

## SAINT MARY'S MILL, SAINT MARY'S GATE, DERBY.

This mill stood on a site on the Markeaton Brook which is now partly under the Multi-story car park on Bold Lane opposite the bottom end of St. Mary's Gate and may be one of the ten mills recorded in Derby in 1086 when Domesday Book was compiled.

St. Mary's Gate took its name from the ancient church of St. Mary, one of the six in Derby in 1086, which stood at the top end and disappeared from the record in the medieval period. The short strip of road to the west of Jury Street on which the mill was situated appears on the OS 1901 25" to the mile map as Lower St. Mary's Gate.

It is possible that the mill was never named St. Mary's. In early records it was Le Twygristmulne (1240), Molendo de Twigrist later the same century and Twogristmilne in 1310, presumably indicating that it had two sets of grinding stones. For part of the 13th century it was leased to Solomon as it was situated next to Derby's Jewish quarter, hence Jury (Jewry) Street. In the 17th century it was known locally as Cuckstool Mill because of the adjacent ducking stool. By 1740 it was officially the Borough Flour Mill but its old familiar name hung on and in 1741 the Derby Mercury reported that a child had drowned in the mill pond of Cuckstool Mill. In January 1785 the same paper advertised for sale a "Water corn mill at the bottom of St. Mary's Gate, occupied by Mrs Waterall". It was advertised again in 1845 as "Cuckstool Mill, with dam". In 1851 it appeared in Corporation records (DLSL DBR/D/190) as St. Mary's Gate Mill and it seems likely that local usage simply shortened this to St. Mary's. When it ceased working is unclear but the same Corporation records show it to be still in use in 1873. The brook was culverted to create the nearby Strand in 1878 so that is probably the time of its demise. The OS 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> feet to the mile map of 1883 shows the brook culverted and the area in industrial use.

William Hutton, in his 'History of Derby' published in 1791, tells us "In 1272 the nuns (of nearby Kingsmead Priory) are said to have let three mills on the Hoddibrook.... They must have been Markeaton, St. Mary's and Cuckstool mills". This seems an odd statement from a man believed to know the town well as it has long been accepted that St. Mary's and Cuckstool were one and the same but perhaps he was right. We do not know when any of these mills were named so it is possible that Markeaton Mill was the one on the Britannia Mill site which had ceased to grind corn before 1818 (not the one in the park near the hall site); that, in Hutton's time, what we know as Nun's Mill was known locally as St. Mary's (after the nuns of St. Mary de Pratis who originally owned the site) and that Twygrist/Cuckstool Mill became St. Mary's in the 19th century. This is pure speculation but it does explain an otherwise apparent error by a man who knew the town so well.

In DLSL some Derby Corporation documents, mainly inventories, refer to the mill between the years 1847-1873 (DBR/D/190). A sample page reads:

### **January 1851. Things in St. Mary's Gate Mill.**

**2 Sack barrows.**

**1 Grindstone in frame.**

**6 Cast iron weights.**

**1 Iron brake for water wheel.**

**Machine spouts.**

**Sack tackling chain.**

**Driving chain.**

**1 iron stove pipe.**

**1 Pair Mill stones.**

Another item is a telegram which refers to a bracket and wire attached to the chimney of St. Mary's Gate mill.

Another document, DBR/D1165 apparently concerns insurance on the mill. It is titled "Sketch of Webster's Mill, St. Mary's Gate. Proposed to be insured in the Yorkshire Office". Dated 4th March 1834 it is a rough plan of the mill with dimensions and description of the usage of the various numbered sections. It is partly faded and in the following transcript those words marked \* are difficult to read and my interpretation may be wrong. Those marked ??? are so far indecipherable. The plan (with west at the top) shows several joined buildings round a U shape with the mill dam running through the centre from west to east and the Markeaton Brook on the north edge as seen in the 1852 Board of Health map. On such an ancient site there has obviously been much rebuilding and additions done piecemeal. Its longest side was 193 feet and the width 61 feet 6 inches. The heights of the buildings vary from 12 feet to 35 feet. The wheel was inside so it is impossible to tell whether it was breastshot or undershot.

Transcript of the key to the plan:

1. **Blacksmith's Shop. John ??? ???**
2. **Boiler House. John Brookhouse.**
3. **Passage to No. 11.**
4. **Corn Mill with 3 pair of stones. John Robinson.**
5. **Water wheel and works. John Robinson.**
6. **Steam engine.**
7. **Plaster Mill worked by the Steam Engine.**
8. **Part of ditto in which are 2 Stoves for Boiling Plaster ???**
9. **Stove for Drying Colours.**
10. **Room for Drying the Sacking & Tarpoling (Tarpaulin) with a Stove.**
11. **Sacking & Tarpoling Manufactory with Stove & Woolhouse\* & Canopy\*.**

On the end of some of the above entries the names of those occupying the rooms have been lightly pencilled in but are now illegible.

**The rooms over 3 & 4 are occupied with the corn mill as Garners for Wheat.**

**No stove or fire either in the Mill or the room above.**

**The 3 rooms over No.7 are occupied by the Trade Union - the first is at present a joiners shop but is to be fitted up with power looms for weaving silk, the second room (with a stove) is occupied by machines for winding silk and the upper floor (with a stove) at present a joiners shop but is to be fitted up with looms.**

**The room over No. 11 is divided in two by a wood partition - the north end of which is occupied with the ground floor and is used as a sacking manufactory and warehouse for hemp & the south end is occupied by the Trades Union & is fitted up with Machines for winding silk.**

**The Trades Unions have a stove in each room.**

From this we learn that the simple corn mill of possible Saxon origins had grown and diversified over the centuries and was currently used for grinding corn (water power), silk winding and weaving (presumably water power), producing plaster (steam power) and manufacturing sacking. From the early 18th century silk mills large and small had proliferated in Derby yet here, well over a century later, there was still room for more silk production showing that there must have been a great demand for silk.

Also relevant is DBR/B/36 which is a draft agreement of 1812 with Wm. Searl re the erection of a bridge over the mill dam (now Brook Walk). This was the well known one that spanned the brook from the end of Searl Street to Brook Walk till the 1970s and appears on the 1852 Board of Health map as Searl's Bridge.

To date my research has failed to find any official documentary reference to St. Mary's Mill. Always the word "Gate" is included.

Further relevant information would be welcome.

Don Farnsworth. July 2008.