

Mills & Millers of Ireland

The Society for the Preservation of Traditional and Ancient Irish Mills



6

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Price 5.00



This new Society was launched in October 2001 to encourage and assist in the preservation of Ireland's old and ancient industrial buildings-MILLS. There are some hundreds of these spread across the nation and while many are beautifully refurbished or put to good use, there are many which could increase the interest of mill folk and others in this aspect of Ireland's Industrial Heritage.

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Editorial

Since mankind first discovered the art of weaving some 13,000 years ago, the industry here in Ireland has been well served by these mills. The recent closure announcements in respect of Fruit of the Loom and other textile factories, has evoked memories of happier times when several generations of families were employed in the same linen, cotton, woollen, tuck and flax mills. It is an inevitable fact, that in a decade or less there will probably be no remaining textile industry, as we have known it left in Ireland. And what of the old Mill buildings? Many local authorities and developers have preserved quite a few of these fine Victorian complexes and turned them into museums, libraries, interpretative centres and housing developments, and these buildings now stand in their changed form as testament to a past era of intensive industrialisation.

As ever more of our people continue to live in towns and cities, the urbanisation of society for all the various reasons, makes people more aware of their rural roots. The countryside - a finite and scarce resource - is changing fast. It is in everyone's interest that we act with due diligence in protecting, amongst other things, examples of our industrial heritage and associated water power. In decades to come these will be of very significant importance to both rural and urban alike and allow all to interface with the past.

The Society's AGM takes place at Dyan Mill, Co. Tyrone on Saturday, October 16th courtesy of Edward and Primrose Wilson. Dyan Mill is a fine example of what can be achieved by preservation and although many of us would aspire to having such a restored property, there is much that can be done in minor ways in maintaining and keeping old buildings intact. If possible, I would exhort those that can attend to come along to this AGM and sit in on the talks by Dr. Fred Hammond and Primrose, and take away some of their experience and beneficial advice for future use.

This AGM is important for other reasons. It is proposed to expand the

committee to thirteen members to allow greater representation countrywide. There will be many vacancies on committee for various functions and responsibilities. The Society is now well established due to the work of the present committee and we need from now on, vibrant support, new members and plenty of fresh ideas.

Please remember to come along to Dyan Mill on Saturday, October 16th and bring a friend.

John Lynch.

Cover Picture:
Mentrim Mill, Co. Meath - Estb. 1620



Stackallen Cotton Mill 1805-1930

by
Larry Conlon

Introduction.

Stackallen Cotton Mill, as it is commonly called is not actually located in the townland of Stackallen but in fact is situated in the townland of Hayes a short distance down stream from where Stackallen bridge crosses over the river Boyne. Its exact location is marked as a disused Woollen Mill on Meath ordnance survey sheet no. 26, of the 1966 ordnance revision, and is located approximately mid way between the town of Navan and the village of Slane. Access to this cotton mill is gained by travelling southwards at Wigars Cross over the river Boyne in the direction of Beauparc, to a point where the mill and its complex is clearly visible.

The first revealing impression of this early nineteenth century Cotton Mill is that it has all the hall marks of a Quaker establishment because of the number of dwelling houses that are attached to the mill to accommodate its workers. Indeed, a number of Quaker families who settled in and around the town of Drogheda in the eighteenth century continued operating in the 'Rag Trade' for at least three quarters of the twentieth century. The Drogheda textile magnates, the Ushers and Allen's, originated from a Quaker background and their descendants can be traced as the driving force behind a number of local textile mills and consortiums in the area for well over a hundred and fifty years.

The formation of the Linen Board by the Irish government in 1711, impacted greatly on the economy, with Ireland being amongst the largest European producer of textile components throughout the eighteenth century. The commencement of the Industrial Revolution in the 1790s brought about many changes to the industry. Labour and material costs had rapidly increased on an annual basis, and to counteract higher operational costs, Irish industrialists imported both automatic textile machinery from Britain and raw

cotton materials from the West Indies and north America. At the time of the Union with Great Britain and Ireland, the Irish textiles and spirits trades had been greatly affected by the West Indian interest in the Houses of Parliament at Westminster. The ending of the Napoleonic wars in 1814 had proven to have devastating effects on the Irish linen industry and this coupled with the cost of labour and flax production had led to the dissolution of the Linen Board in 1828. Nevertheless, whilst major improvements had been achieved in the modernisation of textile machinery in the nineteenth century the Damask Loom which was a regular feature in every textile establishment towards the end of the eighteenth century was used as the basic principle in the manufacture of the most modern day weaving loom of the twentieth century.

The rise of the Industrial Revolution

The rise of the Industrial Revolution in Britain had prompted many English inventors to design and manufacture a mechanical spinning mill and this had been achieved by 1770, however, this type of mill had to be driven by horses. The Grimshaws⁴ of Lancashire were also connected to the inventors of some of the key textile inventions and participated in the Industrial Revolution in many important ways. James Hargreaves,⁵ invented one of the most important devices for the advancement of the production of textiles in mills in Lancashire. His spinning jenny exemplified the kind of inventiveness that made the industrial revolution possible, nevertheless, it was Richard Arkwright, with the assistance of Nicholas Grimshaw,⁶ that improved the spinning jenny and developed the factory system for deploying these machines. One of the most magnificent textile machines of the eighteenth century was the Power Loom invented by Edmund Cartwright, who secured the patent for its invention. Robert Grimshaw made a business arrangement with Cartwright to deploy five hundred looms in a weaving mill near Manchester, but unfortunately the mill not long after it went into operation was burned down in 1790. Apparently it became the victim of the social unrest, in reaction to the Industrial Revolution at the time.



Ruin of Stackallen Cotton Mill
 Photo - J. Lynch

The Grimshaws' in Ireland.

