

Calico Printing Works, Beddington Corner, Beddington

These works were situated on the east bank of the River Wandle, and on the south side of Goat Road, Beddington Corner, contiguous with a corn mill to the south. There were associated bleaching grounds on the north side of Goat Road, opposite.

The position of the parish boundary line between Beddington and Mitcham at Beddington Corner was for many years a matter of dispute between the respective parishioners. This is exemplified by the locations shown on the Tithe Maps of the two parishes. The Mitcham map of 1847 shows the boundary from the river running along the south side of the printing works, thus bringing them within Mitcham (see map below), while the Beddington map of 1840 shows the boundary line further north, running from the river eastwards towards the Goat Inn, so including the printing works within Beddington.

The latter boundary line, which is pretty much that defined on current maps, was shown on the earliest Ordnance Survey maps of c. 1865, and was by then officially acknowledged.

The first calico printers found recorded who can fairly certainly be associated with the site were Joseph Hunt and Thomas John Croft, who dissolved their partnership on 1 April



Extract from the Mitcham Tithe Map, 1847.
[72.8kb]

1769 [1]. Joseph Hunt then carried on alone, but was declared bankrupt in May 1770 [2]. In April 1780 Mitchell Newman, calico printer of Beddington Corner, was declared bankrupt [3].

He was probably succeeded by John Hatton and James Blake, who were there by 9 October 1781, when they dissolved their partnership [4]. The landowner at this period was William Bridges, who on 29 December 1786 granted a lease of the premises to John Hatton [5], evidently a renewal. Later Hatton went into partnership with William Thwaites, and they took on an apprentice in about 1789 [6]. They were later joined by William Kennerley, but he left the partnership on 5 July 1797 [7]. His place was taken by Thomas Thwaites, but he quit on 22 June 1799 [8].

John Hatton and William Thwaites dissolved their partnership on 24 June 1800 [9]. Thwaites probably then went to a calico printing works north of Merton Bridge, where he was recorded as an occupier in 1805. John Hatton carried on alone, and was listed as the occupier in Holden's directory for 1802-4, but it seems that one of the Thwaiteses returned, for Thwaites & Co. were rated for factory and land "late Hatton's" in the Mitcham Rate Books for 1803-1809 [10].

The next reference found that probably relates to the site was a notice declaring the bankruptcy of James Clapham, calico printer of Beddington Corner, in February 1816 [11]. Again there follows a long gap in the available records, until November 1834, when in the schedule to a Deposited Plan, George Ansell was named as the occupier. He was a calico printer who had earlier worked at Rushy Meadow, Wallington, with his brother Joseph, and also at Stubbe Mead, Croydon.

The landowner named in the schedule referred to above, was John Bridges. William Bridges had died in 1805, and his properties had passed to a relative, Brook Allen Bridges, and then

to Brook Allen's son, John Bridges, in 1815. After his death in 1833, they were inherited by his son, also named John Bridges.

George Ancell was followed at the works by John Davidson, who was listed as a silk and woollen printer in Pigot's directory for 1839. He may have been the John Davidson who was recorded as a calico printer in Garrett Lane, Wandsworth in November 1834, when, together with his partner John Davis, he was declared bankrupt. If it was the same man, he was to be much more successful at Beddington Corner. He was to remain in occupation for 30 years.

John Davidson was described in the Beddington census returns for 1815 as a silk printer employing 16 men. One of these was his son Charles, who was a pattern designer. Frederick Braithwaite visited the works two years later and reported that:

"At Mr. Davison's [sic] print works, the silk goods are principally rinsed in the rivers and a large quantity of water is essential for this purpose: 23 cwt of sulphuric acid, 13 cwt of alum, 24 gallons of muriate of tin, with chloride of lime, prussate of potash, nitrate of iron, sulphate of copper, and oxalic acid, were used in these works, and discharged into the Wandle, every week." [13]

On 22 August 1860 John Bridges sold the printing works to Samuel Gurney, a partner in the London banking firm of Overend, Gurney and Company [10]. At about this time Gurney also purchased the Culvers estate at Carshalton and Wallington, including the three mills near Davidson's works, from his brothers-in-law, Foster and Morris Reynolds.

The firm of Overend, Gurney and Company failed in May 1866 and was put into liquidation, and Gurney suffered financial disaster. Soon afterwards it was announced that his estates would be offered for sale at an auction to be held on 31 October 1866. In the auctioneer's sale catalogue the printing works were described as "a Silk Printing Factory with Steaming House, Wash-house, Winch and Colour House, Two Print Shops, Carpenter's Shop, Office, and other Outbuildings." John Davidson was then a yearly tenant, paying a rent of £20 per annum [14].

Some of the properties, including the printing works and the nearby mills, were then purchased by the Croydon Local Board of Health. The sale was completed on 15 August 1867 [15]

It was probably about this period that Benjamin Slater, an elderly resident of Mitcham, was recalling when he wrote in 1911: "There was a large factory at Beddington Corner, on the opposite side of the river to Macray's (i.e. McRae's) Skin Mills. Sample silk printing was done here on a large scale, employing a good many hands." [16]

John Davidson was last mentioned at the works in a Post Office directory for 1870. In the 1871 Beddington census, Davidson, at the age of 77, was said to be "past work". The premises were therefore probably vacant by 28 March 1872, when the Croydon Local Board of Health resolved that the buildings should be pulled down and the materials sold [17]. No mention of a sale has been found, but the works were demolished about this time, and the site remained empty for many years. John Davidson died on 8 January 1876, at the age of 82.

References

1. The London Gazette, 8-11 April 1769.

- 2.** Ibid. 12-15 May 1770.
- 3.** Ibid. 8-11 April 1780.
- 4.** Ibid. 15-19 January 1782.
- 5.** The Croydon Advertiser, 18 July 1885, report of the case Bidder v. Bridges; Sutton Archive and Local Studies Library, SBAB 333.
- 6.** Mitcham Settlement Examinations 1784-1814 (Surrey Record Society, 1973) p. 104
- 7.** The London Gazette, 4-8 July 1797.
- 8.** Ibid. 2-6 July 1799.
- 9.** Ibid. 27-31 January 1801.
- 10.** The Croydon Advertiser, 8 August 1885, report of the case Bidder v. Bridges.
- 11.** The London Gazette, 17 February 1816.
- 12.** Surrey History Centre, QS6/8/164.
- 13.** Frederick Braithwaite, "On the Rise and Fall of the Wandle ... ", in Institution of Civil Engineers Proceedings, vol. 20 (1861).
- 14.** Sutton Archive and Local Studies Library, SBC 728.
- 15.** Croydon Local Studies Library, HEA/1/6.
- 16.** Benjamin Slater, "Memories of Mitcham (1911)", in H. F. Bidder (editor), Old Mitcham, Part 1 (1923).
- 17.** Croydon Local Studies Library, HEA/1/7.