

## Westcott Mill

The earliest mention of the Mill is in the Domesday Book circa 1086

*In Wodeton (Wotton) Hundred Ralph de Fougeres holds Wescote (Westcott). Abbot Alsi held it of King Edward. There are 3 serfs and a mill worth 30 pence, and 2½ acres of meadow.*

In the Inquisition post mortem of Laurence de Hastings in 1348 the mill is mentioned and stated to be a water mill.

From a Deed of Recovery dated 30<sup>th</sup> June 1574 Thomas Codman granted a lease of a Messuage and Mill with garden, land etc., situated in Westcott in the Parish of Dorking.

It is a fairly reasonable conclusion that a mill existed pre Conquest and may go back to very early times. The mill itself will have had many reincarnations over the centuries and is likely to have always been a wooden construction on some form of stone foundations. The water power would almost certainly have come from a sluice fed by the Pippbrook stream and this would give the miller a reasonable control of when and for how long he could work the mill. Very dry conditions resulting in a minimal flow in the stream would have presented problems. To overcome this, a large millpond was constructed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century with a total surface area of 6 acres, to an overall depth of ten feet.

There was a fire in the mill building in 1843 which destroyed it.

*'Another lamentable fire took place on the night of the 7<sup>th</sup> inst, near Dorking, by which a water mill, belonging to R. Fuller, Esq., at Westcott, in the occupation of Mr. J. Bravery, was entirely burned down, with 60 loads of corn therein. The fire was observed by a person passing on the high road, about 12 o'clock at night, gave an immediate alarm. It appears that the mill door was open, and from all the information contained, there is every reason to suppose that it was the work of an incendiary. The night was intensely dark, and 8 persons, endeavouring to draw up the engine in a proper position were accidentally immersed in the water (14 feet deep), one of whom had a narrow escape of life, but happily the whole were rescued without injury, except a good ducking.'* The miller, Mr. Bravery, died of shock two weeks later.



The mill was rebuilt about 1850,

substantially as in attached photos, rectangular in shape and built of brick under a slate roof. The tenant of this new mill was Thomas Killick who remained there until 1878. In 1851 the Water Resources Survey records that the mill contained 3 pairs of stones, and produced on average 55 sacks of flour per week but a 1894 Sales Prospectus says it had 4 pairs of stones. The partnership of King & King then took over the tenancy but dissolved by 1882 when Edward Wilcox came and remained until 1895. Charles Hall became the final tenant as a working mill until 1905 and it ceased operations in 1909.

We have no details of the type of machinery in the mill but from a measurement of the wheelpit the waterwheel must have been of an overshot design and at least 15ft in diameter. All the machinery was sold for scrap in 1912.

Mr Brooke of the Rookery and owner of the pond and mill utilised the empty building as a fishing lodge for the millpond was a 'roach fishing paradise' and fished by the Dorking Angling Society. They formed in 1905 and at their AGM in May 1913 '*invited Robert Wyvill Barclay to succeed his father as President. They also noted that whilst the Mole Water continued to provide the greatest pleasure the lake at Westcott which was used by permission of Mr A Brooke of Leyland was much appreciated,*



*having been the rendezvous for 4 winter competitions. Trout had increased in size and numbers, no less than ten being inadvertently taken during one days coarse fishing - but fortunately returned uninjured. No doubt the vast amount of live feed was accountable for the trout refusing to give much sport to the fly angler, although the 'spinner' had in some cases proved successful. In December 1907 the Dorking and District Angling Society announced that in addition to the stretch of the River Mole granted to them by Her Grace Lily, Duchess of Marlborough - for which each member contributed 1/- to the Dorking Cottage Hospital - the Society had acquired the sole and unrestricted right to fish at Westcott Mill Pond, an area extending to nearly 6 acres and well stocked with roach, perch, gudgeon and trout. It is likely to afford members excellent sport. The lease was drawn up in consultation with Mr Lyne of A H Lyne & Co, and signed after the committee had had a personal interview with the Managing Director of the Landowners Company, Mr A Brooke. Non members will also be allowed to fish on payment of 2/6 a day, reduced to 1 /- a day if accompanying a member.'*

**1923** Following the death of Mr S W Fuller of Dorking in December the Dorking Advertiser reproduced an 1896 feature in which Mr Fuller a keen sportsman referred to his angling exploits at Westcott "*I like jack fishing in the winter, when the frost has cut down the reeds, which give the jack a good hiding and holding on place. Of course butterfly-fishermen prefer the summer. Fishing is easier in a lake like Mr Barclay's (than in the river Mole). You can get pike and jack there, and perch and carp - tremendous carp, but so shy that they are as bad to take as they are bad to eat - and tench, roach and other sorts. I don't believe in artificial baits when I can get others. I use dace for jack, etc.; red worm , the 'brandlin' for trout, etc.; trout also take the minnow and the fly very well. Speaking of some specimen 'takes', a few years ago I took a 23lb pike at Bury Hill. I have had several 1¼lb roach from the Westcott Mill pond. "*

Meanwhile back in 1894, the remainder of the Rookery Estate had been bought by Landowners Ltd., a development company, of which Arthur Brooke was the Managing Director. In subsequent years the various properties were disposed of and former farmland was neatly parcelled up for sale as desirable building sites. Coast Hill Lane, Deerleap Road and the properties backing on to Westcott Mill Pond were all developed in this way. Sales took place in 1898, 1911 and 1929, which disposed of the last of the Rookery Estate.

In 1911, for example, the sale included **The Old Mill and the Westcott Mill Pond**, Sandrock Cottage and various desirable plots adjacent to Balchins Lane and Coast Hill.

After a period of disuse it was converted into a school, **The Mill School**, for young children. Established by the Misses Colam in 1920 it only survived until 1929. Some children boarded and they were accommodated in the Old Mill House at the junction of Westcott Street and Balchin Lane.

It was then converted into a dwelling house, the first generation of such, followed by a complete rebuild. There is some uncertainty over when all this happened but the colour photo, which we think is late 1930's seems to show the building to have gone. We know that the Red Cross used the site for training purposes during WW2. We have little or no information on the development and ownership of the Mill after the end of the War and would welcome any information about this period of its history.







WESTCOTT MILL. FEB. 4, 12.



Late 1930's



Mill Cottage??



Late 1990's??