The earliest branch of the Grimshaw family⁶ to arrive in Ireland from Lancashire, successfully erected the first water powered Cotton Mill in 1784 at Whitehouse near Carnmoney in County Antrim. It is not surprising to find that the uptake on this invention had not taken off in Ireland until the beginning of the nineteenth century simply because of the difficulties in devising the correct water power definitions. Unlike the operation of a corn mill, a cotton mill required a constant velocity of water through its millrace during spinning operations, otherwise the cotton or linen yarn being spun would become greatly defective, and the quality of the thread produced being unusable. For example, in the town of Drogheda in 1795 the Coulter family built a water powered spinning mill along the river Boyne, but unfortunately it completely lacked the power necessary to drive the textile machinery and in the end proved to be a complete failure.⁷ It was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that a number of competent civil engineers in Ireland, devised the mathematical tables required to operate a mechanical water powered mill.⁸

The linen industry was highly labour intensive. For example the growing of flax and the harvesting of its seed had greatly benefited the local farmers financially. The processing of flax underwent three milling stages - beetling, scotching and weaving. Many of the small local industries were off-shoots from the linen trade. The manufacture of hemp for sowing leather harness, etc., and the thrashed flax seed which was used for the manufacture of linseed oil, greatly enriched the local economy. Nevertheless, the linen industry, which was the largest employer in Ireland, paid wages in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which were by far in excess, of wages paid to craft workers over a hundred and fifty years later."

The Industrial Development of the River Boyne in the mid eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The industrial development of water mills along the banks of the Boyne stemmed from the River Navigation, which had commenced in 1748 reaching Navan in the early 1800s. It was for this reason that many important milling industries had being strategically located along the banks of the Boyne where all the necessary materials could be transported to and from the business establishments using barges, each generally having a carrying capacity of around forty tons and usually costing 2d per ton. These barges continued operating daily up and down the river between the town of Navan and the Port of Drogheda, until the mid nineteenth century. For example, on the short stretch of river from Stackallen cotton mill to the bridge at Slane, there were three other Mills - one a tuck or fulling mill at Dollardstown which was designed to pound Woollens produced by local hand weavers in order to compact them and thicken them, and another which was a corn mill situated at Carrickdexter, and of course Jebbs corn mill at Slane, which was built in the 1766."

Stackallen Cotton Mill was an important water powered development which was built by Mr Coxan, in 1805." The contents of its machinery would have consisted of two large and three small carding machines, thirty-six spinning jennies, together with a number of looms placed in the factory complex and a further distribution of looms throughout cottages in the neighbourhood and district. Entry to the mill and yard was gained through an arched gateway on

the south-eastern boundary wall. Inside the yard, on the western boundary wall the Cotton Mill was located. Attached to the eastern boundary wall, was a warehouse and the Mill Wright's workshop. The yard is enclosed on its southern boundary with approximately ten to twelve workers cottages, and its northern boundary enclosed by the river Boyne. Mr Coxan, sold his interest in Stackallen Mill to the Grimshaw's of Carnmoney in 1815, and they in turn successfully operated the mill for spinning, weaving and printing both cotton and linen yarn for over fifty years. Despite the decline in the textile industry, damp-spinning became another important feature of textile mills from about 1820. This was achieved by the installation of sprinkler systems in spinning rooms, creating moisture that not only removed many of the difficulties for the spinning operator, but also greatly improved the quality of thread manufactured.

The appointment of Richard Evans, as Boyne Navigation Engineer, contributed greatly to the success of Stackallen cotton mill. (Mr. Evans replaced a Mr. David Jebb on his retirement.) Evans was one of the country's most capable and most skilful engineers. He served his time with the eminent military Engineer Charles Tarrant, with whom he was engaged in working on the Grand Canal, and it's not surprising to find that the design supervision and building of the weir at Stackallen cotton mill, was the design and work of Evans. He also enlarged the eyes of Stackallen bridge to improve the river navigation. His magnificent design of an almost 180 degree weir, and the provision for two sluice gates at each end of the diameter line of the weir, controlled the volume of water fed to the millrace, which in turn could increase or decrease the velocity of water passing through the millrace, thus achieving a constant speed on the water wheel necessary for its mechanical function. The work of this weir must undoubtedly be the finest example of engineering skill to be found on any nineteenth century industrial site in Ireland. Evans was also careful with his design of the weir, in order to avoid any obstruction to the river navigation and to avoid any acrimony with the local fishermen up stream.

The Decline in the Irish Textile Industry.

Peter Besnard the Inspector General of the Linen Board in his annual report for the year 1817 stated that the manufactory of Linen in the Louth and Meath area had declined by fifty percent, but he made no reference to the Cotton manufactory.⁷⁶ The linen and cotton industries in Ireland had generally fallen on difficult times. Samuel Lewis, in his *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland* published in 1837, reported a further decline in production in textile mills in Meath and Louth, when he stated "that linen was previously made here, and its manufacture has been resumed, and the manufacture of cotton which at one time employed more than six hundred looms has almost entirely ceased."⁷⁷ There is a Bleach Green employing more than fifty persons with a steam engine of ten horse power"⁷⁸. The decline of the cotton industry in Ireland resulted from two sources; the first being the ending of the Napoleonic wars in 1814, and secondly, from a deliberate withdrawal of Irish textile subsidies by the Imperial parliament at Westminster, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, thus plunging Irish cotton and linen manufactures into chaos, when at the time they were forced to compete on the market, and on equal terms against their English counterparts.

A fatal blow to the water powered mills along the Boyne Valley came in 1847 with the construction of a railway between Drogheda and Navan, with a halt situated at Beauparc. This railway line was run almost parallel with the river Boyne between both towns, and within a short time of the railway opening, the Boyne River navigation, had become obsolete.

Finally, in 1867 the Grimshaw's sold Stackallen Mill to the Claytons of Millbrook, in Navan. Claytons, were engaged in the woollen industry in Navan and were one of countries largest producers of woollen garments. They operated Stackallen Mill in their own line of business until sometime in the 1930s⁷⁹. The mill in the 1940s was converted into a furniture manufacturing business operating until the 1950s when the roof was blown completely off. The old cotton mill was then sold and purchased by a family in the immediate vicinity. Sadly, today the cotton mill that once was a hive of activity, and which enhanced the landscape overlooking the river Boyne, now stands in a derelict condition, but nevertheless, its location and its weir

still marks one of the most natural places of beauty and tranquillity to be found along the Boyne Valley.

ⁱ For example Drogheda Grammar School, which was founded by Erasmus Smith in 1669, became an established Quaker school in 1956.

