

The Mills and Millers at Belph, Whitwell and Creswell

Examination of the Portland Estate records and other documents available on the internet indicates clearly that there were two mills associated with Whitwell, one a windmill and the other powered by water. At least in later years, both also seem to have had the option of steam power. The earliest reference to a Miller at Whitwell so far located is to Joseph Bright (buried St Lawrence's on December 9th 1755) who established a charity in 1745.¹ It is not clear with which mill he was associated, but he lived at the Pump House in The Square at Whitwell. According to White's Directory (1857) this charity was lost by the insolvency of the person with whom it was invested.² This Joseph Bright was probably the son, baptised on September 26th 1687, of Joseph Bright and Abigail

In 1858–9 the 5th Duke of Portland bought from George Legat 'a close of land formerly part of Middlegate Field in Whitwell' described as 'lying on the north side of modern Mill Lane' and on which a windmill stood,³ as illustrated on the Whitwell Local History Group website.⁴ It has not been possible, unequivocally, to identify any Miller associated with this mill, but the following, by virtue of living in close proximity to the windmill, are possibly associated with it.

In the period 1841 to 1871 a John Wilson of North Wheatley is shown as a Miller resident at Malters (Malthouse?) Row, Ashurst Cottages or Larpit Lane, Whitwell. He was assisted in 1851 by his nephew, William, and by his son, John, in 1861. In 1881 a William Jallands (b1826 Kirton) of Hills Lane, Whitwell, is recorded as Miller with Joseph Pond as a Miller's Assistant. In 1891 William Jallands is living at Mill Lane Cottage and listed as 'Miller, steam and wind' in Kelly's 1891 Directory.⁵

Whitwell windmill is shown as operational on maps dated 1883 and 1899 but as disused on maps dated 1923 and 1947.⁶ By 1912 the nearest Millers listed in Kelly's Directory are at Bolsover, Clowne and Creswell. An 1813 publication, however, refers to a windmill at Belph.⁷

There were two mills at Creswell / Elmton Common End,⁸ latterly separated by the Creswell–Staveley railway line. The Lower Mill was water-driven, but the Upper or Top Mill was probably originally wind-driven as a ruined windmill is shown on maps at the end of the 19th century. Census and Pigot's Directory records show that Robert and John Butcher were at the Upper Mill in 1831 and 1835, but only Robert appears in the 1841 census and in Bagshaw's 1846 Directory.⁹ William Eyre (b1810 Cottam) appears as Farmer and Miller in 1851 and 1861. In 1871 he is shown only as Farmer, but Joseph Maples (b1852 Sutton-on-Trent) in his household is shown as Miller, and son Robert Eyre (b1845 Elmton) has taken over at the Upper Mill where he remained until 1901. Robert latterly took on responsibility from William Jallands also for the windmill at Whitwell. Robert's younger brother William (b1846 Elmton) is also shown as Miller there in 1881, and as a retired Miller living East Retford in 1891 and 1901.

A Richard Thorpe (b1795 Elmton) also appears as a Miller at Creswell in 1841 with an apprentice, William Mellish (b1823 Stoney Houghton). In 1851, Richard is recorded as Master Miller, assisted by his nephew William Mellish, a Journeyman Miller. William appears to have replaced his uncle in 1861. In view of the overlapping dates they were probably at the Lower Mill.

Another mill was located at Mill Ash, Belph, powered by the Millwood Stream flowing north-east at that point but meandering to enter the Great Lake in Welbeck Park. The Mill Pond is clearly shown on maps dated 1875 and 1883, with the Mansfield–Worksop railway line (authorised in 1865, building commenced 1870 and operational in

1 Whitwell Local History Group <http://www.wlhq.co.uk/book/part17.htm>

2 <http://www.n.f.wilson.btinternet.co.uk/780-790.htm>

3 PI E12/6/26/9/1-34 http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/mss/collections/online-mss-catalogues/cats/port_londonple_nottsales10.html

4 Whitwell Local History Group <http://www.wlhq.co.uk/images/Book/wpe62.jpg>

5 <http://www.andrewspages.dial.pipex.com/dby/kelly/whitwell.htm>

6 <http://www.old-maps.co.uk/indexmappage2.aspx>

7 General View of the Agriculture and Minerals of Derbyshire: With Observations on the Means of Their Improvement

By Great Britain Board of Agriculture, John Farey, Board of Agriculture <http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=cBMAAAAQAAJ&client=firefox-a>

