

Windmills in the Borough of Ipswich



[Information taken from articles by Peter Dolman in the *Newsletter of the Suffolk Mills Group*, March 1979. We are delighted that the Suffolk Mills Group is still going strong; see the Links page under 'Specialist subject areas'.]

'Early references to Ipswich windmills are scarce and there do not seem to have been very many windmills in the town until the late eighteenth century. Probably the two Corporation-owned **watermills** at Handford Road and Stoke Bridge (the Tide Mill) were able to keep the town supplied with flour.

'The windmills had their heyday between about 1800 and 1860, when large amounts of flour were sent to London from the town, and this brief period came to a close when steam mills started appearing about this date in the town. Five windmills are shown in 1783 on Hodkinson's map; by 1812 this had increased to twelve. Greenwood and Bryant between them (1823-5) show seventeen mills and William Cobbett, in his famous quote from *Rural rides*, saw seventeen from one place near the town in 1830. The Ordnance Survey (O.S.) map of 1837 also shows seventeen, although it doesn't show Westerfield Mill, which was there at that date. The detailed town maps of the 1840s show the most mills at twenty-one.

'By the O.S. maps of 1881-4 the number had been slashed to seven; and in 1902 just two remained, only one of which was at work. This was the tall smock mill on Woodbridge Road, near the Lattice Barn public house, which was finally demolished in 1930. The last mill to stand in the town was Bramford Road tower mill, the tower of which was pulled down about 1953.

'The mills

These are listed by parishes within the Borough. The number before each mill refers to the accompanying map [shown at the end of this text]. The O.S. grid reference (to eight figures where known) follows after the name of the mill.

'ST MATTHEWS, IPSWICH

1. **St Matthews Mill** (1566, 4521)

'This post mill was apparently built on an open trestle in 1795 and had its roundhouse erected in 1804. In 1807 it was "newly erected" and had a floor area of 18 feet by 11 feet, with five floors (i.e. a two-storey roundhouse). It drove one pair of 4ft 10in French stones and a bolter and had common sails with 11 yards of cloth, i.e. a span of over 70 feet, which must have been a handful in a gale!

'It lost a sail in 1808 in a gale and by 1823 had a second pair of stones fitted. The mill was advertised to be let several times in the early 1840s after a refit by Samuel Wright, the local millwright. It now had patent sails and three pairs of French stones and cast iron machinery, including the brake wheel.

'The end came on Friday 28th January 1859, when a fire was discovered in the buck. Despite the efforts of several fire pumps, it was completely destroyed within three hours. Shortly afterwards the machinery was auctioned off, together with the post and a few other large timbers which had escaped the fire. John Nunn was the last miller and after the fire he went to the new **steam mill** nearby in Benezet Street.

'2. **Bramford Road Tower Mill** (1489, 4520)

This tower mill was evidently built between 1841 and 1844 for Robert Sallows, possibly by Whitmore of Wickham Market, as it was reputed to have resembled Debenham mill, built by Whitmore in 1839.

'A number of millers ran it, finishing with Horace Cattermole who seems to have ceased using it c.1896-8. It was subsequently dismantled and the premises used as a laundry. The tower was finally pulled down c.1953 and nothing remains at the site. The mill had four floors, with underdriven stones on the second floor. There were four double-shuttered patent sails, an ogee or domed cap and a fantail.

'ST CLEMENTS, IPSWICH

3.&4. Bishops Hill (1755, 4383)

A map of 1736 shows a mill near this site, at approx. 178,437. This mill was blown down on November 6th 1795 and a new mill was built nearby for Mr Dowsing, who had occupied the earlier mill.

'It was a large post mill with a single storey roundhouse, four common sails and a tailpole. A fine watercolour of it can be seen in the Christchurch Mansion museum, Ipswich. The last miller was John Leach and the mill is last shown on the map of 1855. It was apparently sold to a Mr Biddle who moved it to Willisham, probably to replace another post mill moved there from Elmsett earlier. It worked until about 1905, shortly after which it was pulled down. Nothing remains at either of the sites, a house occupying the Ipswich site.