ⁱⁱ For example, it was after his marriage to Elizabeth Grimshaw, in September 1740 that James Hargreaves, devised and invented the Spinning Jenny which was developed at one of Grimshaw's water powered Textile mill.

ⁱⁱⁱ Nicholas Grimshaw, was a prominent figure in the Textile Industry throughout Lancashire. He was also elected seven times as the Mayor of Preston.

^{iv} A number of generations of the Grimshaw family are buried in Carrmoney cemetery in County Antrim, where their family grave is marked with a Celtic cross.

^v *The Drogheda Journal, & Louth and Meath Advertiser* 1795.

^{vi} For example, many of the early automatic textile machines invented in the eighteenth century were developed and funded at textile establishments belonging to the Grimshaw's.

^{vii} L. Conlon, *The Heritage of Collon 1764 – 1984*, (Collon, 1984), p. 29.



^{viii} Jebbs Mill at Slane earned the praises of the celebrated agriculturalist Arthur Young in his book *A Tour in Ireland* published in 1778.

^{ix} C. Ellison, *The Beauties of the Boyne and Backwater*.

^x It was in one of these mill cottages that the mother of celebrated singer Christy Moore was born. Her maiden name was Sheerin and both her father and mother worked in Stackallen Mill

^{xi} Damp-Spinning, eliminated at least eighty per cent of thread breakages during spinning operations when compared with a similar spinning operation using dry-spinning.

All that remains of waterwheel pit of Stackallen Cotton Mill

^{xii} *Ireland's Inland Waterways: The Boyne River Navigation.*

^{xiii} For example, in 1780 David Jebb raised the weir of his own Corn Mill by two foot at Slane Bridge in order to improve the flow of water to the millrace, causing a storm of protest from the local fishermen up stream.

^{xiv} Minutes of the Trustees of the Linen and Hempen Manufactures of Ireland for the years 1796 to 1817.

^{xv} Samuel Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, 1837, 2 vols., 1837.

^{xvi} This Mattock Rangers football field in Collon was originally part of the Bleach Green where lines of cotton and linen materials were hung out to dry, after the bleaching process was carried out. The Bleach House which is in excellent condition and the factory chimney belonging to the Bleach are still to be seen.

^{xvii} The Ordnance Survey Revision of 1966 clearly defines that after the takeover of Stackallen Mill, in 1867 by Clayton's of Millbrook, the mill operated as a woollen mill until its closure in the 1930s..

THE GOLDEN ERA OF CORN GROWING IN IRELAND

From 1600 to 1700 A.D., very little corn was grown in Ireland. In the wake of the Cromwellian plantation, an air of devastation, despair and misery reigned supreme. Almost three quarters of the land had been granted to English and Scottish settlers. The main diet of the Irish was milk and potatoes. The Penal Laws that followed, had a further devastating effect on the Irish.

The landlords and the middlemen had no interest in improving agriculture and pasture which had little labour content and which was preferred to tillage. By 1725 it was stated that Ireland had become a pasture land 'where a field of corn could'nt be seen for miles'. What little tillage remained was given over to the potato crop, which was already greatly reduced as a result of clauses in the renting of land forbidding tenants to plough at will. As the potato was the staple diet of the people, it was no wonder that famines followed.

The English Corn Laws of 1689 turned England into a corn producing country by granting a bounty on the export of wheat. This stifled any encouragement to the Irish to grow wheat. A famine raged in Ireland from 1727 to 1729. The Irish Parliament became alarmed by the seriousness of the situation and set up public granaries to hold grain in 1727. An Act of Parliament passed in the same year decreed that five out of every 100 acres of land should be tilled. This was not implemented, as the landlords who controlled most of the land had no fear of any action being taken against them for their failure to till. Two further famines followed in 1741/1742 and in 1756/1757.

In the 1750s, the Industrial Revolution began in England. The Irish Parliament seized the opportunity and in 1756 it increased the bounty on the export of corn. An Act of Parliament in 1758 granted a small bounty on the inland carriage of corn to Dublin and in 1767 this was extended to the carriage of corn around the coast of Ireland. These Acts increased the area of land under tillage and reduced imports at the same time. From 1758 to 1774

Ireland continued to import more grain than it exported. The bounties were small but very effective. In 1760 they amounted to £4,940 and gradually increased to £39,560 in 1772. The increase in corn growing gave very much needed employment and a number of corn mills began to spring up all over the country.

Very poor harvests after 1779 forced the Irish Parliament to prevent the export of corn, flour and potatoes. Grain prices began to soar and it was only with difficulty that the Irish had sufficient oatmeal and potatoes to survive.

In 1784, John Foster, the Chancellor introduced the Corn Laws and they resulted in a revolution in tillage farming. His aim was to promote tillage by granting bounties on the export of grain. He set fixed bounties for wheat exported with varying rates for flour, oats, rye and barley. The following table of grain exports outlines the remarkable success achieved by the 1784 Act:

Year.	Quantity in Quarters.
1781	102,000
1786	315,000
1787	590,000
1791	872,000
1793	650,000
1795/96	157,000
1800	160,000

(One Quarter is a unit of grain capacity and equals eight English bushels)

The decline in exports in 1795/96 was due to very bad harvests and political unrest resulted in low exports in 1800.

Foster's Corn Laws made Ireland a great corn exporting country and a market for the surplus grain was guaranteed by England, which had moved from agriculture to industrial development. England was experiencing a shortage in food supplies at this time and this food shortage in Great Britain was exacerbated very much by the Napoleonic Wars, which were raging at the time, as troops had to be fed. In the early 1800s, England was only too willing to purchase every bushel of grain produced in Ireland.

Despite primitive means of cultivation, rack-renting by landowners and middlemen and the sub divisions of holdings, the export of grain to Great Britain continued to expand after 1800. A journalist travelling in Ireland at the time said, 'that cornfields were to be seen stretching up to the very tops of mountains'. Irish farmers who had suitable land for growing corn made good profits. Old mills that had been lying idle were restored, new mills were constructed and mill wheels – and a few sails – began turning everywhere. As the number of mills increased, more and more of the wheat was ground into flour and this was exported with an 'added value' factor. Most of the large granaries used for drying and storing grain also came into existence over the same period. By 1811, the area of land under wheat occupied nearly ten times as much land as under any other grain crop.

