buildings, also the ‘*hippings*’ or stepping-stones where the poet John Nicholson suffered his tragic accident in 1843.

The useful life of Dixon Mill was brought to a close in 1850 when it and much of the surrounding lands were purchased by Sir Titus Salt in order to build his new mill.

The Deed dated 31<sup>st</sup> December 1850 between W.R.C. Stansfield, Esholt Hall, Esq. (1), Titus Salt, Crow Nest, Esq. (2), and John Rawson of Bradford, Gent (3)

*‘CONCERNS all those mills . . . one used as a Corn mill, the others as Worsted and Fulling mills respectively known as Dixon Mills . . . the corn mill in the possession of John and Joseph Knowles, the fulling mill in the possession of James Davidson as tenants to W.R.C. Stansfield, the worsted mill at present unoccupied, together with Goit, Dam and Island . . . a messuage near the mills and closes adjoining . . . other plots nearby . . . close of land, about one acre, in Baildon . . .’*

After a life of more than 200 years Dixon Mill ended its days just as it began, as a Corn and Fulling mill.

## References

- AD 1783 W.Y.A.S. Sheepscar, Leeds: Stansfield Muniments ST 511
- 1801 Guildhall Library: Sun Fire Insurance Policy 713352/1801
- 1850 Wakefield Deeds Registry: Vol. QX/306/345

### DIXON MILLS,

*In the Township of Shipley—situate on the River Aire.*

**T**O BE LET, all these valuable WATER-MILLS, containing three powerful Water-Wheels, carried by the whole of the said River, on a Fall of more than Seven Feet, viz:—One Water-Wheel, six Feet broad, now carrying Carding and Scribbling Machinery, in Three Rooms, Two of which are Chambers Eighteen Yards long by Sixteen wide, and are lofty well-lighted Rooms, and equally as well adapted for Worsted or Cotton Machinery as Woollen, a Wool Warehouse, and a Steam Engine House that will hold a Steam Engine of any Power (if wanted) adjoins the same.—Also another Water Wheel, above Five Feet broad, now carrying Four fulling Fulling Stocks, and Two Drivers, and a Water Pump on the Ground Floor, under the large Chambers, now in full employ.—Also, a Third Water-Wheel, carrying a Pair of French Mill-Stones, a Pair of Grey, and a Pair of Shelling Do. and a Flour Dressing Machine, a large Drying Kiln, with extensive Corn Warehouse, adjoining the Banks of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, attached to the same.

Also a good DWELLING-HOUSE, containing Four Rooms on the Ground Floor, Four Chambers and Attics over the Whole, and good Cellars, with a Yard, Two Gardens, a Barn and Stables, together with Four COTTAGES or DWELING-HOUSES, and about Nine Acres of excellent LAND adjoining, in Four Closes or Parcels, nearly all in Grass.

The Lands may be entered to on the Second Day of February next, and the Mills and other Buildings at May Day after. The Machinery that will be Let with the above, are the Two Driving and Two Falling Fulling Stocks, and the Pump in the Cloth Mill; the upright and other Shafts and Drums in the Scribbling Mill; the Mill-Stones and all other Geering, &c. in the Corn-Mill; and if a Tenant should wish to have a Steam Engine added, one will be erected for a reasonable Consideration.

Also to be Let, at BOCK MILLS, in the Township of Idle, to enter to immediately. TWO LARGE CHAMBERS, each Twenty Yards long by Twelve Yards wide, lofty and well lighted so as to suit either Woollen, Worsted, or Cotton Machinery, with a powerful Water-wheel Nine Feet broad, intitled to the whole stream of the River Aire, with a Fall of Six Feet, from Seven o'Clock in the Morning until Seven in the Evening every Day, and also to draw at all other Times when the Water is running over the Dam-Stones.—A Steam-Engine (if wanted) will be added.—Inquire of J. Robinson, at Esholt Hall.—(One Concern.)

LEEDS MERCURY 28th June 1823

## New Hirst Mill

An advertisement for New Hirst Mill, in the Leeds Intelligencer of 21<sup>st</sup> November 1814, shows how the Esholt estate, under Joshua Crompton at this date, was prepared to accommodate a new tenant at the mill. The substance of it reads: *'New Mill, to be let on lease, on the River Aire with a fall of near seven feet. The Mill is above fifty feet square and it is intended to add a chamber over the whole and to put in two water wheels eight feet broad, one to carry eight fulling stocks, and the other six scribbling engines, six carders, a willey, a Jiger and a teaser, large enough to supply six stubbing billies. If not let for woollen machinery it will be offered as a worsted, flax or other mill to the Tenant's choice. Also available are two houses, two barns and about twenty acres of land near the mill.'*

It would seem that Joshua Crompton found a tenant but only for the fulling mill. A later advertisement in the Leeds Intelligencer of 18<sup>th</sup> August 1817, (see page 27) shows him offering more inducements for the prospective tenant.

Note: a) the emphasis on worsted or cotton machinery, rather than that for woollens; (b) the new wheel race, which can still be seen; (c) the five new cottages.

