

# **MILLS ON THE LAND YEO**

## *Further Discoveries*

by

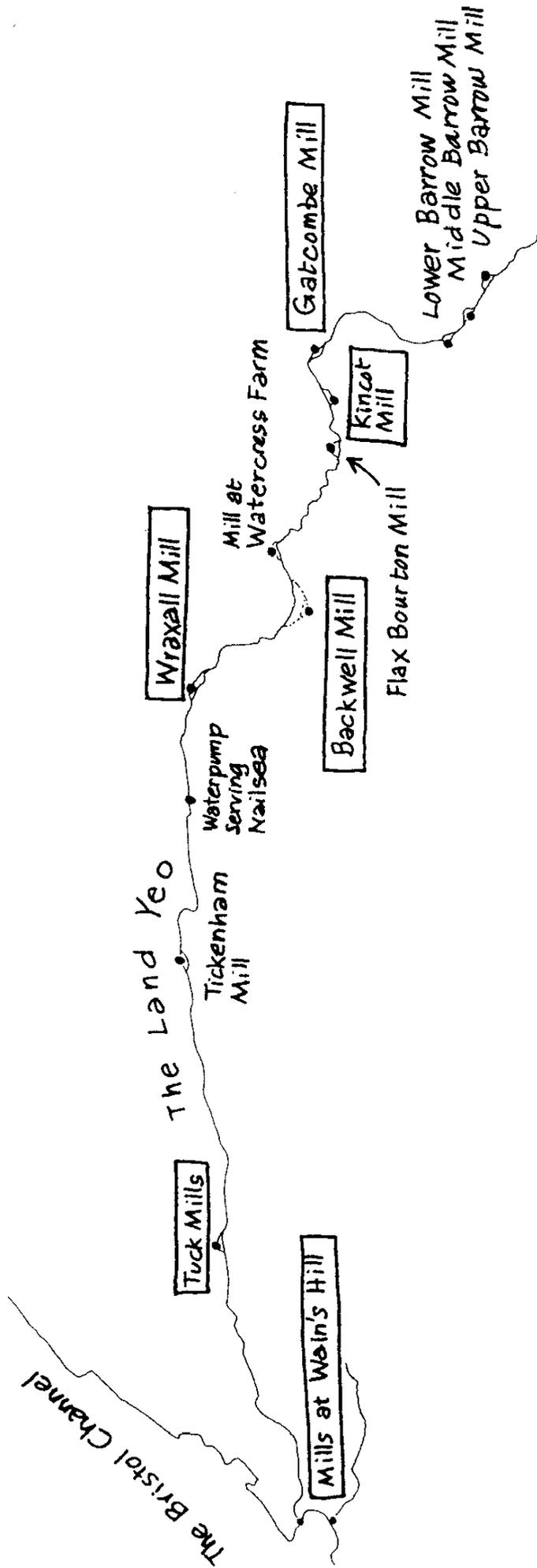
**Ruth Poole  
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Jane Lilly**



## **Cover photograph**

The mouth of the Land Yeo from Wain's Hill, Clevedon. A 17th century mill appears to have worked here, at or near the present sluice.

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Mills shown boxed indicate those sites referred to in this publication

## INTRODUCTION

It was just as well I did not write an introduction to 'Mills on the Land Yeo' claiming that this was a definitive study! When I wrote this text - largely in 1989 - my intention was to expand on reports which had appeared in Nailsea Pennant Volume 3, issue 1, in December 1982.

I was thus initially taken aback by the amount of new information received, following publication of 'Mills on the Land Yeo'.

I welcome this very positive response which further increases our knowledge of history in the district.

So, many thanks to Ruth Poole of Long Ashton, Phyllis Horman, historian of Wraxall, Norma Knight of Backwell and Jane Lilly of Clevedon

for providing further insights into the history of the mills.

Jane Lilly has found three mills completely new to me, two of which near Wain's Hill, Clevedon, may have been tide mills - that is to say powered by the waters of the Bristol Channel rather than the yeo and neighbouring streams (other known tide mills were at Portishead with possible sites at Kingston Seymour and Uphill). Present day sea defences obscure the topography of earlier centuries so the nature of these mills remain uncertain at present.

Local history reports are never really definitive and I anticipate further discoveries in the years ahead.