Wheat was grown in large quantities for export, mainly to Britain as the Irish people had little taste for the cereal crop. The country people relied very much on potatoes, oatcakes and milk for their staple diet. Barley was grown mostly for the needs of Irish breweries and distilleries and only a small amount was exported. Oats was grown for the production of oatmeal to meet domestic needs. Some oats was exported – a considerable amount of oatmeal to Scotland and in less quantities to France. At the end of the Napoleonic Wars the English preference for Irish corn continued.

In 1815, Britain lifted the continental blockade on the importation of foodstuffs but high import duties were levied. Ireland was unaffected by this change as it was deemed to be part of Great Britain from the Act of Union of 1800. A Corn Law of 1815 excluded the import of colonial wheat unless the price of British wheat exceeded 69 shillings per quarter. A steady increase in the export of grain – particularly wheat/flour – from Ireland continued from 1815 to 1830. In 1840, the exports from Ireland to Great Britain exceeded 2,300,000 barrels.

Following the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1848, overseas grain supplies became freely available on the British market. Corn continued to be exported from Ireland up to and during the Great Famine of 1845/48 so that rents could be paid. As a result of the Famine, the milling industry was also adversely affected as the demands for meal and flour decreased due to the big reduction in the Irish population.

Following steps taken by the British Government after the Great Famine, the year 1851 became the record high year for Irish tillage. From that point onwards there was a decrease in the area under cultivation and more grassland became available. The majority of Irish farmers were tenants of landlords who increased rents as farming outputs increased. They had little to gain from tillage farming and reverted to pasture farming.

From the 1870s, American wheat flooded the Irish market and as a result of this the grain trade became totally limited to the larger mills in the major cities and towns in Ireland. The fall in the acreage of wheat was most pronounced. It had been grown as a commercial crop and was very much subject to the fluctuations of the market. Irish wheat production fell by 80% and it did not rise again until compulsory tillage was introduced during the First World War.

The provisions contained in Foster's Corn Laws, the Napoleonic Wars and the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain were the principal factors in Ireland's tillage revolution of the late 1800s and the first half of the nineteenth century. It created very welcome employment amongst the farming community. It also created wealth and prosperity. Many of the cities and towns – particularly along the coastline – owe their development and growth to the export of corn and flour during that period. With the introduction of steam as a power source, huge milling complexes came into existence in the larger maritime towns and cities. A report in the 'Kerry Evening Post' of June 11th 1834 indicates the change brought about in one town as a result of its trade in corn. 'The export in corn from the county of Kerry to British ports, principally shipped from the port of Tralee, amounts to upwards of 10,000 tons annually on average. It is interesting to view the great number of corn stores now in Tralee, full every year of grain for exportation and to think back to the time, thirty years ago, when not a single corn store was to be seen in the town. In comparison to today, Tralee was then an miserable hamlet with little in the way of maritime trade, and the poor farmer had no other mode of making up his rent than by the produce of his half-starved cow and the labour of his wife'.

By 1852, Tralee had forty-one buildings connected with the corn trade. These included, granaries, stores, kilns and mills. Three of the mills were powered by steam. The town also had five corn exchanges.

While Britain was engaged in wars and the Industrial Revolution, it can be truly said that Ireland was experiencing its 'tillage and corn revolution' and on which very little has been written.

Donal J. O'Sullivan



French wind mill
Photo J. Lynch

THE TUCK & WASH MILL A SHORT DESCRIPTION & THEIR PURPOSE

William. E. Hogg

Here are some words to introduce and some facts to help establish the significance of this small institution of former times.

The word *home-spun* though not often used today still conveys a meaning to most people, while words like *stocks*, *combs*, *beetles*, *washfeet* & *carding* may not. These latter words have been used more generally in the wool trade. And it was in this area that the tuck mill, which is here to be described fulfilled its role.

From a study of time and events, we learn that many traditional operations (more recently used and better known as practices of the linen trade) were in fact instigated for the processing of wool and later adapted to the linen business. Furthermore, it is obvious, that in the good old days and for eons before, wool was the thing for warm garment making.

On the world scene linen is one of the older, better-known textiles. It was not hugely used in our part of the globe till the mid-18th century (after which time cotton so increased as to put a halt on any supremacy for linen.) We can assume, therefore, that nearly all garments worn during previous generations and for numerous centuries (while there were animals to provide it) were of wool, which required them to be fabricated by hand or otherwise. And while richer folk may have at all times enjoyed the luxurious feel of silk, industrial forces have recently for convenience and by other causes, ensured a preference for man-made fibres equal to or perhaps surpassing that for the natural.

Before the time of industrial revolution, Ireland had somewhere in the region of four hundred tuck mills; and prior to that period one could only guess how many more than this number existed. It is not surprising to find that such mills predominated in western counties where wind and weather was most

severe and warm garments were necessary for survival. Mills described as woollen mills were scattered about the country but not numerous; while in regard to the tuck mill many counties were well supplied. Cork and Galway had good shares at around 40 and 45 respectively, but they were more common in the West, County Mayo having about 60 in 1850. Well-scattered across the nation, in many cases the tuck mill operated alongside a corn or other type of grinding mill. Our records provide detail of about 360 tuck mills throughout Ireland (in mid-19th century) with very few counties having none at all.

The material of the tuck mill was largely home-spun. Weaving was a very common domestic activity and it was the woven woollen cloth from the home or small weaving shops that was brought to the miller for transformation at his tuck mill. He could process about 60 yards of material in a day and (about 1850) was paid 2d. per yard for this work.

So what are the processes and technology of the tuck & wash mill? To explain these ancient processes we introduce the interesting 1980 publication entitled -

'The Industrial Archaeology Of Northern Ireland,' in which the author, Dr. William A. McCutcheon, M.R.I.A., (an experienced researcher in archaeological, milling and other engineering matters) provides for us details of how the tuck mill operated. We are grateful to Dr. McCutcheon and the Northern Ireland D.O.E. for permission kindly given to print extracts from this article on the subject, in which we read as follows.