A MEMORIAL of 1822 from the trustees of the estate of the late Cyril Jackson to John Wilmer Field of Heaton (who purchased the Manor of Shipley in 1823) lists all property comprising the Manor. Included is: *'A newly erected mill used for the fulling of cloth with cottages lands and grounds at the north-west corner of Hirst Wood now in the occupation of Joshua Crompton Esq. under a lease (93 years unexpired) at the annual rent of five pounds'*.

Esholt Estate eventually found tenants for both departments of the mill. Parson and White's Directory for 1830 gives for Shipley, New Hirst: *'Davison & Co., Scribbling and Fulling Millers. Rayner, Joseph, Worsted Spinners'*.

In 1833, Parliament instigated a nationwide investigation into the employment of children in factories. Among those from whom The Factories Enquiry Commission took evidence about the Worsted side of the business was Joseph Rayner. Mr. Rayner's response is here summarised:

*'Mill used for Worsted Spinning since 1820. Driven by waterwheel. Ten horse power. Employs 35 persons, plus warehouse and counting house staff. Hours of work: 72 hours per week of six days. The mill starts at 6 a.m., stops for one hour for lunch at noon, works 9 ½ hours on Saturday and 12½ hours on the other five days.*

*Holidays: Five days regular holiday per year paid.*

*Conditions: There are no fines or punishments. Children under 12 yrs. are employed in spinning or piecing only.'*

<b><u>Ages and pay in a regular week of 72 hours:</u></b>			
<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Age in Yrs.</b>	<b>Wages per week</b>
6	4	under 10	3s.
2	3	10 to 12	3s. 6d.
	4	12 to 14	4s. 6d.
3	4	14 to 16	5s. 6d.
	3	16 to 18	6s.
	2	18 to 21	6s
3	1	over 21	16s. 6d for males 7s for females

N.B. nearly a third of Rayner's employees are children under 10 years old.

The known occupiers of the mill throughout its history are listed below. After the brief worsted spinning venture in the 1830s a variety of small manufacturers in the woollen trade kept this little mill going for another fifty years or so.

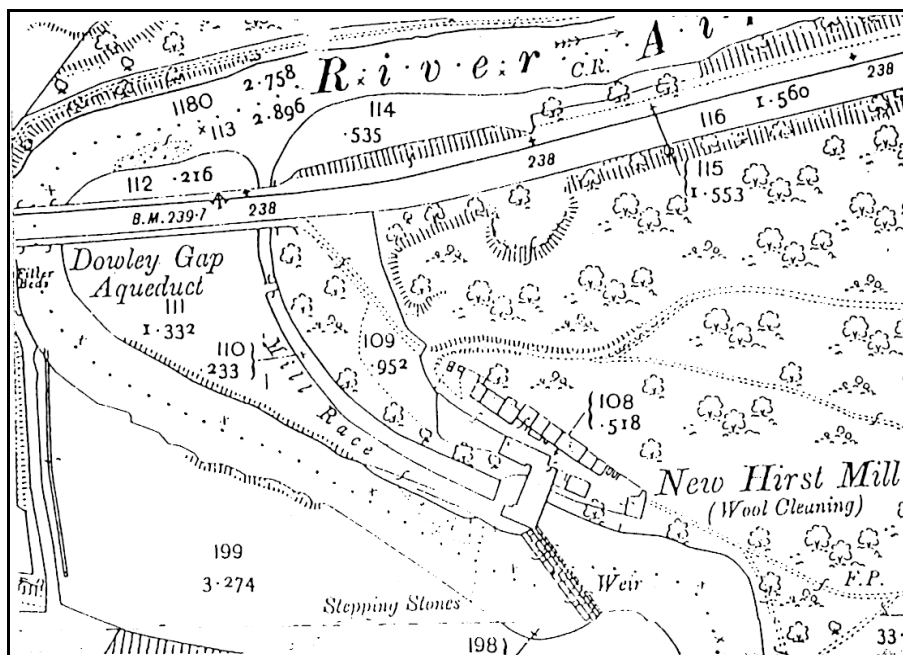
<b>Date</b>	<b>Occupier and usage</b>
1745	Samuel Denison, fulling
1765	Thomas Rishman and others, fulling
1830	Davison & Co., scribbling and fulling
	Joseph Rayner, worsted spinning
1849	Parker & Co., scribbling and fulling
1853	Brook, Tillotson & Co., scribbling and fulling
1872	Craven & Crabtree, fulling
1876	Idle Cooperative Society, scribbling
1883	Disused
1897	Thomas Williams, use unknown
1906	Unknown, wool cleaning
1923	Demolition began

The advertisement for New Hirst Mill in 1817 (see opposite) shows the living quarters available as, 'Three dwelling houses' and 'Five good new cottages'.

Looking at the Census Return for 1841 we see eight dwellings occupied by a total of 58 people—and all in houses with no piped water supply and primitive sanitation.