Martin Bodman

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Gatcombe Mill, Long Ashton

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[following the article by Phyllis Horman and Wilfred Rew in Pennant 8]

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## GATCOMBE MILL, LONG ASHTON

There was a fulling mill at Gatcombe in 1378.<sup>1</sup> A lease dated 1736 referred to a "*paper-mill, late water-grist mill*". The previous tenant had been John King but it was now held by William Baker, paper-maker.<sup>2</sup>

In December 1740 £150 worth of damage was caused by a fire in the drying room of the paper mill. Apparently it had been started deliberately by an apprentice.<sup>3</sup>

### References

1. Manorial Court Roll, Ashton Lyons. Bristol Record Office AC/M3/3

2. Lease and release, 26, 27 November 1736. Gatcombe Manor Documents, 30(a) (b). Bristol Record Office

3. [A H Shorter]. Somerset & Dorset Notes and Queries, Vol 25 1950, quoting the Daily Post, 23 December 1740.

## KINGCOT MILL, LONG ASHTON

During the 18th century it was sometimes known as "Little Mill"<sup>1</sup>. On 21 December 1805 Richard Neale, John Ames, William Elton and Levi Ames leased the mill, a house, garden and strip and West Mill Paddock on lives, for a chief rent of £15 and £1 heriot.

Neale surrendered the lease and when Edward Peters took it over on 8 October 1827, at an increased rental of £16 6s 8d, it was described as a snuff mill.<sup>2</sup>

There is a field to the north of the Kingcot Mill called Lyons Mill Paddock, so there may have been another mill there.<sup>3</sup>

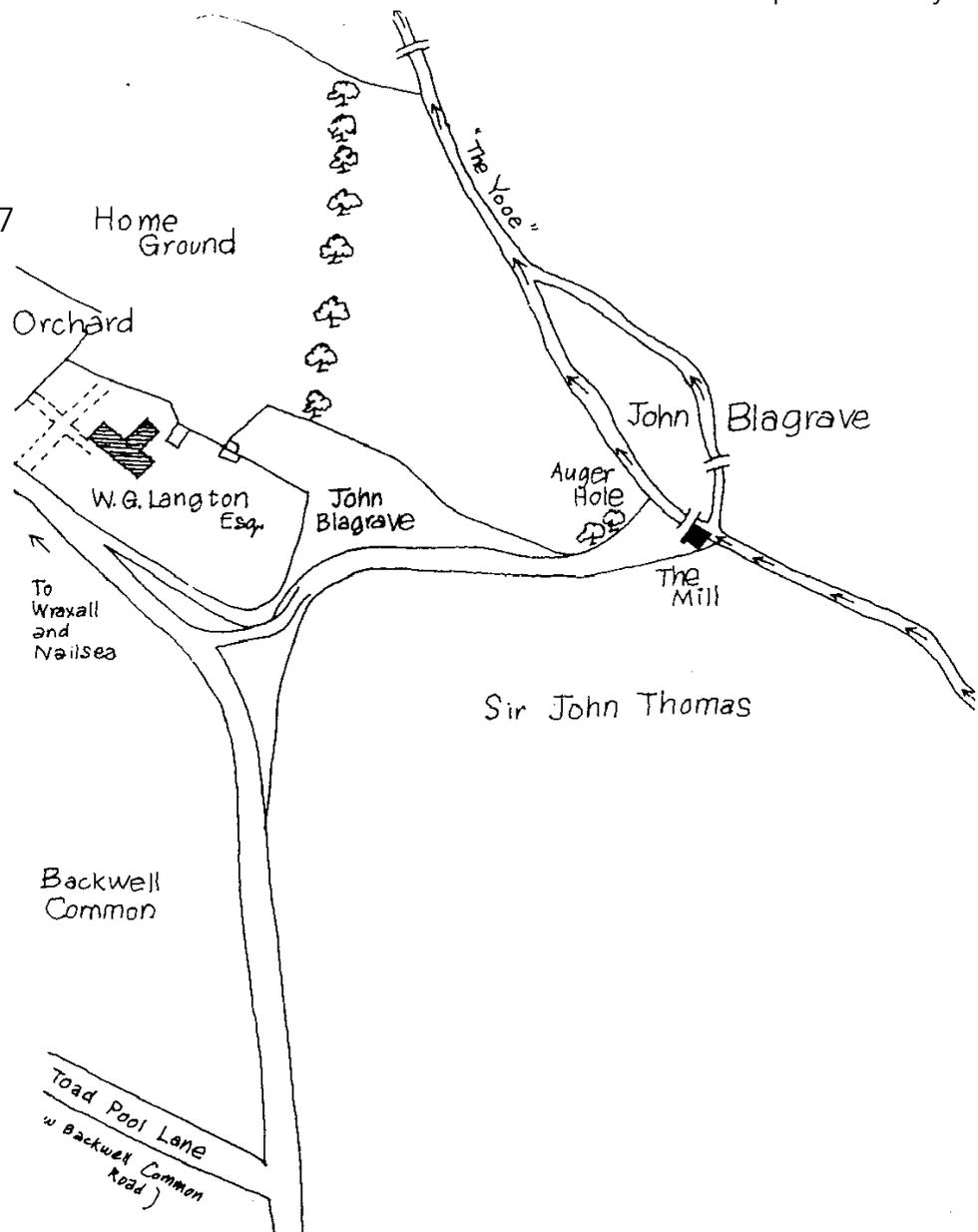
(Editors Note:- Various spelling exist)