8 Whitwell Local History Group <http://www.wlhq.co.uk/images/Maps/19SE%201899.jpg>

9 History, Gazetteer and Directory of Derbyshire, with the Town of Burton-upon-Trent by Samuel Bagshaw
<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=GvoGAAAAQAAJ>

1875) to the west.¹⁰ In 1890 the Duke of Portland required the Shireoaks Colliery Company to ‘*build a wall to be erected from the private loading berth at Whitwell Station to near Belph Mill Dam*’.¹¹

Maps dated 1899, 1901 and 1923 show the Mill Pond and sluice adjacent to Whitwell Colliery, the branch line from Whitwell station to the colliery, the Cricket Ground, Railway Cottages, with Belph Mill and Mill Ash a short distance east.^{12,13} A 1947 map shows the Mill Pond and a sluice, Station Cottages and Belph Mill Cottages, but does not designate Belph Mill *per se*.¹⁴ There is a reference to Belph Mill in 1956 as follows, ‘*Agreement with Charles Cople for Belph Mill, Whitwell, Derbys*’.¹⁵

According to Wikipedia, the stream flowed from a natural fault, and the ruins of two mills can apparently still be seen.¹⁶ Possibly one of these is the windmill referred to in the 1813 publication, above. My grandmother, Harriet Hind, recalled that in addition to milling cereals, Belph Mill also possessed a ropewalk for processing flax, but whether this is the ‘round flax mill’ associated with the Rotherham family *ca* 1755 is unclear.¹⁷ Benjamin and Mary Rotherham (née Heathcote) are recorded as holding the Belk (Birks? Belph?) Closes at about that date,¹⁸ and a Samuel Rotherham, buried St Lawrence’s in 1845, was described as of Belph Moor.

The earliest reference so far located to what seems to be the property at Mill Ash is dated 1701 and states as follows ‘*one rood of land within the Manor of Whitwell, abutting north on the Milne Lane and south on the ditch*’ transferred by feoffment from ‘*Godfrey Walkinson of Handsworth Woodhouse in Derbyshire, yeoman, to Richard Biney of Whitwell in Derbyshire, yeoman*’.¹⁹

John Porter (1733–1806) son of Charles Porter of Whitwell was in 1745 indentured with Mathew Porter, Stonemason, for seven years.²⁰ In 1760 John received by feoffment from Samuel and Alice Cutt ‘*a close of land on Mill Lane at Belph in Whitwell*’.²¹ In 1764 John married Ann Flower (1745–1819) at Whitwell. Their eldest son and heir, George, was baptised at Whitwell on February 5th 1764. Two of the occupants of John’s property at Mill Ash were Samuel Beard in 1761²² and Robert Vallance in 1764.²³

John died 1807 and bequeathed his property to his wife Ann and daughter Charlotte, but specified that if Charlotte married some of the property would pass to his sons George and Charles, and his married daughter Ann Dodds.²⁴ This will was later judged to be ambiguous and eventually in 1823 the property at Mill Ash was divided between Charlotte Porter, spinster, George Porter, Miller, Charles Porter of Whitwell, gent., and Robert Dodds of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and his wife Ann née Porter, the Porters mentioned all being children of John Porter, Mason of Whitwell, and his wife Ann.²⁵ Charlotte died in 1831 while resident in London and bequeathed her share of the property to ‘*Maria, eldest daughter of her eldest brother George Porter, for her life; after her death bequeaths the same to Maria's brothers John and George and sister Charlotte*’.²⁶

George Porter (1764–1846) married Ann (1771–1844, but other details not known) and he was described in 1820 and 1823 as Miller, in 1824 as Farmer of Belph Grange, and in 1840 and 1841 as a Farmer of Mill Ash. He died in 1846 and is buried at St Lawrence’s.