The numbers for later years are shown in the list below.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Dwellings occupied</b>	<b>Number of occupants</b>
1841	8	58
1851	7	42
1861	6	35
1871	5	29
1881	1	11
1891	1	5





Most of the occupations shown in the Census Returns are in the woollen trade, e.g. wool carders, cloth millers and wool slubbers, confirming that the worsted trade had moved into the big steam-powered mills, leaving the little mills barely surviving in the dwindling woollen trade.

In October 1897 a meeting of Shipley Urban District Council considered the application of Mr. Thomas Williams of New Hirst Mill for a supply of piped water to his premises. The Sanitary Committee reported that the residents in the cottages at New Hirst were at present obtaining their water from a stream running alongside the Cemetery (opened in 1895), and that the supply was possibly polluted with sewage from the New Brighton district. It was decided that samples of the water would be analysed.

In December 1897 the Sanitary Committee agreed that additional closet accommodation be provided at New Hirst Mill and the cottages adjoining; while in June 1898 the Waterworks and Estate Committee recommended that a three-inch water main be laid from the Cemetery Chapel to New Hirst Mill. That the Council should be considering these necessary provisions when the mill was nearly at the end of its useful life seems somewhat ironic.

### The Rosse Estate Sale

As noted earlier, New Hirst Mill was part of the Manor of Shipley. The manor had been purchased in 1823 by John Wilmer Field of Heaton Hall, who was also Lord of the Manor of Heaton. His daughter Mary inherited both manors on the death of her father. She married Lord Oxmantown, afterwards Earl of Rosse, of Birr Castle, Ireland, and her husband became the Lord of the Manor. On the Earl's death in 1867 the manors reverted to his widow Mary. On her death in 1885 the manors were inherited by her son, the fourth Earl.

In 1911 the Rosse estates in Shipley were offered for sale by auction. In the Sale Catalogue, Lot 113, totalling 43.119 acres, comprised: '(1) Farmhouse and part of Hirst Farm; (2) Hirst Wood, New Hirst Mill and six cottages the mill and cottages being leased to Miss Crompton Stansfield of Esholt, the lease expiring 1<sup>st</sup> May 1915. The mill, stone built, stone slated, in four floors, each about 81 ft by 27 ft, has out-buildings nearby. The cottages are stone built, stone slated, comprising five cottages of two rooms and one of three rooms'. This Lot went for £2,300 to Sir James Roberts Bart., the proprietor of Salt's Mill.

In January 1921 a special meeting of Shipley Urban District Council was called to consider a letter from Sir James. He writes, regarding a parcel of 54 acres of land near Salt's Mill: *'I offer you all that the trustees conveyed to me, for £13,000. If you accept I will make a gift to the Council of Hirst Farm, Hirst Wood, mill and cottages, comprising 43.119 acres'*.

The offer was accepted. The mill and most of the cottages were demolished in the 1920s, and Hirst Wood opened to the public.

### References

- AD1822 Wakefield Deeds Registry, Vol. HX/138/139
- 1833 Factories Enquiry Commission. Supplementary Report. Employment of Children in Factories.
- 1897 Shipley Times, Wharfedale and Airedale Observer.
- 1898 Shipley Express.
- 1911 W.Y.A.S. Bradford, Sale Catalogue, Rosse Estate, also Yorkshire Observer, 1<sup>st</sup> December 1911.
- 1921 Minutes of Shipley Urban District Council.
- 1923 Minutes of Shipley Urban District Council

*New Mill, in the Township of Shipley.*  
TO BE LET, for a TERM of YEARS,  
*To Enter to Immediately,*

**T**WO Large CHAMBERS over the said Mill, the One 10 and the other 16 Yards long, and each 10 Yards wide, with 10 Windows on each Side, properly arranged for Worsted or Cotton Frames, or for Machinery for the Woollen Manufactory.

Also, The GROUND FLOOR under the larger Chamber, containing a new Wheel Race, Six Feet broad, into which a new Water Wheel will immediately be put, which, with Half the Stream of the River Aire, now to be Let, will be able to carry as much Machinery of either of the above Descriptions, as the above described Rooms will hold.

Also, FIVE Good New COTTAGES, near to the Mill, which will be finished, ready for inhabiting, as soon as wanted.

Should a Tenant apply for a proper Term, he may be accommodated, the next Year, with a proper Quantity of Land, or with the Fulling Mill also; when, the Whole of the Water would be at his Disposal; the Fulling Mill being let now only for the present Year.

The Fulling Mill is carried by a Water Wheel Six Feet broad, carrying Four Falling and Two Driving Pulling Stocks, running in Geer, all entirely new and on the best Construction. The Stocks are supplied with Water from a Cistern, by a Pipe to each Stock. A most excellent Pump, carried by the Water Wheel, supplies the Cistern.

THREE DWELLING-HOUSES, Two Barns, and Nineteen Acres and a Half of excellent Land are now occupied with the Fulling Mill, and may now be taken along with the above Premises, to enter to the Lands on the Second of February next, and Fulling Mill and Buildings the Twelfth of May after.