### References

1. April 1735 Bristol Record Office. AC/MI/34 (3)
2. Map of the Manor of Long Ashton in 1826 and Survey on cards, Bristol Record Office AC/PL/10
3. Bond copy of 1826 Survey, Bristol Record Office AC/E/193. Ashton Court estate map and surveys. Bristol record Office.

### BACKWELL MILL

From an estate plan of 1787



## BACKWELL MILL

### Location ST 493 706

The earliest record of a mill in Backwell is in the Domesday Survey of 1086 when it was worth 4s. There is no indication as to the site of that mill, but as all mills at that time were water mills and as there is only a very short stretch of the Land Yeo crossing the extreme north-east corner of the parish it probably stood on a leat near its bank.<sup>1</sup> [*My suggestion of an earlier mill site on the river Kenn cannot now be substantiated. MB*].

It is next mentioned in the 13th century. The tenants, called appropriately de Molend (molendinarius means a miller in Latin), were involved in a law suit between 1268 and 1270 concerning a house, mill and land, where Gilbert son of Austin unsuccessfully claimed as his property.<sup>2</sup>

In 1327 Edytha and Walterus atte Mulur are recoded as paying tax; they are presumably 'at the mill'.<sup>3</sup>

The next reference occurs in the 17th century. In 1640 John Cottrell of Long Ashton, Gent., and later lord of the manor of Barrow Gurney, leased to Thomas Perrin of Backwell, yeoman, for £120 and an annual rent of 40s. "*a water mill called Moore Mill with the orchard, garden, course of water and comons to the said tenement and mill belonging, sett and lying and being in Backwell.*"

The lease also includes a further 11½ acres of land, parts of which are described as adjoining the mill and the "yooe".<sup>4</sup>

In 1709 the mill formed part of the Backwell estate of William Gore of Barrow Gurney. It was described as a "*watergrist mill called Moore Mill*" with about 18 acres of ground.

A survey of the manor in 1787 listed John Blagrove, grandson of Mary Gore, as holding "*Backwell Mill and land adjoining*". The map which accompanied the survey shows "The Mill" on the River Yeo due east of what is now Brook Farm.

The survey of 1812 shows the same John Blagrove as holding a small area of pasture described as "the site of Backwell Mill". It would seem that the mill had disappeared even though it was still marked on the accompanying map and also Greenwood's map of Somerset, 1822.<sup>5</sup>

In 1977 it was noted that not only were there no remains but that there had been changes in the course of the stream.<sup>6</sup>

[The 2"=1 mile draft Ordnance Surveyor's mapping of the area appears to indicate that the mill had vanished and the Yeo rechannelled as early as 1810.<sup>7</sup> See also back cover illustration. *Martin Bodman*]

### References

1. Victoria Country Gistory of Somerset, Volume 1, 449b
2. Somerset Record Society, Volume vi, p227; Volume xxxvi, p22
3. Somerset Record Society, Volume iii, p94
4. Somerset Country Record Office, DD/GB/40/2
5. Longleat W.M.R. Box 20 Items 29, 32 and 35 (By permission of the Marquess of Bath)
6. Backwell Parish Check List, 1977/8
7. Ordnance Surveyors Drawings, OSD No. 48, Ser 33, 2"=1 mile. Microfilm at Local History The Castle, Taunton