'ST MARY, STOKE

5. Belstead Road (approx. 156, 433)

This mill appears on a map of 1812 and is depicted as a distant post mill on an engraving of 1819. It had gone by 1823 and nothing more is known of it.

'Monson's map of 1848 and White's map of 1867 both show a circular building near the 1812 site and Grid Reference 1530, 4307 and this could possibly be a roundhouse remaining from the mill. We will probably never know.

'6. & 7. Stoke Hill Mills (North Mill 1595, 4370; South Mill 1599, 4364)

There were two post mills here, the North Mill being the older of the pair. It was standing in 1736 and worked until 1849, when it was moved to Earl Soham (246, 644) where it stood until about 1903. It is well illustrated, being situated on the brow of Stoke Hill, overlooking the town. The best picture is the one by Constable; this depicts it as a small post mill with an enclosed porch, a single storey roundhouse, an ogee-shaped roof, four common sails and a tailpole.

'The South Mill was standing in 1764 but was apparently rebuilt in 1786, this date being cut into the weathervane, now preserved in Christchurch mansion. It worked until c.1881, when a sail was blown off; it was demolished in 1887 and both of the mill sites have been built over. South Mill was originally similar in appearance to the North Mill, but it was subsequently extended at the tail as depicted in the famous photograph by William Vick, taken c.1880. This shows it to have had a single storey roundhouse, with two spring sails and two common sails; it was winded by a tailpole. The stocks were carried in a wooden pollend.

'The mills were in separate occupation originally, then around 1790-1830 they were in joint ownership, after which they split up again. The North Mill was probably last used by Robert Andrews, listed in 1846, and who subsequently went to the mill south of the Albion Mills. The South Mill was last worked by William Goodchild, whose father John was there in the 1830s.

'8. & 9.. Halifax Mills (North Mill 1628, 4261; South Mill 1627, 4254)

The South Mill, known as "Halifax Mill", was the older, being first shown in 1812. It was advertised for sale in 1841 as a Capital Windmill' with a "double roundhouse" – there were three pairs of stones and a flour machine, patent sails and, most interestingly, a rooftop fantail. In fact, it seems

to have been very much like Ramsey mill. It is apparently shown in an engraving of 1843 but went about this time, being replaced by a steam mill, the building of which remains in use as light industrial premises. The windmill was last used by William Buttrum.

'The North Mill was first shown on the O.S. map of 1836-7 and was probably built speculatively in the 1830s. It was advertised in 1841 as a "Capital nearly new windmill" and had a two storey roundhouse and two pairs of stones. It was to be pulled down a month after the sale, which in fact appears to have happened. The last occupant was Thomas Lucock. who ran both mills up to 1841. The North Mill was slightly taller than the South Mill, both being shown in an engraving of 1839.

'10. Providence Mill, Stoke Green (1641, 4341)

This post mill was newly built in 1812 when it was auctioned because of its owner's bankruptcy. It was a large mill, being 18ft by 10ft, with a 21ft roundhouse, a 6ft flourmill, 9ft brake wheel, a pair of 4ft French stones in the head and tail, and a wooden windshaft with a cast iron neck. Two engravings of 1819 depict the mill but not in any detail.

'It worked until the late 1840s, the last miller being William Bruce. Nothing remains on the site, now part of Croft Street.

'ST MARGARETS, IPSWICH

11. Peddars Lane (now Anglesea Road) (1585, 4529)

This mill stood near St Matthews Mill [1.], to the north of Peddars Lane next to the hospital. It is first shown on a map of 1825 and disappeared in 1849. It was smock mill, being described as a "wooden tower mill" with two pairs of stones, a flour mill and a jumper. It was "lately occupied by Mr Kealy" in 1837. Samuel Symonds occupied it at the end of its short life and little more is known about it.

'12. & 13. Bolton Mill, Henley Road (1621, 4573)

The first mill here is depicted as a post mill on Bransby's map of 1812, and stood a little west of its later site. It is shown at this latter site on the 1836 O.S. map and was advertised in 1840 as "lately erected". It was a smock mill on a brick base, with patent sails, fantail, two pairs of 4ft French stones and a flour mill with jumper. It seems to have been built c.1835, from the amount of lease expired by the date of auction.