New Mill is situate very near the Aqueduct Bridge, of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, over the River Aire.

Enquire of Mr. J. Robinson, Esholt Hall.

LEEDS INTELLIGENCER 8th August 1817

## HIRST MILL and THE WRIGHTS

After Joseph Overend's death in 1809, Hirst Mill continued in a clearly profitable manner as a paper mill and corn mill under three generations of the Wright family - all of whom were concerned in the affairs of Shipley township, especially in church matters.

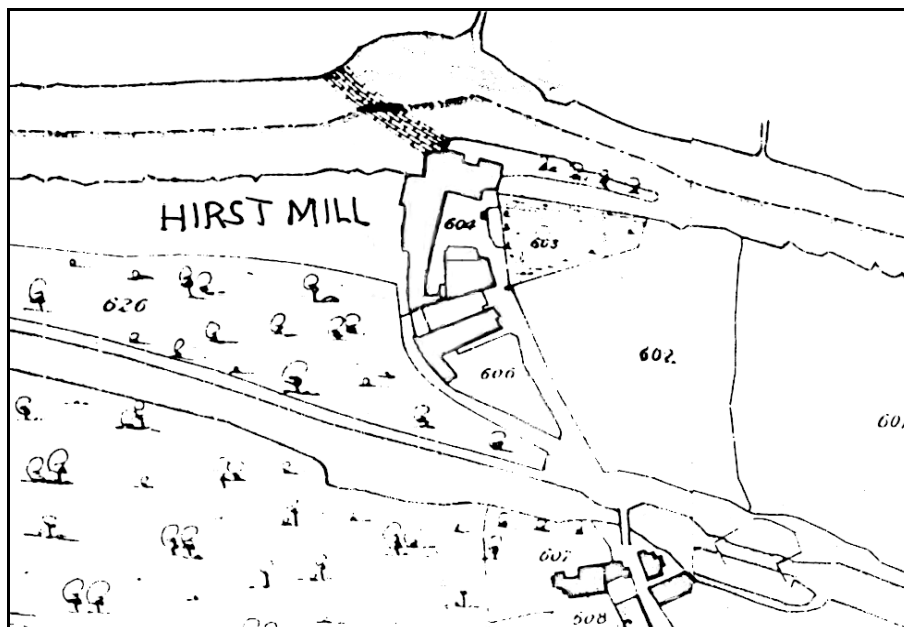
Thomas Wright succeeded his uncle Joseph, next came Thomas's nephew John Wright, and finally John's son William Wright who due to ill health retired and sold the business to Sir Titus Salt, Bart. in 1872.

### Thomas Wright

Following the death of his father, Thomas Wright, at the age of twelve, had been taken under the wing of his uncle Joseph Overend. Thomas first appears in the records at the age of 21 in a deed of 1791 where two of the parties were: *Joseph Overend of Hirst Mills, paper maker and Thomas Wright of Hirst Mills, yeoman*. In 1807 the Shipley section of the County Poll Book shows that Thomas had become a paper manufacturer, while Joseph Overend was a 'gentleman', presumably retired from business.

In his will of 1809 Joseph Overend devised to Thomas all his property in Shipley and 64 acres of land in Kirkby Malham, while his property in Horsforth was devised to John Wright.

Further property came to him following the 1815 Shipley Enclosure Award, when Thomas was awarded three allotments. These included land in Moorhead Lane, and half an acre adjoining the *Shipley and Bramley Turnpike* [Saltaire Road] where he later built the villa named on the 1848 O-S. map as Shipley House [now the Shipley Social Club].



*Hirst Mill - from the 1846 Shipley Tithe Map*

The million pound Government grant, to build churches as a thanksgiving for peace after the Napoleonic Wars, required each award to be supplemented by private subscriptions. A successful petition from Shipley dated 21<sup>st</sup> September 1818 listed the amounts pledged by sixteen landowners.

Amongst them were:

Richard B Wainman for   £105

Dr. Cyril Jackson for    £100

Thomas Wright for       £100

with other small amounts, the total added up to £505 - 1s - 0d

St. Paul's Church, Shipley, consecrated in 1826, was furnished with a peal of six bells purchased by subscription, under a committee comprising Mr. Jonas Bradley, Thomas Wright Esq. and Mr. John Wright.

The Shipley Town Book for the 7<sup>th</sup> November 1827, records that Thomas and John Wright, both present at a meeting, made a proposal regarding the use of the town's School on Sundays [this was probably the school built in 1817]

In an Indenture of 13<sup>th</sup> August 1828, John Bradley of Shipley conveyed to Thomas Wright of Shipley, gentleman, John Wright of Hirst Mills, corn miller, and six other well known Shipley people including Rev. Richard Horsfall of St. Paul's Shipley: *'An allotment of land of about 3,640 square yards, bounded on its North side by the highway from Shipley to Bingley'*. While Crabtree, in his book, *'Shipley through the Camera'* adds, *'as a site for a Sunday School and National School at a cost of £55 - 11 - 0d'*.