## WRAXALL MILL

### Location: old mill possibly at ST 483 715

Wraxall millers included John Wallis, who in April 1656 married Ann Jones. 'Old King Cable of the mill' was buried at Wraxall in March 1693.<sup>1</sup>

At some date prior to 1709, a 99 year lease on the mill was granted by Elizabeth Gorges to Thomas Emery. Elizabeth Gorges married John Codrington and the latter entered into a new lease with Joseph Emery - following Elizabeth's death. This lease described Wraxall as a grist mill. There was a stipulation in the indenture to rebuild the dwelling house which had recently been destroyed by fire. The new building was to be tiled and not thatched.

Joseph and Elizabeth Emery had a son Thomas, born in about 1707, who may well have inherited the new lease.<sup>2</sup>

A bridge by the mill was repaired in 1726. In the next year Mill Lane was mentioned in the Churchwarden's accounts when Charles Bull was required to mend fallen banks by order of Colonel Codrington. In 1764 the Churchwarden '*paid Godwin Stanbury making two bridges below the mill £4 - 11s - 2d*'.<sup>3</sup>

It is possible that the original mill was sited on the course of the Yeo beyond the pond that lies at the foot of the grounds of Wraxall House Hotel. The physical evidence for a mill site today is marginal, but that is not to deny that a mill may have existed here before the destruction of the miller's house at the beginning of the 18th century, or even afterwards.

The mill stone near Wraxall House were from a crushing mill - an edge runner mill - for processing oak bark, ochre or charcoal (for gunpowder), and are not from a flour or grist mill. They may have been brought here merely for ornamental purposes.

Reading Phyllis Horman and her brother Wilfred Rew's findings prompted me to undertake further research. I obtained enlarged prints of the Tithe map of 1837 and the 25"=1 mile Ornance Survey of 1884. Comparing the two maps it is evident that the building referred to with the high level door in the Pennant article did not exist in 1837, when the site (449 on the tithe map) was described as "*Barn and yard*". The barn was aligned at 90° to the later structure evident in 1884.<sup>4,5</sup>

In 1837 this barn was owned and occupied by James

Edward Homer, who also owned the house and grounds now known as Wraxall House Hotel. He leased the '*grist mill and mill pond*' from Sir John Smyth and sublet to a miller by the name of Weeks.<sup>4</sup>

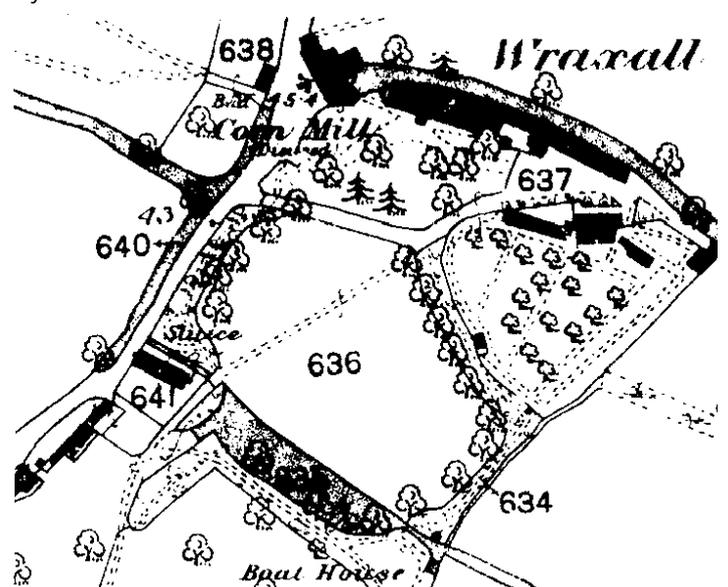
The grist mill - the 'new' mill - was already in existence in 1810 when its leat appears to be indicated on a 2"=1 mile draft map prepared by Ornance surveyors. Day & Masters map of Somerset, produced in 1782 is at too small a scale to show map mill leats and must be discounted from any conclusions. Greenwood has already been shown to be inaccurate (see Backwell Mill).<sup>6</sup>

I would conclude from the above that there was only one mill at this Wraxall site throughout the 19th century. The 1764 reference noted above may also imply the 'new' mill was established by the late 18th century - the bridges crossing the river outlet below the pond and the mill's tailrace.