10 <http://www.old-maps.co.uk/indexmappage2.aspx>

11 PI E12/9/6/2/1 http://nottingham.ac.uk/mss/collections/online-mss-catalogues/cats/port_londonple_minerals.html

12 <http://www.old-maps.co.uk/indexmappage2.aspx>

13 A.E. Overton and Bob Essery ‘*Whitwell*’ in *Midland Record*, **22**, pp 14–33. ISBN 1–905184–13–1

14 <http://www.old-maps.co.uk/indexmappage2.aspx>

15 <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/records.aspx?cat=157-ddp7&cid=2-626&kw=belph#2-626>

16 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belph>

17 <http://www.wlhg.freeuk.com/book/part17.htm>

18 PI E12/6/26/4/3 http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/mss/collections/online-mss-catalogues/cats/port_londonple_nottsals10.html

19 PI E12/6/26/7/1 http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/mss/collections/online-mss-catalogues/cats/port_londonple_nottsals10.html

20 PI E12/6/26/7/3 http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/mss/collections/online-mss-catalogues/cats/port_londonple_nottsals10.html

21 PI E12/6/26/7/4 http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/mss/collections/online-mss-catalogues/cats/port_londonple_nottsals10.html

22 PI E12/6/26/7/5 http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/mss/collections/online-mss-catalogues/cats/port_londonple_nottsals10.html

23 PI E12/6/26/7/6 http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/mss/collections/online-mss-catalogues/cats/port_londonple_nottsals10.html

24 PI E12/6/26/7/8 http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/mss/collections/online-mss-catalogues/cats/port_londonple_nottsals10.html

25 PI E12/6/26/7/12/1-2 http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/mss/collections/online-mss-catalogues/cats/port_londonple_nottsals10.html

26 PI E12/6/26/7/14 http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/mss/collections/online-mss-catalogues/cats/port_londonple_nottsals10.html

The Porter property at Mill Ash included ‘a close of land in the parish of Whitwell in Derbyshire measuring 1r. 20p. bounded on the north by [the rivulet leading from] Belph Mill and on the south by Mill Lane, together with a messuage or dwellinghouse and seven cottages erected on part of the close’.²⁷

It is further described as including ‘A dwelling house at Mill Ash in the parish of Whitwell in Derbyshire, ‘private stone built and tiled’; seven cottages adjoining the house, also ‘private stone built and tiled’; a coach house about 20 yards away from the cottages; and two pig sties’.²⁸

In 1840, this property was conveyed to the 4th Duke of Portland by the mortgage holders and joint owners (who included George Porter, Farmer of Mill Ash, his sons John Porter (born 1807, Coach Builder of East Retford) and George Porter (b 1809, Hop Merchant of Leeds) and his son-in-law John Megson (Brewer of Wakefield) and his wife Charlotte née Porter.²⁹

A book³⁰ published in 1845 refers to ‘A Singular Tree’ as follows, ‘There is a tree now flourishing in a meadow at Belph-mill, near Whitwell, in the occupation of G. Porter, of the Mill Ash, which exhibits the appearance of two trees—one above the other—on one bole or stem. The parent tree—the willow—had been from time to time headed or topped, and the seed of the ash by some means had been deposited on the crown of it, and had taken root, and, in the course of years, made its way down the heart of the willow into the earth. The tree or trees stands at a short distance from the Duke of Portland’s coach-road, and about two miles from the celebrated Greendale Oak, in Welbeck-park, and is well worth the notice of the curious passing that way—Derby Reporter.’

My particular interest in these mills stems from the fact that my great great grandfather, John Hind, was associated with the mill at Belph. John Hind is recorded in the various censuses as born about 1799 at Whitwell, but no baptism record has been located there or in the surrounding parishes, and his parents are not certainly known. John Hind was resident Elmton when he married Elizabeth Turner at Staveley on August 5th 1823.

In 1824, when his eldest son William was baptised at St Lawrence’s, John was described as a Miller resident Whitwell, but his exact place of residence is not known, nor is it clear with which mill he was then associated, but possibly one of the mills at Elmton because he was not recorded as a property owner or tenant in the 1823 Tithe Schedule for Whitwell. Baptism records indicate that by 1826 John and family had moved to Osberton where he was Miller, resident at the Mill until ca 1834. John Hind then moved to the Chequer House at Scofton, adjacent to Ranby, until ca 1838 but returned to Osberton until at least August 1844 when my great grandfather George Hind was baptised at Worksop Priory.