This is almost certainly the National School shown just below Crow Gill Quarry on the 1848 O.S. map.

Thomas Wright made his Will in 1828 and added three codicils before his death in January 1836. He devised Hirst Mills, some land in Malham and his real estate of about 42 acres in Shipley to his nephew John Wright, while he bequeathed legacies totalling £7,100 to his seven nieces and other relatives in Horsforth. His codicils give to his housekeeper her cottage (adjoining his garden in Shipley) and an annuity of £30 per year, and to John Wright two lots of real estate (as yet untraced).

## John Wright

**T**homas Wright's brother James, a tanner of Horsforth, had a family of three sons and seven daughters; the eldest son, John being born in 1785. As we have seen, he inherited the paper mill in Horsforth and all Thomas Wright's property in Shipley and Malham. In contrast to Joseph Overend and Thomas Wright, both bachelors, John chose to marry - not just once, but twice.

He married Ellen Tunstall at Bingley in 1819 and a son William was born in 1821. In 1824 Rebecca was born, Ellen dying shortly afterwards. John's second marriage in 1826 was to Jane, daughter of Timothy Lister, maltster of East Morton. Jane died in 1827 after giving birth to a daughter, christened Jane.

The Census of 1841 shows John Wright, corn miller, and William Wright, with two servants at Hirst Mill, along with seven other dwellings. The site had a total population of 41 people.

The Tithe Maps and Schedules of 1846 show John Wright to have amassed considerable property, namely about 53 acres plus Hirst Mill in Shipley, and about 186 acres in East Morton. There was also the Paper Mill with about ten acres in Horsforth and land in Malham.

The Will of John Wright bears the date 11<sup>th</sup> July 1849; he died on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 1851.

All his real estate in Shipley is devised to his son William Wright, and George Dryden of Bingley, surgeon, 'IN TRUST' for William Wright and then in trust for William's son John Ambler Wright. To his son directly he gives all his other real estate including the Paper Mill in Horsforth and lands in Bailiff Bridge, Bentham, Wycollar and Malham. Regarding his newly married daughter Jane his will contains the following: *'AND WHEREAS previous to the marriage of my daughter Jane the wife of Mr. Whitham I gave and conveyed to her or for her benefit an estate at Morton in the parish of Bingley on which I had expended considerable sums of money'*

### **William Wright**

**J**ohn Wright had retired from business by about 1845, leaving the running of Hirst Mill to his son William. A daughter Sarah Ellen was born to Hannah and William Wright in 1847 and a second daughter Rebecca in 1849. Their son John Ambler Wright, mentioned in the will of John Wright, died in his ninth year. John Whitham, a lawyer and the son of John Wright's daughter Jane, married Sarah Ellen and acted as William Wright's legal advisor.

Regarding the mill, the Census returns confirm that the mill ceased to employ corn millers from 1861 onwards. Cudworth writing in 1876 comments: *'Since the occurrence of a fire some years ago the paper mill only has been worked. The paper mill is now occupied as such by Mr. John Hey'*.

From 1865 onwards, William Wright entered into a large number of mortgage transactions, on Hirst Mill and his other properties in Shipley and Malham. The inference is that he was raising money in anticipation of his retirement to his villa near Thirsk.

He sold Hirst Mill and adjoining lands to Sir Titus Salt on 25 April 1872. The parties to the indenture were: (1) Samuel Varley of Stanningley, William W. Whalley of Leeds and David Salmond of Bradford - the mortgagees; (2) William Wright of Shipley, late paper manufacturer, now out of business, (3) Sir Titus Salt Bart. of Crow Nest and (4) John Henry Wade of Bradford.

William Wright died, age 56, on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1877 at his residence Stoneybrough, Thirsk. His body was brought to Shipley for the funeral and he was laid to rest in the family vault in the churchyard of St. Paul's church.

A report in the Shipley and Saltaire Times of 10 November, 1877, reads: *'On Thursday evening last the Society of Change Ringers connected with Shipley St. Paul's Church met in the tower and rang a muffled peal as a tribute of respect to the memory of the late Mr. William Wright. The peal consisted of 1877 changes, corresponding to the year in which he died. It was through Mr. Wright's munificence that this ring of bells was augmented to an octave (a tenor and a treble were added) in 1867'*.

The stone slab of the Wright's vault carries the names of Thomas Wright, Rebecca daughter of John Wright, John Wright, John Ambler Wright, William Wright and Hannah Wright.

William Wright in his will dated 8<sup>th</sup> March 1877 put all his estate and effects in the hands of two trustees, John Ambler of Westgate, Baildon, gentleman, and John Whitham of Ripon, gentleman, on behalf of his daughter Rebecca.