The present layout of pond and tail stream is not ideal for a mill. A miller would ideally have had a second watercourse to act as overflow when the mill was not in use. The present stone-lined channel is barely wide enough or deep enough for a mill wheel and a bypass channel.

The deeds of Wraxall House were unfortunately destroyed by flood in a Bedminster bank vault in 1968 and these issues may never be resolved.<sup>7</sup>

Incidentally, in 1327 the mill at Wraxall was occupied by Ada or Ade '*Atte Mulle*'.<sup>8</sup>



The site in 1884

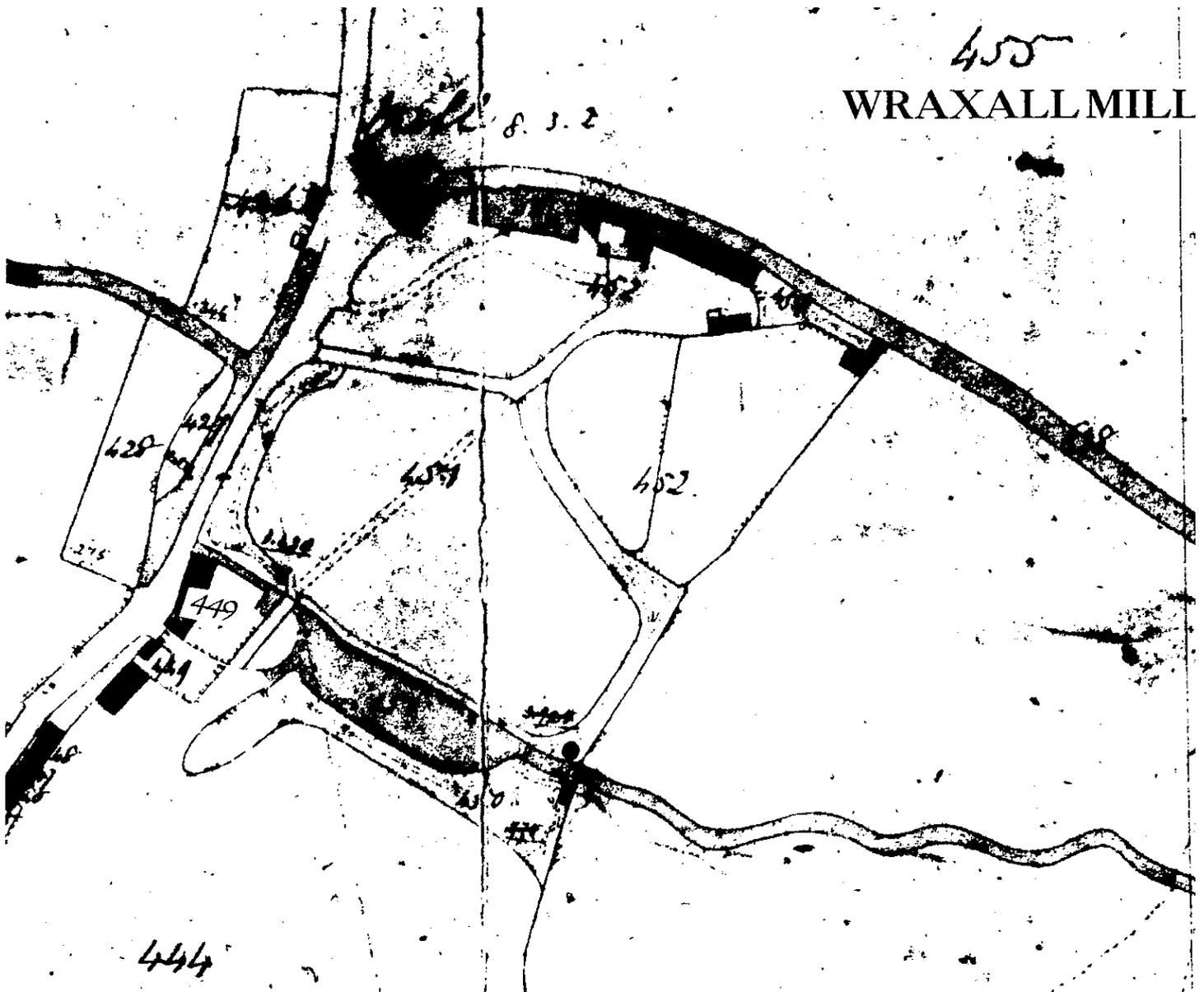
## References

Phylis Horman and Wilfred Rew. The Old Wraxall Mill, Pennant No. 8, Summer 1994, citing:

1. Wraxall parish registers, Somerset Record Office, Taunton
2. 'Calley Papers', Trowbridge Record Office, Wiltshire. Indenture for 10/9/1709
3. Wraxall Churchwarden's accounts, Somerset Record Office, Taunton

Martin Bodman's research:

4. Tithe Map and Apportionments, 1837, Somerset Record Office, Taunton. D/D/Rt 64 and 64A
5. Ordnance Survey Map. Somerset, 25"=1 mile, sheet 5.6, published 1884
6. Ordnance Surveyor's Drawings, OSD No. 48 Ser 33, 2"=1 mile, published 1810. Microfilm at Local History Library, The Castle, Taunton
7. Personal communications with Mrs M West of Wedmore, a previous owner of Wraxall House, October 1994
8. Exchequer Lay Subsidies, I Edw III, 1327-8: quoted by: Rev George S Master. Collection for a Parochial History of Wraxall, Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society, Bristol 1900.



The site in 1837, surveyed for the Wraxall Tithe Award. The site of the 'old' mill would have been at 449 on this map, then described as 'Barn yard'. Compare the building alignment with that in 1884. The latter is a different building, at right angles to the 1837 barn. The pond and plantation are numbered 450.

## TUCK MILLS, CLEVEDON

### Location ST 442 712

The Tuck Mills lay in the fields south of Clevedon Court, Tithe Map number 9, see map. The tuck mills were used for fulling cloth, being water operated hammers on an eccentric cam. Cloth was fullled or felted by being hammered while damp.

During the Middle Ages, Somerset was far in advance in the wool trade, before the Cotswolds really took over the lead in the seventeenth century. John de Clevedon, then Lord of the manor of Clevedon, was responsible in 1342 for keeping an account of cloth exported from the county, and was fined by the King for returning a frivolous answer. In 1390, a later John de Clevedon was exporting 24 cloths to Gascony on the *Jonet* of Bristol, owned by John Cornkey.<sup>1</sup>

From the survey of 1630 we see that the Tuck Mills covered three and a half acres and were of

a yearly value of £3 10s 0d. Like the mills and mill houses, they were in the demesne. Judging from the fact that most of the farms had a yearly value of £1 per acre, the Tuck Mills themselves may have fallen into disuse, with the field they stood in bringing in the usual rent for agricultural land.<sup>2</sup>

The location of the mills can be fixed from a lease of 1700, when a field of 10 acres called Tuck Mills and Pauls Hay is described as being bounded on the north by the road of Tickenham, south by the Land Yeo and west by the roadway lane, now called Court Lane.

A roofless house called Kentons was let at the same time with two acre field bounded north by the Tickenham road, east by Mr Bolton's orchard, south by ground called Tuckmills and west by the Oxpens belonging to the Manor of Clevedon (see map).<sup>3</sup>