'Unfortunately the mill was struck by lightning on 17th July 1851, as *The Ipswich Journal* recounts at great length. Great damage was done, including a shattered sail and almost inevitable (in such cases) splitting of the striking chain! The owner, Charles Fonnereau (of Christchurch Mansion) apparently wrote the mill off as it was sold for demolition in December 1851. The last miller was William Howell who subsequently ran the Albion Mills on Woodbridge Road.

'The site is now built over, situated as it is in the suburban area of north Ipswich.

'14. Folly Mill, Tuddenham Road (1708, 4552)

This smock mill is first depicted on the 1812 map and in 1819 was advertised as a "newly erected Tower Wind-mill" with two pairs of French stones. It was advertised to be let in 1841 and again in 1842, when it was also offered for sale. It is described as having four floors with three pairs of stones and was occupied by William Pollard. William Bird was the miller in 1861 though the mill must have gone about this time. It was moved to a site near Mr Cullum's watermill at Kettleburgh, where it only had a single pair of stones. The mill disappeared between May 1864 and June 1865, The last miller was William Bird. Nothing remains at either site. [see Note]

'15. "Tower Mill", Albion Hill (now North Hill Road) (1731, 4496)

This mill is possibly the best documented and one of the oldest mills in Ipswich; it passed through many people's hands during its life of over 100 years.

'It is first depicted on Hodkinson's 1783 map and was advertised in the mid-1790s as a "good brick tower mill, with 2 pair of French stones, a flour mill and machine". In 1808 we read that it "has had its walls raised 12 feet, a new cap and turning tackle, new inside with 3 pairs of French stones". It must have been a very "dumpy" mill before its raising as it was not tall in later life.

'In 1836 it had "spring sails" and "cast iron shafts", with two pairs of French stones and "one pair small ditto". In 1837 "patent sails" are mentioned and in this form it remained until its demise. In later years a pair of composition stones were used, as I discovered a piece of one while rummaging about the site in 1975.

'The various millers and owners get very complicated in the nineteenth century so I will not go into detail. The last miller was Abram Southgate, later at the water-mill at Combs Ford, Stowmarket. The tower mill, which was tarred, with a large domed or ogee cap and ten bay patent sails, was last worked in 1890 and was pulled down the following year. The site is now disused, with the odd derelict shed remaining. Nothing remains of the mill, although a little digging might reveal some foundations. The piece of millstone now resides in my back garden!

'16. Bank Road, Albion Hill (1736, 4508)

Very little is known about this mill which only appears on maps of 1848 and 1849 and also on an O.S. map revision of unknown date (I haven't seen the original). An advert of 1841 refers to the mill: "To let – Smock Windmill, with 3 pair of stones, patent sails, winds herself, on Woodbridge Road, Ipswich". This mill in fact worked until 1866 and had a steam mill added in 1861. Both were pulled down in 1869, having stood vacant for three years. The last miller, who also owned it, was Isaac Thurman. It was probably not moved as previously suggested. *[see Note]*

'17. & 18. Albion Mills (North Mill 1754, 4525; South Mill 1754, 4518)

These two post mills appear on maps of 1823-5. They were under the same ownership in the 1840s, but appear to have been leased separately, despite their proximity to one another. In 1842 "an excellent Post Wind-mill driving 2 pair of French stones abreast" was to be let, the proprietor being John Bedwell. Later that year "A New Post Wind-mill" with two pairs of stones, patent sails and a fantail and a two storey roundhouse was offered to let – "apply to Mr William Archer, on the premises". If the South Mill was in fact "New" in 1842, it must have been rebuilt as a mill was on the site some eighteen years before. It actually had two patent and two common sails, although the advert kept quiet about this.

'The following year the mills were again offered; the North Mill to be sold by auction, occupied by Charles Bedwell and the South Mill to be let – "apply to Mr John Collins, millwright, Woodbridge Road, Ipswich". (His premises were at the lower end of Woodbridge Road, in the town.)