## References

### Thomas Wright:

- AD 1791 Wakefield Deeds Registry: Vol. DG 518/746
- 1809 Borthwick Institute Probate Registry: Vol. 152 no. 141
- 1815 W.Y.A.S.: Bradford, Shipley Enclosure map and schedule
- 1818 Wakefield Deeds Registry: Vol. GU 296/319
- 1828 Wakefield Deeds Registry: Vol. KG 59/65
- 1829 Wakefield Deeds Registry: Vol. KP 31/33
- 1830 Wakefield Deeds Registry: Vol. KT 181/169
- 1836 Borthwick Institute Probate Registry: Vol. 193 no. 174

### John Wright:

- AD 1819 W.Y.A.S.: Bradford, Bingley Parish Registers
- 1826 Wakefield Deeds Registry: Vol. IN 623/615
- 1843 W.Y.A.S.: Bradford, Baildon Parish Registers
- 1846 W.Y.A.S.: Bradford, Shipley Tithe Map
- 1846 W.Y.A.S.: Sheepscar, Leeds, Bingley Parish Tithe Map
- 1848 W.Y.A.S.: Bradford, Shipley St. Paul Parish Registers
- 1849 Borthwick Institute: Probate Registry Vol. 224 no. 1066

### William Wright:

Wakefield Deeds Registry:

Principal conveyances:

- AD 1871 Wright to Rhodes & Richardson: Vol. 657/540/564
- 1872 Varley & Wright to Salt et al: Vol. 673/284/-

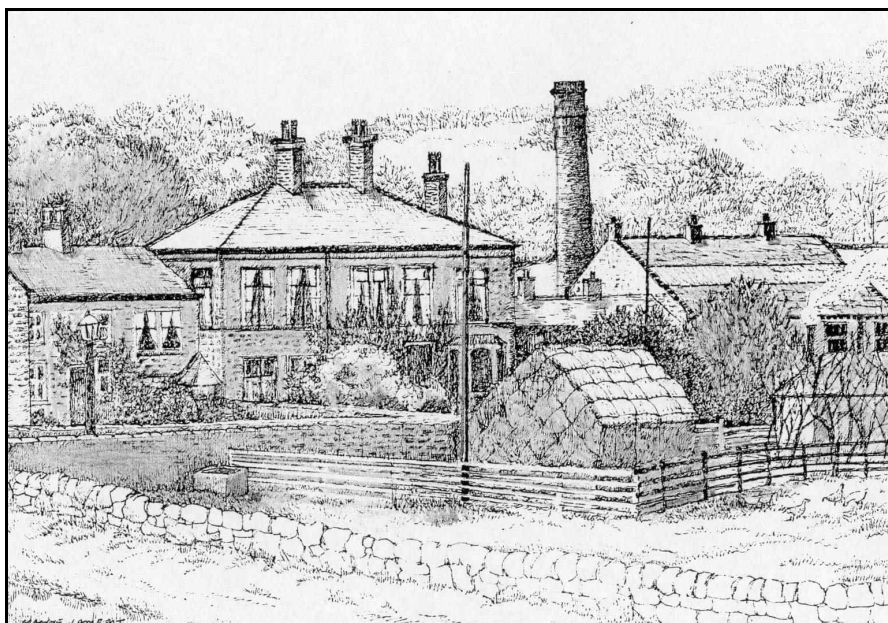
Mortgage transactions:

- AD 1865 YO/89/97
- 1866 ZL/355/-
- 1867 ZL/436/-, ZL/438/-, 603/531/630, 603/532/631,
- 1868 603/538/-
- 1871 656/338/432, 657/540/565, 657/541/566, 657/542/567
- 1872 672/484/-, 672/486/-
- 1874 706/699/792, 706/700/793

## A NEW DIRECTION

Records of Hirst Mill since the Salt purchase are sparse. The Census return for 1881 shows Hirst Mill House occupied by the family of Thomas Kendall, a well known quarry owner and stone merchant. Kendall was unlikely, therefore, to be operating the mill. The residents in the nearby cottages are shown to have quite diverse occupations, with no apparent connection with the mill.

For 1891, the Census shows Hirst Mill House occupied by Harry Gilbert Stuart and his family. His firm, Messrs. Stuart Brothers, were in business as cloth washers and scourers (of industrial cleaning cloths).



*Hirst House*

A point of interest here is that a well known photograph (see drawing on page 35), early but undated, depicts Hirst House just as it is today, whereas the mill appears to be a simple single-storey shed-like structure. Perhaps it was the Stuarts who rebuilt the mill.