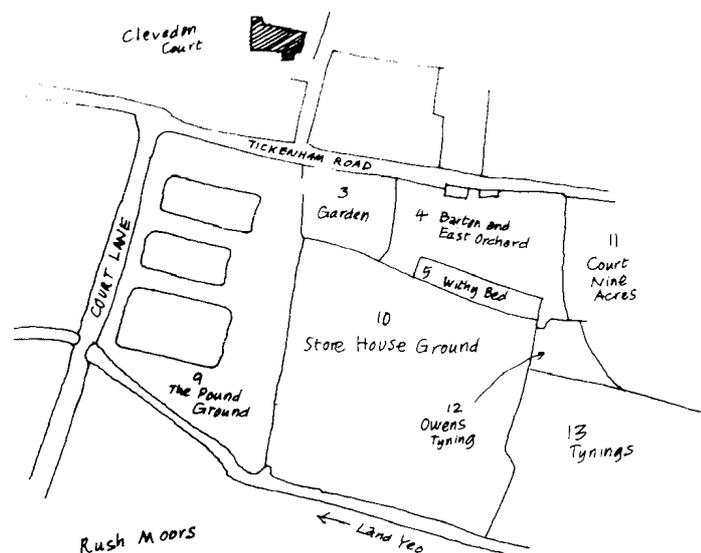
### References

1. Overseas Trade of Bristol in the later Middle Ages. Bristol Record Society, volume 7, [1390-1. Account of the custom of cloth of scarlet and other cloth with grain and without grain and beds of worsted exported from Bristol 29/9/1390-29/9/1391, destination Gascony].

### Somerset County Record Office, Taunton

2. 1630 survey

3. DD/EN/5. Oddingsell and Winston to Walter Greene of Walton Park, Esquire. 1700. Tuckmills referred to in a lease of adjoining land. 1701. Further reference, where Tuckmills described as 'belonging to the Manor House of Clevedon'.



## MILLS NEAR WAIN'S HILL, CLEVEDON

### Location ST 392 705

Clevedon has three rivers, the Land Yeo, Middle Yeo and Blind Yeo. The Blind Yeo is a channel, rather than a river, strictly speaking, flowing into the Middle Yeo near the sea. The Land Yeo and the Middle Yeo have their mouths at Clevedon Pill, the old harbour below Wain's Hill, and here there are two fields called Mill Ground. The mills here were water grist mills.

There is no mill listed at Clevedon in Domesday Book, but leases dating from the early seventeenth century are conditional upon the tenant grinding his corn at the Lord's Mill. These conditions are imposed until as late as 1714, and give evidence of the mill when we lack leases for the mill itself.

The first direct references to mills at Clevedon is made in a Survey of 1630,<sup>1</sup> which lists the mills and mills houses as part of the demesne of the Manor. Following this, in 1657, Frances Leaker retired from milling to take on the lease of the old poor house. Two years later William Stratton leased the watermill with its houses, buildings, floodgates, flood hatches, mill dams, banks,

ponds, streams, water and fishing.<sup>2</sup>

The mill is next mentioned as excepted from a lease, being in 1700 'late or now in the tenure of Robert Brian'.<sup>3</sup> The following year the mill was described as 'late of William Stratton and Samuel West and now in hand'.<sup>4</sup> A lease of 1704 lets the mills to Robert Bryant, for his life and the lives of his son Robert and daughter Susanna. For £3 per annum he was to have 'the decayed mill of Clevedon, situated on the sea walls there... To be granted when the floodgates have been put in good repair'.<sup>5</sup>

The last lease mentioning the mill is one of 1722, when Richard and Samuel Eyres lease 'five acres belonging to Clevedon Mill late John Player'.<sup>6</sup>

No evidence seems to be left of the mill silts, excepting two fields by the sea wall, Tithe Map numbers 529 and 576 (see map overleaf).<sup>7</sup> 529 is bounded on the east by the Blind Yeo and south by the Middle Yeo. 576 is bounded on the east by the Blind Yeo before it turns north to run into the Middle Yeo.