'The mills passed through various hands, being last shown together on White's 1867 map. The South Mill had gone by 1877, when the Felixstowe branch railway cut through its site. The North Mill, which was the older mill, had two common sails, two spring sails and a fairly low roundhouse and no fantail. The name is perpetuated in a public house called "The Albion Mills" nearby. *[The pub was running from 1861 – the naming after the windmills may not have occurred until c.1875 – and closed and was demolished in 1995. The bus stop on Woodbridge Road is still called "Albion Mills".]*

Both [the Albion Mills] were owned by John Bedwell until their demise. The South Mill was last worked in 1864 by Charles Fuller and then stood vacant until demolition in 1876. The North Mill

was still working in 1885, occupied by Arthur Cox, then stood vacant for two years and was demolished 1887-8. [see Note]

'19. Sidegate Lane (1797, 4549)

This post mill first appears on the O.S. map of 1836-7 and probably dates from the 1820s. The only description of it found so far is in the sale advert of 1859, brought about by the death of William Cuthbert, one of its millers. It had spring sails and a fantail with two pairs of French stones, a flour machine with jumper and a brick roundhouse. This mill ceased work in 1869, Charles Smith being the last occupier; it was gone by 1870 and in that year the new steam mill was erected by Smith in Woodbridge Road (St Johns Mill [see 20.]). James Rivers left the mill in 1867.

'20. "Lattice Barn", Woodbridge Road (1899, 4483)

The "Lattice Lane Mill" as it should be known was not ... erected until late 1879 or early 1880, by Charles Smith, who ten years earlier had established a steam mill nearby. This is very strange, as steam mills usually follow windmills and not vice versa! Charles Smith's family continued to use "Lattice Lane Mill" until it ceased work in 1922. The shutters were then taken out and the cap and sails removed in 1925. It would appear to have been pulled down finally in 1927 or early 1928 and was shown as "Smith's Windmill" in the 1920s. It succumbed to a local builder after which the site had housing built over it. Smiths also ran [the aforementioned] steam mill on the Woodbridge Road which had its stones replaced by a "Tattersall" roller mill in 1898. The mill building still stands, now occupied by Messrs Barnard, who sell flour and meal from the premises (though it is milled elsewhere). [In 2021 the building is being converted into accommodation.]

'The windmill was photographed in 1924 by A. Woolford of Ipswich and, although not of very good quality, the pictures do allow us to get a clear view of the mill's exterior. It was tall, thin and not very attractively proportioned. The wooden tower was covered in tarred felt and the base was untarred. There were five floors with a single storey brick base. The three pairs of stones were on the second floor. The cap was boat shaped, with a gallery and six-bladed fantail, and was turned by a worm against the outer curb face. There were four double-shuttered eight-bay patent sails, the striking chain of which was assisted to the ground by a "tailpole".

'The style of the cap and sails suggest that it was a "Collins" mill, though whether this was the "Ipswich" Collins or the "Melton" Collins I cannot say.

'21. "Mill Field", Foxhall Road (approx. 184, 442)

The Tithe map of 1849 shows "mill field" at this site, to the north of Foxhall Road and the 1805 O.S. map, although inaccurate, confirms a mill near this site.

'A newspaper reference of 1805 mentions the "windmills" in the Foxhall Road, the other one being that in Rushmere parish; sale adverts of 1808 and 1812 mention a substantial post mill with roundhouse, called 'Brightwell Mill'. It is almost certain that this mill is the one referred to, as the mills in Bishops Hill and further along Foxhall Road were in St Clements and Rushmere parishes respectively, St Margarets parish being specifically referred to in the 1812 advert.

'Bransby's map of 1812 omits the mill, but this is probably an oversight. It had gone by 1823.

'ST HELENS, IPSWICH

22. & 23. Albion Hill (south side of Woodbridge Road) (1753,4497)

[22.] The post mill south of Albion Mills (see 17. & 18.) was one of the oldest mills in the town. It is first shown in 1783 and is mentioned in sales adverts in 1796 and 1798. At this time it had a single pair of French stones and a large roundhouse.

'In 1804 it was sold, together with a nearby [23.] "Drug Windmill with iron cylinders and going gears". Both mills were to be taken down and cleared away. It seems that the post mill survived, however.