As the woollen material was contaminated with dirt and other unpleasant animal matter (such as fat, sweat, etc.), it had to be first washed **or scoured**. The wash mill of the **linen** trade was quite an immense piece of equipment and that of the tuck mill (from which the former was adapted) only a little smaller. The **wash mill** was composed of a substantial timber gantry [Ed.: that no doubt almost filled the building] to which the working parts were attached. Supported from its uppermost frame a long heavy **shank** was pivoted so that it could swing freely. An also large and curved **foot or stock** was attached to the bottom of the shank and positioned to swing robustly within an enclosure at the bottom of the wash mill called **the box**. For this the mill wheel provided impetus through a revolving camshaft and wiper with

iron covered cams. The heavy foot was displaced and then released, swinging with a crash back into the box. Usually wash mills were fitted with two feet, and with the assistance of plenty of water and a cleansing material (usually fuller's earth) they pounded and squeezed the material within the box space until it was clean. The operation required up to four hours. Following its wash, the material was transferred to the tuck mill for finishing processes. Firstly it was **felted**, the operation being performed by a beetling engine which repeatedly hammered the material to fill in the weave, and so rendering it more breeze resistant for the ultimate wearer. In the tuck mill the next operations, known as **combing**, required a third section of equipment. This did what is known as **raising the knap** which was followed by some further **teasing**, which resulted in creation of a nice thick, warm woolly material for the garment maker. The equipment used for this last operation was the **carding cylinder**. Several varieties of such machinery were developed for use in the woollen industry but the one in the tuck mill was quite small, being about 4 feet long and 2ft. 6ins. diameter. This cylinder was made of perforated roughed up or spiky metal which gripped the material while it revolved slowly. Immediately above the large cylinder some other (small diameter) cylinders or shafts revolved with combs attached, to perform a teasing action on the woollen weave as it passed through. Sadly few of these pieces of equipment remain today for us to study.

SOME WORDS RELATING TO THE INDUSTRY ARE EXPLAINED.:

- Worsted** Yarn from wool which has been combed to remove the short fibres and leave the long ones laid parallel. Parallelism is retained in the spinning process giving a smooth even lustrous yarn (unlike wool.) Worsted has been traditionally used for suiting, dress clothes, fine clothes, underwear & hosiery.
- Silk** Derived from the cocoon of insects - artificially made from 1880, but natural for many years before.
- Linen** One of the oldest known textiles and much used in ancient Egypt. British linen trade was established and

improved from the mid-18th century but cotton became an important competitor from the end of same century. The British Linen Company was incorporated by Flemish weavers in 1746.

- Carding** - a textile process in spinning (wool) whereby a tangled mass of fibres is reduced to a filmy web by working it between surfaces covered with fine wire pins.
- Hand cards** Were used in the past. Tuft was teased into a well mixed spongy cylindrical shape for conversion into a loosely twisted roving and later reduced to yarn.
- The Swift** Used for wool processing; was a large cylinder of about 50 inches diameter, surmounted on its upper half by smaller diameter rollers.
- Salts** In wool - chiefly fatty materials & potassium carbonate to give wool grease. Animal perspiration, accounting for a lot of the weight, had to be washed out.
- Wool** May be used in 3 ways : spun into woollen or worsted yarn, consolidated into a sheet, or woven.

Some sitings of Tuck Mills :

County :

Antrim	11		
Armagh	0	Donegal	13
Down	4	Dublin	9
Sligo	17	Mayo	59
Galway	44	Cork	38

STATISTICS on Tuck Mills (citing 195 ex total of c360) by county,
in mill records :

Antrim	11	
Armagh	0	
Donegal	13	(+2 woollen)
Down	4	
Dublin	9	(tuck 8, corn & tuck 1)
Sligo	17	
Mayo	59	(tuck 35, corn & tuck 19, tuck & corn 5)
Galway	44	(tuck 34, corn & tuck 10)
Cork	38	(tuck 26, corn & tuck 11, carding & tuck 1)

MILLS AND THEIR HISTORIC INFLUENCE ON TOWNLAND NAMES.

by J. Lynch

We know that water mills were known in Ireland from the earliest times and were probably more common in olden times than in the latter half of the 19th century. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, almost every suitable *ballybetagh* - a term for an ancient townland - had a mill. We are all familiar with the story of Cormac Mac Art, King of Ireland, who in the third century A.D. asked the King of Scotland to supply a millwright to construct a mill on the stream of Nith, which flowed from the well of Neamhnach at Tara and is reputed to be the location of one of the first mills in Ireland. Tradition in the area still recalls this occurrence, though the exact whereabouts of the site is unknown. *The Lives Of Irish Saints* mentions that where monasteries were founded, a mill soon followed. St. Fechin's mill site at the ruined Fore Monastery in Co. Westmeath is a good example of a mill dating back perhaps 1400 years. St. Moling Luachra, a seventh century monk who died around 690 established a famous monastery and mill in South Carlow - the area in modern times is known as St. Mullins. St. Ciaran, St. Senanus, St. Mochua and others, likewise erected mills where they settled.

Another useful pointer and help in identifying an area's association with a mill is the gaelic word *muileann* and indeed several European languages have a similar word in their vocabulary - the Latin, molo to grind; English, mill; Gothic, malan; French, moulin, etc. Many places in Ireland take their names from mills, thus Aghnamullen Parish in Monaghan - mullen in this case being the anglicised version of muileann; Mullennakill in Kilkenny - translated into Irish, Muilenn-na-cille or the mill of the church; Mullinavat or Muileann-abhata, the mill of the stick. Mawillian, a parish in Londonderry - the Irish version being Maghmhuilinn, the plain of the mill. Readers will notice that the *m* is changed to a *w* by aspiration in these cases. *Ballywillin* is another parish on the borders of Antrim and Londonderry, where the name signifies the town of the mill - or another common name being simply Milltown. Killawillin on the Blackwater near Castletownroche is called in Irish Cill-a-mhuilinn, the church of the mill.

