

The Snuff Mill, Carshalton.

This mill was situated on the west bank of the Wandle just above Butter Hill Bridge, abutting on Mill Lane, and opposite the Lower Mill. A.E.Jones was of the opinion that it was established by George Ansell in existing buildings which he bought, together with the Lower Mill and other properties, from the trustees of James Scawen in about 1782, [1]

The earliest specific reference that has come to light is the record of a policy taken out by George Ansell on 21 March 1786 with the Sun Insurance Company, on those properties, and including a timber and tiled snuff mill "in his own tenure". [2] A memorandum added to the entry in the register records that the policy was endorsed to James Newton, Robert Barker and Charles Bill "as Mortgagees as Indenture dated 1 May 1788:

George Ansell had presumably redeemed the mortgage by 16 April 1790, when he renewed the policy. The mill was then described as a "Madder & snuff Mill under one roof", and Ansell as a "Madder & Snuff Manufacturer". [3] He renewed the policy again on 25 April 1795. [4]

George Ansell died on 8 June 1797 at the age of 65, and by his will, proved on 19 June, bequeathed his mills and other properties variously to his wife Sarah and his five sons. He devised the madder and snuff mill and his dwelling house to his wife, and directed that after her death those properties were to be inherited by his sons George and Charles Augustus in equal shares. [5]

The mills were insured on 20 October 1797 by Allen Lambent, a local millwright, presumably acting on Sarah Ansell's behalf. [6] She did take over the management, and renewed the insurance policy on 31 March 1798, which included cover for her dwelling house. [7] On 13 March 1802 she published a notice proclaiming that whereas Thomas Hill, a London tobacconist, had sent to the late George Ansell on 22 January 1793, 730 lb. of tobacco to be ground into snuffs and this not having been collected, she would if it was still uncollected~after 14 days sell the snuff to defray the expense of grinding and storing it. [8] She renewed the insurance policy on 15 Mar 1805. [9]

Sarah Ansell continued in occupation until her death in 1807, when her sons George and Charles Augustus took over the business, in accordance with their father's will. However Sarah in her will, proved on 22 April 1807, directed that the goods and implements used in the mills be independently valued, and then conditionally given to George and Charles. The brothers were given the option of either paying 5% of the assessed value annually to their three sisters, or giving a lump sum representing that value to their sisters in equal shares. [10]

Charles Ansell insured the mills and contents on 7 July 1807. [11] He had also inherited the Lower Mills, and on 24 October he insured that mill, together with his dwelling house, the snuff and madder mill, and ancillary buildings. [12] He renewed this policy on 10 October 1810. [13]

It is not known for how much longer George and Charles worked the snuff and madder mill. Charles was also involved with paper making at the Lower Mill, and George was working at the adjacent calico mill. By 1818 the operation of the snuff and madder mill had evidently

been taken over by their brothers James and Robert Ansell, for they insured their stock and utensils in that mill on 21 January of that year. [14.]

The register entry of this policy contains the last mention of madder. Subsequent references to the mill were merely to a snuff mill. It seems likely that madder grinding was never a major activity at the mill, and that production was mainly for the use of local calico printers. Topographical writers compiling their lists of Wandle mills in earlier years always referred simply to a snuff mill or mills. Edwards in c.1789 wrote that "Mr.Anse11 has snuff mills." [15] Malcolm in 1805 referred to "Mrs;Ansell's snuff mills." [16] In *The Ambulator* for 1796, and in later editions, the reference is to "Mr.Ansell's snuff mills." [17] And Hassell in 1817 noticed "a snuff mill the property of Messrs.Anse11." [18]

James Ansell left the business after a few years and then worked as a paper maker at the Lower Mill. He was described as a paper maker as early as 13 September 1820, when his daughter Harriet was baptised. In Pigot's Directory for 1823-24 Robert Ansell was listed as the occupier of the snuff mill, and was to remain so for the next 40 years or so.

In 1850 Brayley listed among the Carshalton mills, "A snuff grinding mill of 16 horsepower for twelve hours; the property of Edward Tyrrell Esq. the City Remembrancer; occupied by Robert Ansell." [19] Edward Tyrrell had acquired the property through his marriage in 1823 to Frances, daughter of William Lingham, who had died in 1818, leaving the mill and other properties in trust for the benefit of Frances and her sister Harriet: [20]. William Lingham's sister Sophia was married to George Ansell, and evidently at some time before 1818 he and Charles Ansell had sold the mill to their brother in law.



The Snuff Mill in c.1867.
[56kb]

Robert. Ansell died on 4 May 1865 and was succeeded at the mill by his widow Sarah and his son, also named Robert. Sarah Ansell died on 15 January 1881 at the age of 81, and had no doubt retired long before, leaving her son to carry on the business.

The owner of the mill, Edward Tyrrell, died on 5 June 1881. An indenture was drawn up on 23 January 1883 involving Edward Tyrrell's son Avery Tyrrell and other members of the family, from which Dr. Peatling copied extracts. It is not entirely clear what this document was, but it seems to have been a conveyance of the snuff mill and the nearby Lower Mill and calico printing mill. The snuff mill was described therein as "shed, drying houses snuff and madder mill, cottage warehouse and stable together with a piece of land used as a garden." It was "formerly in the occupation of Robert Ansell since deceased and now in the occupation of Robert Ansell his son." [21] Despite the reference to madder, the manufacture of this had ceased many years earlier, as previously noted.

Dr.Peatling noted in 1915 that he had been told that both Robert Ansell junior and his father before him had mainly been engaged in grinding into coarse powder contraband tobacco seized by Customs and Excise officers, which was afterwards thrown into the sea [22].

Robert Ansell was still working at the mill at the time of the 1891 Carshalton census, but may have retired soon afterwards. According to A.E.Jones, the mill was "taken over for other purposes" in 1892 [1]. However, Robert Ansell still lived at Butter Hill nearby until his death on 26 February 1905, at the age of 78.

By 1918 John Boughton, a parchment manufacturer, was in occupation of the snuff mill, which he had converted to his purposes. He had previously worked at the former leather mill above Hack Bridge.

R.Thurston Hopkins visited the mill in 1930 and gave the following description:

"... Old Snuff Mill, a plain weatherboarded building, with a roof of warm red tiles ... inside, the building shows every sign of respectable old age, the oak framework being solid and not less than two hundred years old. The waterwheel has been dismantled, and nothing of the old snuff-grinding machinery remains, if we except one or two of the mill-stones which are now displayed in odd corners ... Although the mill is no longer working, it is still the home of an ancient craft carried on by John Boughton, who manufactures parchment and vellum ... Mr. Boughton informed me that the vogue for the jazz band gave a new lease of life to his business, owing to the fact that the heads of bass drums required the best vellum ..."
[23]

J.Hillier in 1951 made a passing reference to "the snuff mill (now Broughton's(sic) parchment works)" [24]. By 1865 the building was occupied as light engineering works by K.F.Morrill, by Gray Gauges .Ltd. in 1967 and until at least 1973, and by S.T.R. Printers in 1999. The building remains, now apparently used for storage, and is probably the oldest industrial building in Carshalton.

References

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7. Ibid. MS 11837/21, No.676699.
8. The Times, 22 March 1802.
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10. PROS 11/1458 q.257.
11. Guildhall Library, Ms 11837/75, No.8Q5811.
12. Ibid. MS 11837/87, No.837356.
13. Ibid. MS 11837/91, No.849428.
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16. James Malcolm, Compendium of Modern Husbandry, Vol.I, p.6.
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24. J.Hillier.