'The small drug mill is a bit of an enigma, nothing further having come to light about it. A possible site could be the circle shown on Monson's map of 1848 at the "Lunatic Asylum" nearby, at Grid Reference 1751,4486. [This asylum would have been Belle Vue Retreat.]

'The post mill continued meanwhile. In 1821 it was sold or let and had two pairs of stones. A mill was "to be removed" in 1824, although this may have referred to another mill (see later). About 1850 a long period of occupation began with Robert Andrews, who had one of the Stoke mills [6. & 7.] a little earlier – and had been made bankrupt at Bramfield (near Halesworth) in 1842. He ran the mill into his seventies, being last recorded in 1871. James Wood was occupier in 1873, though the mill may have ceased work by this time. It was still standing in 1877 when its presence was noted in a report of the opening of the Felixstowe Railway. It had gone by 1881 and Belle Vue Road now covers the site. An old house called 'Mill House' stands near the site but was not, in fact, the miller's house, this also being covered by the road now. The site is perpetuated in "Post Mill Close", a recent development [1978-79] behind the "Mill House", though some way from the actual site.

'24. & 25. South side of Woodbridge Road (1769,4501 and 1771,4507)

These two mills are shown only on Bryant's map, surveyed in 1825, and Greenwood (1823) misses them, though this is probably an error as he omits several mills known to have stood at this date.

'A sale notice in 1824 may refer to one of them, although its description matches the mill above (No. 22) and also says "to be removed". One of the mills was a smock mill; and advert in 1824 offers to be let "a smock windmill – in St Helens Parish".

'Both mills had gone by the 1836-7 O.S. map and nothing further is known about them at present.

'SUNDRY MILLS IN OLD IPSWICH

26. Lingfield's Hill (St Clements) (approx. 172,443)

This open trestle post mill is marked on Ogilby's map of 1674 on "Lingfields' Hill", which corresponds to the hill in Alexandra Park overlooking Suffolk College. Old paintings and engravings show a mill at or near this site in the early eighteenth century but it had gone by 1778, although Kirby's map of 1736 omits it (this is very inaccurate though).

'In 1978 a pair of 3 foot "Cullen" stones were found near here and there is perhaps some slim chance that they might have come from this mill.

'27. & 28. Corporation marshes (approx. 160,441 and approx. 160,442)

One of these mills was taken down in 1733, although "lately erected" by Lawrence Rainbird. The other was erected that year by Thomas Flintoft, on condition that it be demolished before the expiry of the lease. Kirby's 1736 map marks two mills here, so some degree of overlap seems to have taken place. Kirby's map is terribly inaccurate since it shows Handford watermill south of the windmills, on the tidal Orwell, when it was in fact to the north of the freshwater Gipping. Pennington's map of 1778 misses them, but Hodkinson (1783) shows one. Both had gone by 1805 and nothing more is known about them. The site was built over in the nineteenth century.

'Early references

Lilian Redstone, in *Ipswich through the ages* (1948), records that in 1332 Geoffrey Costyn recovered £10 in damages against John Bande the elder, who had built a windmill on a mount 25 feet high which overlooked his grounds and disturbed his privacy, contrary to the immemorable

custom of the Borough that noone should erect a building so as to overlook a neighbour through a window or otherwise. This principle is still applied today.

'*The annals of Ipswich* by Nathaniel Bacon mention that in 1558 "the erection of John Parvise's windmill shall be considered off by the Council of Learned of the Towne".

'WINDMILLS FORMERLY IN PARISHES OUTSIDE IPSWICH

29. Wicks Ufford Hamlet, Rushmere (1916,4403)

The Ipswich Journal in 1794 advertises to be sold "a post mill ... situated in the Hamlet of Wicks Ufford, in Ipswich, now in the occupation of Robert Nixon". It is not certain which mill this refers to but I think the one in Rushmere parish along the Foxhall Road is the likely candidate. This mill was first shown on the 1812 map of Ipswich; Greenwood names it as "Goodwin's Mill" in 1823 but Bryant in 1825 marks a mill on Brook Hill further along the Foxhall at Grid Reference 211,438. At first I thought this was a mistake as no other map shows a mill here but the Rushmere tithe map of 1845 names this site as "Mill Field". As it is not in Ipswich Borough I will avoid the issue!