The local mill was therefore a very important and integral part of the community and acted as a communications and social centre, where people in having their grain ground, also exchanged news and views on the current topics and matters of the period. The humble potato had not yet been introduced and cereal crops of oats and wheat were the essential diet. Little wonder then, that townland names evolved in many instances from the presence of the local mill. Not to be outdone, the more humble hand mill or quern also had an impact on the countryside. It was customary for families who lived a long distance away from a large water mill to grind corn by hand querns for their own or their neighbours consumption. Bro (bronna being the plural) is the old Irish word for mill stone and generally attributed to the hand quern. We find many place names where it was likely that the owners of hand mills or very small water mills made a living grinding their neighbour's corn. It is quite likely that there were also individual travelling hand mill operators who provided such a service in isolated areas. Coolnabrone, the hill-back of the quern is the name of a townland in Kilkenny; Tobernabrone, the well of the quern; Clonbrone and Cloobrone, the meadow of the quern found in Galway, Mayo and Offaly. These querns were also made locally and consequently some places received their townland names from quern producing areas, as is the case of a famous area in Limerick called Carrigeenanronety near Ballyorgan - in Irish, Carraigín-na-mbrointe - the little rock of the mill-stones. There are many more examples of Mills and their affinity with parishes, townlands and even fields and houses. This article is but a brief synopsis of what is out there and perhaps readers would like to share their knowledge in this subject! Is your locality named after a mill?

TIDAL MILLS - Investigation,

by Brian Murph-Ruane

On a cold November day a small group led by esteemed member Michael Lynch set out to rediscover the remnants of four reputed tidal mills in north County Dublin. The first site is located on the south bank of Malahide Estuary and west of Malahide Yacht Club. Enter via the Millford housing estate and the remains of the bund walls are still in evidence enclosing an area of approximately an acre and appearing to have a discharge point close to the Yacht Club. Prior to recent housing developments the remnants of an old stone building formed part of the site. Any mill in this location had to exist before construction of the railway and had to depend on a small tidal range for power. The land rises from the estuary and it is likely that the fresh-water stream that enters the mill site here added to the storage capacity.

[Townland : Yellowwalls]

The estuary narrows at the western end where it is crossed by the new M1 motorway bridge and this is the reputed site of a further tidal mill. While the tidal range at this site would be minimal a large area of water could be contained with a bund for controlled release to work a wheel. The Ward River which enters the estuary at this point would add to the water mass. Nothing was found to indicate the previous location of this mill.

[Townland : Seapoint]

Approaching Portmarnock on the coast road from Baldoyle you are obliged to cross a narrow bridge. This spans the Sluice River which enters the estuary at this location. More recent drainage works and a sluice gate are close by. It is believed that an old tide mill operated at this spot at some point in time. Some earthworks / budding was in evidence which may have contained the tidal waters and the river. Again the tidal range at this point was small, the deficiency supplemented by the river.

[Townland : Burrow]

The estuary north of Donabate is similar in size to Malahide. The north bank is approximately a half mile from the road, which leads to the Fingal Ballealy landfill site. The river which enters the estuary is substantial and meets the sea at Rogerstown, a half mile further east. The site of the mill is in the middle of the estuary and marked by a substantial section of wall, the stone for which had to be drawn in. One could just justify the mill by strategically placed walls to contain tidal waters and river flow.

[Townland : Newhaggard]

MILLSTONES, A VIEW

BY PETRA COFFEY

Man has been grinding or milling substances for various purposes since at least the Neolithic era, and the milling of different grains for domestic use has probably always played an important part of the daily routine. The method of reducing the grain by smashing it between two hand-held rocks was improved upon by the introduction of a 'rubbing stone' or saddle quern, which was itself superseded by the rotary quern, and later still by large circular mill stones. Initially the querns were powered by manual effort, but as the stones increased in size, and became full sized 'millstones', (often about 54 inches in diameter), water, wind and animal power became the more usual source of energy. The earliest evidence of water-powered grain mills in the post-Roman world, is to be found in Ireland¹ Water mills, both horizontal and vertical, were being built in Ireland from around 600 AD.² The earliest grains contained many 'foreign bodies' including grit, as is shown by the teeth from early skulls. Later on, preliminary grinding to remove the husks was done, and also drying of the grain.

Many examples of Irish domestic saddle and rotary querns are to be seen today in the National Museum. Rotary querns were in daily use in most households until relatively recently. Small querns are still in common use today in parts of the world where spices need to be ground daily to be added to food.

since Neolithic times for the making of excellent querns and millstones. From mid thirteenth century, the freshwater quartzite rock quarried from the area around La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, 60 kms east of Paris has been the producer of arguably the best flour milling stones ever produced. The quarries were able to



Grinding stone and pestle, used daily to grind spices outside kitchen of private house, Nagambo, Sri Lanka
Photo - P.Coffey 1995

produce monolith millstones, some over 6ft in diameter,³ but more often were composed of several segments kept together with an iron band. The stones were sent all over the world and continued to be exported in their thousands until the late nineteenth century. Their hardness and vesicular texture meant that they needed less frequent dressing than other softer stones, and proved more suitable for the finer wheat grains that were being grown. They also lasted much longer. At La Ferté, the unusable millstones were used for building, sometimes on river banks, as may be seen in this photograph.

Unusable millstones on the 'Berge aux Meules' at La fereté -sous -Jouarre
Photo - P.Coffey 1990



In Ireland, most Counties had sites producing milling stones of varying quality, most used locally.

Millstones were hewn from rock of many different types, conglomerate of different ages and types, grits and sandstones, limestone, granite, basalt and greywacke. Some of the best millstones produced here were from the Lower Carboniferous sandstones from Drumdowney Hill in Co. Kilkenny which were said to be 'equal to the French' [millstones from La Ferté].⁴ In some instances,

the existing cleavage of the rock produced a ready-made surface for the millstone.