### References

Somerset County Record Office, Taunton

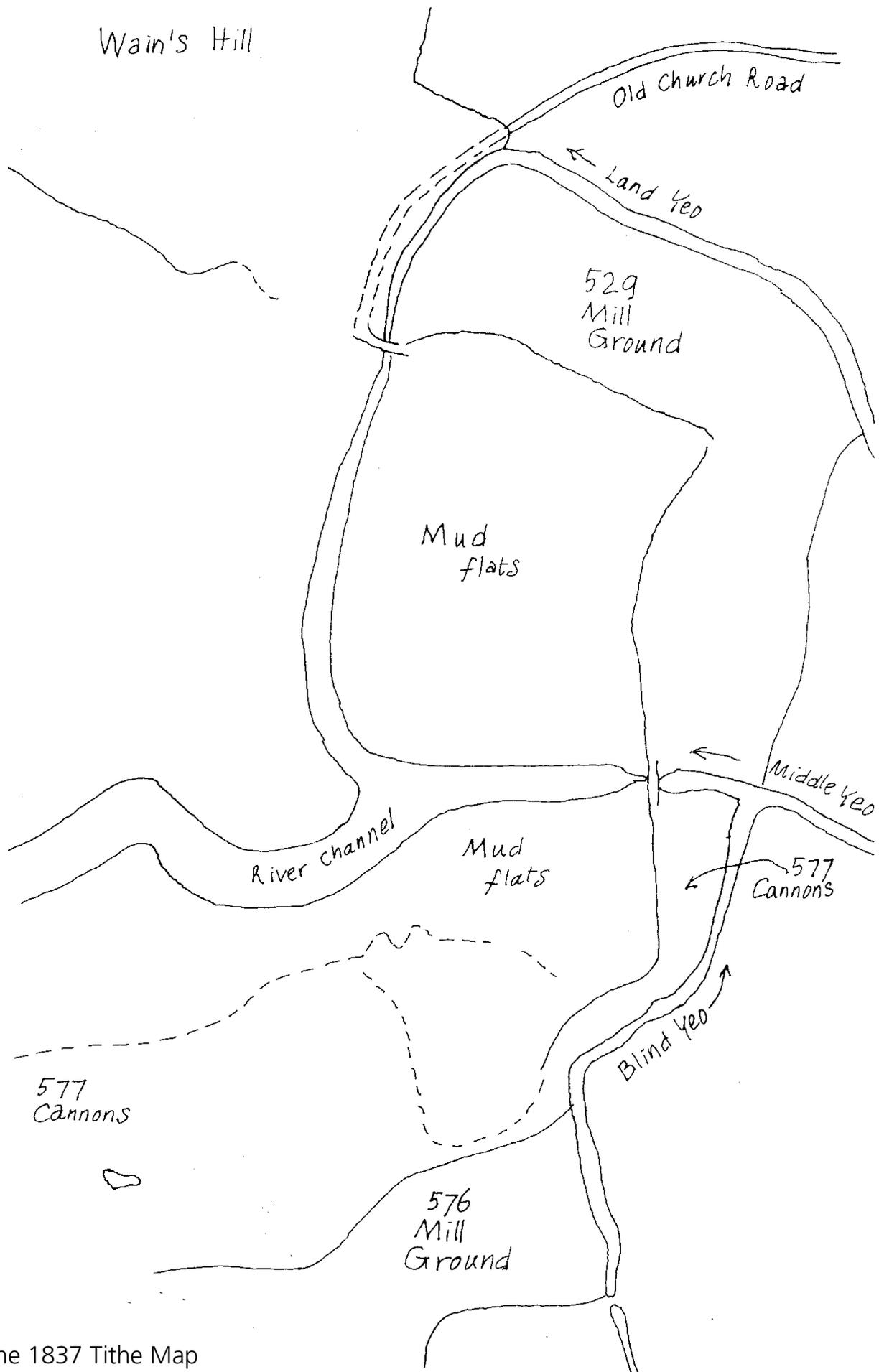
1. Survey made by Elizabeth Wake, 1630.
2. Lease between Lord John Digby and William Stratton, Mariner.
3. DD/EN/5. Oddingsell and Winston to Walter Greene of Walton Park, Esquire.
4. DD/EN/12 Oddingsell, Whetham, Whiting and Fox. Whiting and Fox lease for a year. Water Grist Mill called Clevedon Mill late Wm Stratton, mariner, and now in hand.
5. DD/EN/108 Nathaniel Wade to Robert Bryant
6. DD/EN/98 Elton to Richard and Samuel Eyres of Clevedon. 5 acres belonging to Clevedon Mill late John Player... etc.
7. Clevedon Tithe Map and Apportionment, c1840.

### TUCKS MILLS

*see map, left*

Field 9 and 10 are the site of Tuck Mills and Pauls Hay. 3 & 4 cover the site of Kentons. The pound ground had three large ponds in 1839 - formerly fish ponds - when the survey for the Tithe award was made. One pond remains.

# MILL SITES NEAR WAIN'S HILL



From the 1837 Tithe Map

## **Back cover map**

The Land Yeo in 1810. From the 2"=1 mile draft for the first edition 1"=1 mile Ordnance Survey Map of 1819.

A microfilm copy is held by Somerset County Council's Local History Library, The castle, Taunton, reference: OSD No 48 Ser 33, 2"=1 mile, published 1810.