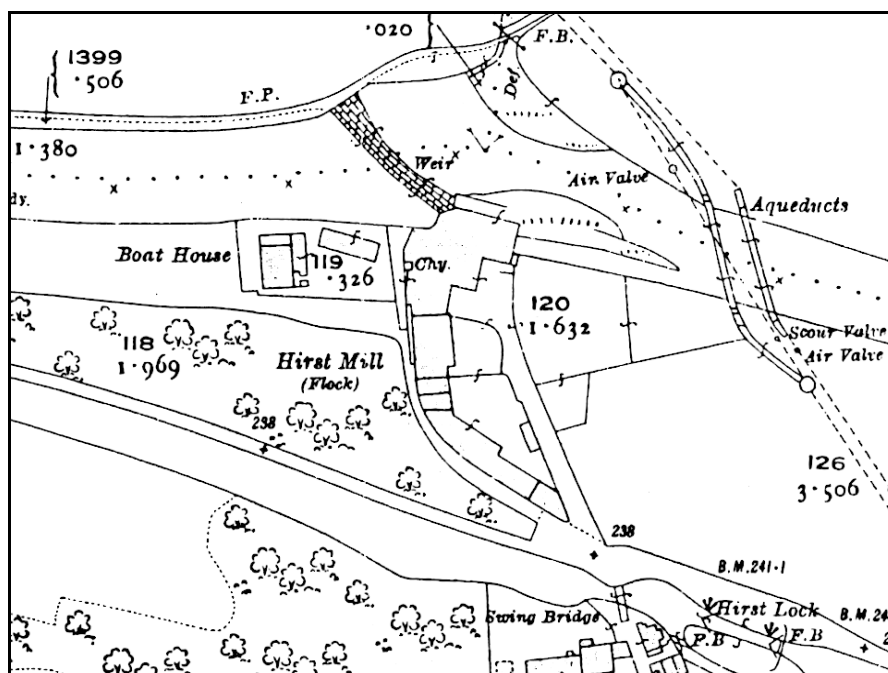
One item revealing a little about the Stuarts is a cashbook held by Bradford Archives. The first entry in this, '*Cash book number one of Stuart Brothers Ltd.*' bears the date 1<sup>st</sup> October 1898, presumably the date when the business became a limited company.

An undated newspaper cutting, pasted inside the front cover of this cash book, reads: '*Stuart Bros. Limited. This company has been registered . . . to take over as a going concern the business of Harry G Stuart, William B Stuart and Ernest Stuart at Saltaire, to carry on the business of spinners and manufacturers of silk noils and silk waste, cleaning cloth makers, grease extractors, waste pullers, etc.*' The Stuarts later moved to bigger and better premises in Ashley Mills, Shipley.

The next occupant of Hirst Mill was Mr. Glyn Thomas, a manufacturer of flock bedding.

An indenture dated 5<sup>th</sup> January 1921 from Sir James Roberts Bart., 30 Hyde Park Gardens (proprietor of Salt's Mill) to Glyn Thomas and Co. Ltd. of Hirst Mills, conveys Hirst Mill, Hirst House and a plot of land lying between the river and the canal, in fee simple, for the sum of £5,000.

On the plot of land conveyed in this indenture stood the Bradford Amateur Rowing Club's boathouse. The Club had been paying rent to the Salt Estate, but Mr. Thomas, as the new owner of the land, objected to the boathouse. To meet his objection the club ferried the boathouse in sections across the river and re-erected it on the Bingley bank of the river.



Hirst Mill and Hirst House - from the 1906 OS map

A news item in 1937 concerning Glyn Thomas includes the passage: 'When a member of the Society Of Friends urged the need for 3,000 mattresses for a Refugee Hospital in Spain, Mr. Thomas offered the use of his mills at Saltaire with power and with the services of certain workpeople, to make the mattresses without cost to the Bradford Spanish Relief Committee'.

In 1948 an item on Hirst Mill reports that: 'The picturesque water-driven factory of Mr. Glyn Thomas is soon to be reopened after standing idle since 1942. Mr. Thomas contends that since 1942 about 120 h.p. water-power has been wasted; 110 h.p. reserve oil engines have been idle and only ten per cent of the available 13,000 square feet of factory space is in use. He has applied to the Board of Trade for "Liberty to work as we did from 1913 to 1940" when the mill had an annual output of 500 to 600 tons of bedding or bedding material'.

In July 1951, in anticipation of his retirement, Mr. Thomas offered his mill for sale by auction. The Telegraph and Argus advertises: 'Freehold works premises . . . floor area 1428 square yards . . . two 45 h.p. water turbines with shafting. Lot 2 is Hirst House with vacant possession and includes a small cottage adjoining and also the wooded pasture lying between the river and the canal'.

The same paper reporting the sale describes the mill as three storeys high, stone-built



with fire-proof floors with and adjoining two-storey office block.

A reserve price of £5,000 had been put on the property (Mr. Thomas's purchase price in 1921). Only one offer was made, of £1,000, and both mill and Hirst House were withdrawn from sale. Tenants were found for the mill for a few years, but then the mill stood empty.

In 1969 Mrs. E H Thomas of Hirst House applied for a Tree Preservation Order on the belt of trees adjoining the canal; the order was confirmed in July 1970.

At a meeting of the Shipley U.D.C. in September 1971, the council were informed that an application had been made for use of the mill and warehouse for the cleaning and renovation of vehicles. In response the council made a request to the County Council for a 'Discontinuance Notice of Industrial Use' on this property lying in the Green Belt. The County Council in its reply asked what new uses would be acceptable, to which Shipley U. D.C. resolved that the County Council be advised that residential use would be acceptable.