It is possible that John Hind initially worked with John Foster (b1784 Osberton) who was Miller there from at least 1813 and who in 1832 was shown as Corn Miller living Diamond Nook, Osberton.³¹ John Foster was Miller residing at Ranby Kilns in 1841 and had retired there by 1851 as his son William took over. Osberton Mill was a large operation in 1851 with a Miller (William Wilkinson b1813 Osberton), Foreman Miller (Stephen Keene b1822 Melksham, Wiltshire), Night Miller (Joseph Taylor b1809 Ranby) and Apprentice Miller (Henry Girsham b1834 Ireland). According to the register at Scofton William and Matilda Wilkinson were resident at Osberton Mill when their son Frank Booth Wilkinson was baptised on July 11th 1852 and similarly Thomas and Hannah Black were resident there on January 9th 1853 when their daughter Catherine was baptised, and on November 19th 1854 when their son Thomas was baptised.³²

By April 1851 John Hind and family had returned to Whitwell and he is recorded as Master Miller at Mill Ash, Belph, indicating that he must have trained at least one apprentice while at Osberton. It seems likely that he took over on or shortly after the death of George Porter in February 1846, but no definite record has been found. John Hind was named as Miller there in White’s 1857 Directory, and as Master Miller and Farmer there in 1861. He died in 1869 and his Administration described him as Farmer and Miller of Belph and named his wife Elizabeth as executrix.

27 PI E12/6/26/7/14 http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/mss/collections/online-mss-catalogues/cats/port_londonple_nottsales10.html

28 PI E12/6/26/7/18/1-5 http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/mss/collections/online-mss-catalogues/cats/port_londonple_nottsales10.html

29 PI E12/6/26/7/22/1-3 http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/mss/collections/online-mss-catalogues/cats/port_londonple_nottsales10.html

30 ‘The Friend’: A Religious and Literary Journal, Published by The Friend. 1845 <http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=30ErAAAAYAAJ>

31 ‘History, gazetteer, and directory of Nottinghamshire, and the town and county of the town of Nottingham’, By William White.

<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Q3cHAAAAQAAJ>

32 Scofton Registers <http://www.archive.org/stream/registerworks00pargoog#page/n423/mode/2up>

White's Directory of 1857 named John Hind's eldest son William also as Corn Miller at Belph,³³ and the 1861 census also lists John's sons Rheuben (b1841) and George (b1844) as Millers. William was listed as Miller in the 1876 Post Office Directory and in 1880 William was described as Miller at Mill Ash when the *Retford and Gainsborough Times* (July 9th) reported a drowning in the reservoir attached to the mill at Belph Moor.³⁴ The 1881 and 1891 censuses and the 1891 Kelly's Directory³⁵ all recorded William as '*Miller steam and wind*' at Belph while in 1891 William's son Charles, resident at Chapel Yard, was also recorded as a Corn Miller. Charles Hind died in 1894, and when his father, William, died in 1895 he was buried at St Lawrence's in the same grave.

At this date both Bulmer's and Kelly's Directory list William's elder son Albert as Farmer and Miller at Belph. Albert was still recorded as a Farmer at Belph in 1899 but by 1901 was recorded as a Labourer living Hodthorpe with his wife Sarah, daughter Jessie and cousin Lucy Hind. He was buried at St Lawrence's in 1905 and his widow was subsequently recorded as a shopkeeper at Hodthorpe in 1911 and 1912.

John Hind's second son, Thomas (born Osberton and baptised Worksop Priory March 19th 1826) started life at Osberton as an Agricultural Labourer but in 1851 was recorded as a Journeyman Miller living at Thrumpton Lane,³⁶ Ordsall with George Townrow. Later that year (October 2nd) at St Lawrence's Thomas married Mary Drabble, daughter of William Drabble, Sawyer of Belph. Sadly, Mary died shortly after the birth of their son James in 1853 and Thomas moved away. He married secondly Ann Turner and in 1861 was recorded as a Journeyman Miller living High Street, Litchurch. In 1871 he was living with his widowed mother at Belph Moor, but returned to Belper and then Ripley where he died a widower in 1902.

33 <http://www.n.f.wilson.btinternet.co.uk/>

34 Whitwell Local History Group <http://www.wlhg.co.uk/book/part18.htm>

35 <http://www.andrewspages.dial.pipex.com/dby/kelly/whitwell.htm>

36 Ordsall Mill http://www.picturethepast.org.uk/frontend.php?action=printdetails&keywords=Ref_No_increment;EQUALS;NCCN002353