' "Goodwin's Mill" – or "Gooding's" as it should have been called, after S.R. Gooding, its owner – was occupied by Charles Smith in 1839. He advertised it to be let in 1840 and S.R. Gooding advertised it to be let in 1841 and again in 1842, when Smith left the mill auctioning off his furniture and effects – perhaps he had hit hard times. His name is later linked with the smock mill on Woodbridge Road, which stood within sight of this mill across the heath.

'The mill seems to have been sold, for in 1845 "widow Newson" was owner, with William Dawson as occupier. He is listed in the 1851 census as living in Wicks Ufford Hamlet, Rushmere, and ran the mill until its demise which was about 1844. The site is devoid of all mill remains, though the miller's cottage still stands in the grounds of St Clements Hospital.

'From the sale adverts it would seem to have been a big mill; in 1842 it was a 'superior, large and substantial 'POST WIND-MILL' with a round house capable of holding 400 combs of corn. "The mill stands well winded, with Patent Sails, drives 3 pair of French stones, Flour mill, jumper and smut machines".

'Just outside the present Borough boundary stood tall Rushmere smock mill, which was built c.1840 by Henry Collins of Melton and owned by him for several years, let by Henry Betts. After the post mill was demolished the Dawsons took this mill, running it until 1928. It was demolished just before the war and the site is now marked by a new housing estate: "The Mills".

'30 & 31. Westerfield Mill (Earlier site approx. 169,477; later site 1697,4737)

The village of Westerfield is now cut in half by the Borough boundary, and Ipswich now claims the windmill. This was advertised in 1795 to be sold by auction: "A smock windmill lately new built with 2 pairs of stones, flour mill and other going gears, situate on Westerfield Green..." The Enclosure map of 1808 marks it, as does the 1805 O.S. map, at the south-west corner of the Green, north of the present "Mill Farm".

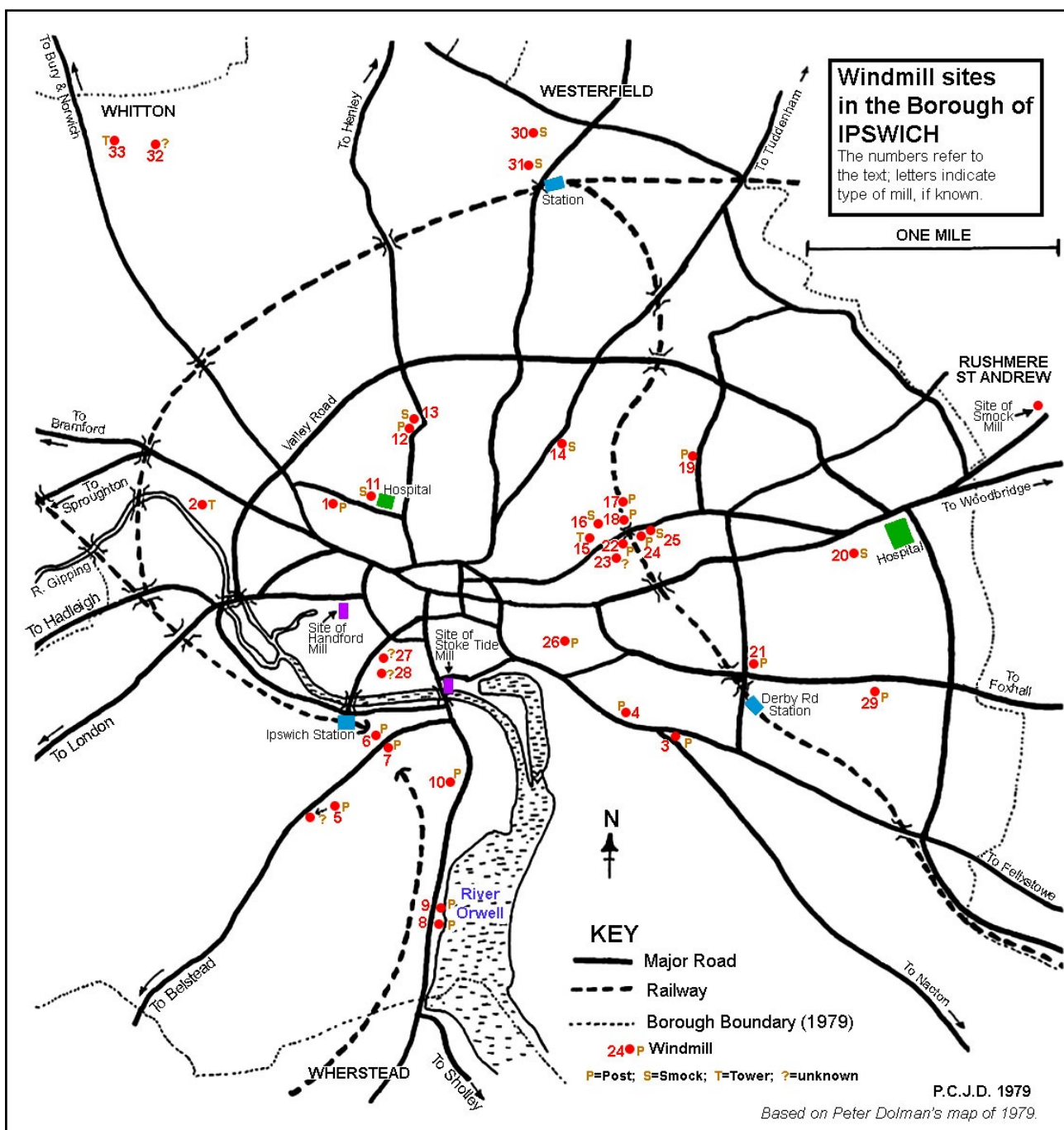
'In 1811 it was again advertised as a "Capital new-built smock windmill" and had "1 pair of 4ft 6ins French and 1 pair 3ft 10ins Peak stones, with regulators to each, 1 flour mill, 3 floors...". By Bransby's map of 1812 it has been moved or rebuilt on a mound just south of Mill Farm. In 1839 the Rev. Mileson Edgar (the local vicar) owned it and William Barrett Threadgell (aged 50) was miller, employing one man; trades directories of 1853 and 1858 name him as W.B. Threadkell. Who knows which spelling is correct! The mill seems to have disappeared in the late 1860s and nothing remains.