Townland of Graigue, Fethard, Co. Wexford showing a millstone of 4 ft 8 ins in diameter
Watercolour (March 1850) by George Victor du Noyer (1817 - 1869) geologist and artist. Reproduced by kind permission of the Geological Survey of Ireland

Examples of millstones partially cut, and then abandoned, perhaps because the emerging millstone had split, are to be seen to day at Harrylocks Bay on the Hook Peninsula, where the bed rock is of Devonian ORS conglomerate - and at Lady's Well baryte mine in Co. Cork. Other examples are to be seen on the Silver river, in Co. Offaly, on Carrick



Millstone on shore beside
Lady's Well barthes mine
Photo - Kevin Cordes 2003

at Geroge's Quay, next door to The Sun, as a 'merchant for Ballyhack millstones'.⁵ Most Counties in Ireland had sites producing milling stones of varying quality, most used locally. One site, on top of the mountain at Carnmore in Co. Monaghan, had a large quarry that produced millstones which 'were let roll down the mountain and conveyed to Scotstown'.⁶

In the eighth and ninth centuries, that is, Early Christian Ireland, the CAIN DOMNAIG or Law of Sunday, forbade 'grinding in mill or quern' on that day, with different penalties for the laity imposed by clergy if they broke the Law. The idea itself, of not allowing milling on Sundays, may predate the eight century.⁷

The Irish word for mill is *muilenn*, and the evidence for sites where milling took place has been recorded in place names such as Mullennakill and Mullinavat, both in Co. Kildenny.⁸ Sites which produced querns were given names which recorded this fact.

The growing and milling of many grains, beginning with oats, rye and barley, to the varieties of wheat used nowadays, for the production of the staple food of bread, has played an extremely important part of the history of man, and the grinding of the grain and baking of bread deserves recognition.

Mountain in Co. Wicklow and in Co. Kilkenny at Drumdowney. Broken or unsuitable mill stones were put to all sorts of uses, from anchors to headstones. In Co. Roscommon, quarries at Slieve-Dart and Slieve-Baun both produced excellent mill stones.

In 1738 so many millstones were being produced on the Hook Peninsula that Nicholas Mellin set himself up in Dublin

1 Colin Rynne *Irish Flour Milling* ed A. Bielenberg, Lilliput Press 2003

2 *Ibid*

3 *Rapport. Sur la situation des carrieres qui sont au-dessus de la Ferté-sur-Marne,*

département de Sein-et-Marne, en Vendémiaire de l'an IV. Citoyen Dechan. *Journal des Mines*. No XX1 Prairial An IV [1795]

4 *Economic Geology of Ireland* GH Kinahan MRIA etc in *Journal of the Royal Geological Society of Ireland* Vol VIII NS 1885 - 1889 Dublin 1889

5 *A directory for Dublin for the Year 1738*

6 *Economic Geology of Ireland* GH Kinahan MRIA etc in *Journal of the Royal Geological Society of Ireland* Vol VIII NS 1885 - 1889 Dublin 1889

7 *Using mills on Sunday* Ann Hamlin. *Studies on Early Ireland: essays in Honour of M.V.Duignan*. Ed BG Scott, c. 1970.

8 *The origin and history of Irish names and places* P W Joyce, MRIA Dublin 1871



A collection of early quern and grinding stones at the Roman archaeological site at Carthage, Tunisia Photo - Donal J. O'Sullivan 2004



"Tailcorn" limestone figure of a man kneeling to use a 'saddle quern' (circa 2250 B.C) It is unusual for a man to grind grain as it is usually a woman's job, often done by a special rank of slave



Two types of rotary querns

Rotary hand quern
Photo - J. Lynch



RIO, HERE WE COME!

by Arthur Mc Dermott.

In 1945, when the war was drawing to a close, I was still a shift worker in the Waterford Mill. For years I nurtured an ambition to travel to South America and, with this in mind, I had been studying Spanish using Hugos Self-Taught System. In this, one had to master 50 booklets at the rate of one per week so that at the end of a year, it was claimed that reasonable fluency could be achieved. And so it was. When a grain ship berthed with Spaniards among the crew, I tested my fluency and had the satisfaction of being understood and complimented.

I studied vacancies advertised in MILLING and replied to one by the Rio do Janeiro Flour Mills and Granaries Limited. I was invited by this company to appear at their London offices for an interview. I duly presented myself and was accepted for the post of junior miller in their Rio plant on the strength of my City and Guilds Certificate and a favourable medical examination. Then followed a frenetic shopping trip in Dublin, buying trunks, packing and doing the rounds of friends up to departure from Ireland and arrival in London in February 1946.

Since all British ships were still being used as troop transports, we were booked on a Swedish ship due to sail for Brazil. Swedish also, was the ship bound for Gothenburg which we boarded in Hull on March 2 in the most miserable bitterly cold sleety weather imaginable on the first stage of our journey. Unforgettable considerate Swedes provided us with steaming cups of tea when we went aboard.

On the following day we arrived in Gothenburg after a rough crossing. The temperature was minus 12 degrees C, but so dry that one felt comfortable in casual winter wear. A curious sight in some streets was clinkers, placed earlier on the surface, now visible under a later cover of ice like exhibits in a glass case.

From the window of our overheated hotel room, we witnessed an example of Scandanavian orderliness in the construction of a building across the street

in which dozens of men were working at various levels of the structure. Near 8 am. a foreman appeared from a small office at street level with a watch in one hand and a whistle in the other. He studied the watch intently and at the precise hour blew the whistle for a coffee break, whereupon the men abruptly left what they were doing and swarmed down. At 8.30 the action was reversed. The foreman studied his watch, blew his whistle on the dot and the men swarmed up to resume where they had left off. It reminded us of a film track run backwards for comic effect.

Our cicerone in Gothenburg was Mr. Frodi of the Jonson Line, a gently diffident man, who seemed to enjoy our company. A beautiful Swedish glass vase, which Ruby admired in a department store, was presented to her a day out on our voyage. It was accompanied by short complimentary note from him.

We set sail from Gothenburg on March 8 1946 and headed into the Atlantic through the choppy waters of Pentland Firth in Scotland's north. Our ship was the MV Peru, a cargo vessel with accommodation for about a dozen passengers most of whom were Swedish businessmen bound for South America to resume their business interests interrupted by the war. We were booked on the only berth available, the owners' executive suite, an unexpected, unrepeatable luxury.