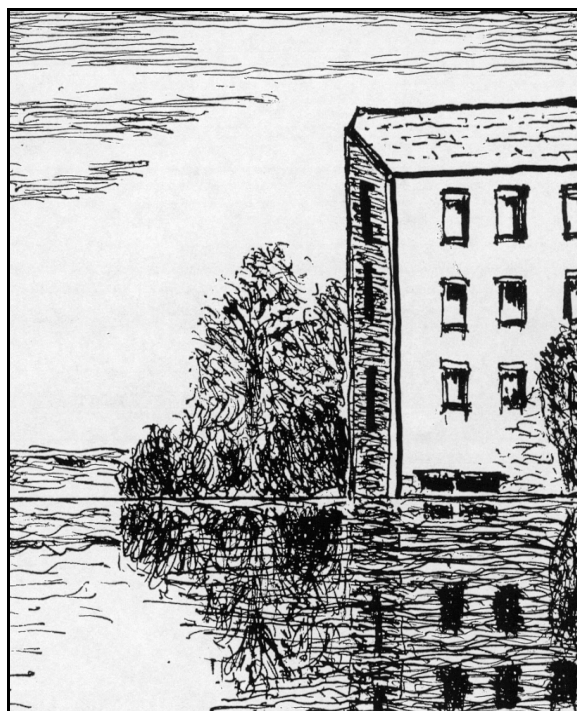
By February 1972 planning permission had been fully approved for the conversion of Hirst Mill into eight residential properties and garages.

The Yorkshire Post for 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1972 carried an advertisement offering: *'Stone-built Riverside Luxury Flats for sale at Hirst Wood, Shipley: fitted kitchen with waste disposal unit, bathroom with coloured suite, central heating and garage. Prices £6,000 to £9,000. Early completion'*.

This brings the story of the Hirst Mills up to date, with the surviving buildings, Hirst Crescent, Hirst House and the converted mill building standing as a memento of the industrial history of this now quiet corner of Shipley.

#### References

- AD 1898 Bradford Archives: Cash book, Stuart Bros., 31/D/78
- 1921 Wakefield Deeds Registry: Vol. 1921/6, p. 151/60
- 1937-51 Bradford Telegraph and Argus: 30 December 1937, 27 August 1948, 23 July 1951, 31 July 1951.
- 1969-72 Bradford Central Library, Local History Dept.: Minutes of Shipley U.D.C.
- 1972 Yorkshire Post: 2 December 1972



*New Hirst Mill in the early 1920s*



*William Wright—from an old photograph*

## **APPENDIX**

### **Joseph Wright's Dialect Dictionary gives us the following definitions:**

FAN - sheets of sacking on a rotating wooden frame, causing a wind used in winnowing corn, i.e. blowing away the chaff from the grain. This one is probably water-driven.

PICK - a tool used to dress a millstone and prepare it for grinding.

STROAKE, PECK - almost certainly measuring vessels. A stroke is two pecks, four pecks make a bushel (eight gallons). A Stroke is also a smooth straight piece of wood with which the surplus grain is struck off to level it with the rim of the measure.

MULCTURE - a certain fraction of the meal taken as payment in kind by the miller.

ARK - a meal chest.

KILNE - for drying the grain before grinding. A kiln hair is possibly a screen woven of hair for use in the drying process.

KITT - a wooden vessel.

GRINDLESTONE - a grindstone

SWAPE - the handle of a grindstone: sweeps out a circle when in use.

GAVELOCK - an iron crowbar or lever.

POYTE - equals POTE, meaning Poker.

MAULE - a hammer.

NADGE - an adze, a carpenter's hand-tool.

### **The three pamphlets of Glyn Thomas**

1932 The Principles of Hygienic Bedding – Bradford Central Library

1933 The Hour Sterling – Shipley Library

1937 The Path to Peace – Shipley Library



*New Hirst around 1910. The cottages, on the left, are mostly empty. The upper stories of the Mill are on the right*

Bill Hampshire was born at Altofts near Wakefield, but has lived in Shipley for many years. Now retired, he was, formerly, a lecturer in Electrical Engineering at Leeds Polytechnic.

The Shipley Local History Society was formed in 1986 by a group of classmates following the completion of an Adult Education course on the history of Shipley led by Dr. Gary Firth.

It was felt at the time that a town such as Shipley was interesting enough to justify a society dedicated to the study of its history. As a result, over the last decade and a half a small, but enthusiastic group have worked on various small-scale projects relating to Shipley's past.

Now, for the first time since its foundation, the Society feels that the research that has been carried out by Bill Hampshire, on the evolution of three of the earliest water mills in Shipley, deserves a wider audience, and this book is the result.

The story of Dixon Mill, Hirst Mill and New Hirst Mill is told here for the first time. We follow the story from their medieval origins as corn and fulling mills, through their various mutations within the wider textile trade, and their inevitable decline and replacement, following the development of the large centralised textile mills such as Salts of Saltaire.