'32 & 33. Whitton (Early site approx. 147,474; tower mill 1429,4754)

The tithe map of 1840 names a field near the church as "Mill Mount"; this presumably is a field name recalling a very early mill about which nothing is known.

'The tower mill at Whitton is first shown on the 1836-7 O.S. map. In 1830 Thomas Codd is named as miller, and in 1939 William Jupp. In 1840 it was owned and occupied by Edward Field. Field continued at the mill in the 1840s and 50s, to be replaced by George Self who ran the mill until it closed. At one time it was owned by the man who owned Albion Mill [17. & 18.] and the tower mill in North Hill Road [15.]. It was still working in 1885 but must have finished soon after. It had gone by 1900 and nothing now remains. A good photograph of it has survived and this shows it to have been a nicely proportioned but smallish, four-storey, tarred brick tower mill. The boat-shaped cap had a six bladed fly with a tailpole chain guide and four seven bay double-shuttered patent sails. It looks unmistakably like the work of Collins, being virtually a brick version of Leiston smock mill, built by Henry Collins of Melton in 1840.'

Peter Dolman



Note

Peter Dolman writes in the second article on Ipswich windmills:-

‘Since compiling the article I have been investigating the parish rate books for St Margarets; these run from 1854 until the end of the nineteenth century and record the owner, occupier, estimated annual rent and rates for a specific property. As such, they are an invaluable guide to when a mill ceased to work, was pulled down, or indeed built. As a result, ... more accurate information can be substituted for the previous notes. [These corrections have been incorporated in Peter’s text.]

‘I’m only up to 1885 in the rate books so cannot yet say when Albion Mill and the Tower Mill (North Hill Road) ceased work.

‘Thanks must go to Bob Malster for putting me on to the rate books as a source of information; also to the staff of Ipswich Record Office, County Hall, who are most helpful.’

[Peter’s final updates on Ipswich windmills date from December 1979.]