High seas kept some confined to their cabins in spite of reduced speed during the first few days. Crockery was broken in the saloon and it was difficult to sleep with the pitching and rolling. Besides this, The Peru being a motor ship, a harmonic vibration passed along the hull from stem to stern, which was most disconcerting until one became accustomed to the "vrrruummm" as the shudder passed by the bunk on its way to the stern at precise intervals.

We dined with the Chief Engineer, a dark haired, well-built, Swede who was proud of his giant diesel engine and unconcerned about its baneful vibrations. One day he took us to the engine room where the vibration was alarming and the noise made the wearing of earmuffs essential. I commented on the smoothness of steam turbines in comparison but he dismissed my

remarks with good-humoured contempt.

On our ninth day at sea, March 17, toasts were drunk in honour of St. Patrick. Sometime about this occasion, one of the Swedish passengers, a Mr. Muller, apologised for "what our people did to you in the tenth century". I accepted in what I hope was good grace in spite of my privy amusement at his bizarre expression of regret for destructive raids carried out a thousand years earlier by ancestral piratical seafarers.

On our arrival at the Cape Verde Islands to take on fuel oil, swarms of piccanins invited us to throw coins in the water. Agile as fish, they easily retrieved them. There also, we gorged ourselves on bananas, which we hadn't eaten for six years and the ship's doctor demonstrated the art of eating an apple under water.

On our fourteenth day at sea, we came in sight of St. Paul's Rocks, that eerie isolated hummock of jagged rock rising above the ocean close to the Equator in the South Atlantic. Captain Andersen announced at lunch that Father Neptune would be aboard shortly. Sure enough he appeared attired in splendid regalia accompanied by a retinue of assistants. Those who could not produce certificates to prove that they had crossed the line were subjected to the traditional ceremony of initiation to the Brotherhood of the Sea. Each initiate was primed with a dose of "medicine" which tasted like a mixture of vinegar and pepper and then "shaved" with a large wooden scythe after being smeared with some evil smelling greasy substance. The victim was then ducked in the pool.

That night we were presented with our certificates. Mine bears the name Trygonidus Erinensis (Irish Sting Ray) and guarantees that it would enable me to voyage safely under "Our Mighty Patronage". Following this, we had a party on the House with Schnapps and many other beverages. The gaiety continued until the small hours with song and dance. Captain Andersen told me that he had been in Cork in the twenties as a young ship's officer when the Black and Tans had set fire to the centre of the city, in reprisal for the loss of some of their force following a successful ambush by republicans.

On day 19, March 26, we came in sight of the Brazilian coast. I decided to take a quick dip in the pool before it was dismantled. I had a shock when I

dived into bone chilling water, much to the amusement of the Chief Engineer who stationed himself on the bridge to witness my reaction. He knew what I was unaware of; the cold Antarctic current flows here close to the appropriately named Cabo Frio.

At 12.15p.m. we anchored in Guanabara Bay for immigration inspection. A few hours later the ship docked. Journey's end. We had arrived.

I shared the common knowledge of that wild extravaganza of nature, which the Portuguese explorers misnamed Rio de Janeiro, thinking that the bay was the mouth of a great river. As we neared our destination, the scene, which presented itself, confirmed the reality of my expectations; the Sugar Loaf, Corcovado with the great statue of Christ at the summit as well as other features of Brazil's renowned capital city of that time. So far, I registered no more than a modicum of pleasure and admiration of a scene so familiar to me in pictures. As we approached the city, I discerned on the foreshore objects, which looked like large matchboxes standing on end. As the ship came closer however, I became aware that these "matchboxes" were skyscrapers and high-rise buildings. The full majesty of the scene then suddenly fell into perspective as it came home to me how puny these impressive examples of man's creative achievements appeared against the backdrop of nature's creation at its most extravagant.

Thus began my life as a miller in Brazil, a country with an area greater than all of Western Europe, and a population of 120 million speakers of Portuguese.

Arthur McDermott 27/1/04.

Event guide for 2005

Croom Mill, Co. Limerick is the venue for an event on Saturday, March 5th 2005. Dr. Valerie Hall, Professor of Palaeoecology, Queen's University, Belfast will speak on the topic of 'Bread and Bogs'. Mr. Norman Campion of the Industrial Heritage Association will also give a talk on 'The mills of Co. Wexford'.

On Saturday, June 11th 2005, the Society's event takes place in The Old Meeting House, Ramelton, Co. Donegal. A Society member, Mr. James Davidson who is an authority on the baking tradition and bakeries will speak on the subject of 'Baking'. There will also be a speaker from the Dublin Institute of Technology in attendance and who will speak on the same subject. 'Weaving in the Co. Donegal tradition' will also be a topic with a local speaker in attendance.

September 10th 2005 is National Mills Day and it is hoped to have four mills throughout the country participating. There will it is hoped be genealogical data available at these centres.

The 2005 AGM will take place in Co. Tipperary – exact location to be finalised. The topic for the occasion will be 'Why eat bread?' and lectures will be given by a dietician and a representative from the Food Safety Authority of Ireland

All venues will have refreshments and lunch at a cost of Euro 30 per person or Euro 50 for a couple. Attendance at AGM is free except for those wishing to have lunch. The Society ask that events be well supported and please bring a friend.

Donations/Bequests

Mills and Millers of Ireland is a voluntary organization with charitable status. The Society is dedicated to assisting in the preservation of that part of our ancient industrial heritage-MILLS, and to saving these picturesque buildings and associated features from destruction. To help us achieve these aims, we need your help and support. Membership of the Society is one way of ensuring that our objectives are furthered and kept to the fore. You can if you desire, further support the Society by making a bequest in your legacy. A bequest may be a gift of a specified amount of money, a gift of a specified item, a share in your property or perhaps the legacy of a mill or mill site. These matters can be added to your will in a codicil and your Solicitor will advise. If you have any further queries in this matter, please contact us where your issues and concerns will be addressed in confidence. Your interest, membership and contribution is greatly appreciated and without this expression of support, the Society would cease to function. Our Hon Treasurer and Mmbership Secetary is Ms. Stephany Bourke, Skerries Mills, Skerrikes, Co. Dublin.



Left to right: R. Deasy, N.O'Shea, M. Conlon, E.Egan

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See application form enclosed.

Application form for membership

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