

## ***THE STORY OF TRINITY MILL - BAGENDON***

***by Joyce M. Barker  
edited by Richard W. Whorlow***

### ***Editor's Introduction***

*This is a shortened version of a story which could have been written only by Joyce Barker. By a most fortunate coincidence Joyce, a professional historian, was born (in 1912) at Trinity Mill, Bagendon, Gloucestershire. Not only was this mill on a site which has been used for the purpose since before the Conquest, but the ownership can be traced continuously from that time. Joyce combined historical research with personal recollections to write a draft of this story although her account for the last century and a half was incomplete and sadly she died while working on it. I have filled in some of the details of the story from 1860 onwards. Complete copies of the text, including a list of sources, are available at the Gloucestershire Records Office and elsewhere.*

### ***The Early Years***

**T**his one small site, a mill building and its river and meadows relates to England and tells the story of England. There is complete continuity in ownership from Anglo-Saxon times. Travellers between Cirencester and Cheltenham cannot but see the Cirencester Golf Links yet generally fail to see a long Cotswold stone building on their right as they come round the corner from Cirencester and onto the straight stretch of road beyond. From that bend to the end of the straight is the actual length of the area we are studying, about 400 yards (370m.), and less in width.

Trinity Mill was the manor mill of Bagendon. It is fortunate that the Domesday Book gives us an authentic start, by stating that in the time of Edward the Confessor (1042 - 1066) Bagendon was owned by Woolward or Ulward or Wolfward. Take your choice - Ulward is my favourite because it has sounds of local dialect. Thus written evidence immediately pinpoints a manor mill in Saxon times.

William the Conqueror dispossessed Ulward and gave the manor to Hugo l'Asne (Hugh Donkey), one of his lesser knights. The assessment of Bagendon in Domesday in 1086 was £4 and the mill is singled out at 10s. (50p). Hugo put in as tenant one Gilbert but we need not linger on him because when William I died

William Rufus ruled after his father. William Rufus presented the manor to the strong military family of Chandos; as under-tenant they chose Richard, Richard de Bagendon. And this partnership lasted some 300 years. Essentially a tenant by military service, this would reflect on all his subjects and by the custom of the manor, each would have his duties and, all but a few, their rights.

We have to imagine these years as best we can with Bagendon men following Richard, fulfilling their duty to Chandos, and so to the King. Defection was not unknown and one de Bagendon joined Simon de Montfort in the barons' war, was on the losing side in 1265 at the battle of Evesham and the family suffered insofar as his son was paying 2 marks (£1.6s.8d. = £1.33p) each year 'for the debts of his ancestors'. The miller had to grind corn for his lord and the tenants were beholden to bring corn to the manor mill, a good source of income to the lord and a means of feathering his own nest to the miller where an extra handful from the sack could add up substantially. The picture of a jolly miller is contradicted by the picture of a somewhat deceptive thief.

Gradually the customs of the manor loosened and many duties were changed to payments in money. The de Bagendons gradually lost their tight grip on the manor, and the family declined, the last becoming a priest and in due time Rector of Bagendon. A final date for this stage in the story is 1382.

### ***The Mill***

The actual mill at this time can only be imagined and is unlikely in its beginning to be little more than a single storey thatched shed with an outside wooden wheel and a dwelling for the miller. We know that in the time of King John, Robert de Chandos gave of his wood 'enough for repairs of the mill', an endless chore, up to the present day. At some stage the water level at the mill was raised by an artificial channel or leat; once made, this would have been improved from time to time by widening, raising the banks for deeper flow and perhaps lengthening. The need to take away excessive water at the beginning of the leat would mean a controlling sluice at the head to divert part of the flow

in order to prevent the artificial banks from breaking down under the weight of the water - an occurrence which has happened fairly frequently even in modern times. Another sluice near the mill might also divert water when the mill was not working; it could be closed, together with a sluice immediately in front of the wheel, to stack up the water for starting. The Trinity Mill leat is a particularly long one and raised above the natural water level for some 400 yards, the east bank throughout being artificially raised, the west bank being scooped out of the rising ground. The actual fall from this false height to the natural level is some 12 - 14 feet (3.6 - 4.2m).

### *The Weavers and the Chantry*

In the next phase we start at another definite date - 1382. The de Bagendons had ended with a priest, celibate, probably in debt with inherited mortgage problems and the only way out was to sell. We must now bear in mind that Cirencester, but two miles away, was one of the great centres of the wool and cloth trade of the Cotswolds and it had a Weavers' Company which brought together the woolmen and merchants who were dealing in their high class goods with the Low Countries, France and Italy, combining business with deep religious beliefs. Thus it was that they established chantry chapels, in Cirencester Parish Church, where priests would pray daily for their souls, dead and alive, and conduct all appropriate services. They wanted property of sufficient value to pay the salaries of two chantry priests. Nicholas Poynter, John



Trinity Mill before 1866 - roof openings were later replaced by dormer-windows

Boys and Robert Playn negotiated on the Company's behalf to buy the Manor of Bagendon, which of course included the mill. The Chandos name was still to hover over them as the overlord but the great change was that, as an ecclesiastical holding, it was not held by military service. A new era was emerging more recognisable to us today - a village with a larger proportion of free men though the mill was still the manor mill and the villagers still had to send their corn there.

Even today there is confusion over the ownership of the mill and people will say it was an abbey mill. This is not so, for the Abbey already in 1383 had three mills of its own and the Weavers wished to support a priest for their chantry chapel of the Holy Trinity. How better to distinguish the Weavers' mill from the Abbey than by calling it Trinity Mill. From now onwards Trinity Mill is recognisable in its own right.

Many decades later Trinity Mill is referred to as 'formerly a cloathing mill' and also as a 'fulling mill', the two titles being one and the same thing. The Abbot had two fulling mills and the Weavers would be in a good position to create their own by adding the equipment to the corn-mill by introducing the hammering system for beating the cloth to thicken it by felting the fibres.

Other evidence for a clothing mill is the adjacent Rack Orchard on the right bank of the tail race. This was the accepted name for the area used to dry and stretch the lengths of cloth on tenter hooks. In the north west corner of the orchard is the Holy Trinity Well. A seam of fuller's earth in this area is another clue to the fulling process but also the spring water flowing over the fuller's earth was found to be medicinally beneficial and became well known for curing sore eyes. The last time it was used in that way was in the 1920s when a man asked my grandfather if he could fill a bottle with the water for an eye complaint. The structure disappeared under the Cheltenham Road when the sharp angle, actually the parish boundary of Baunton, Bagendon and Daglingworth, was eliminated by road re-construction in the early 1950s. As I remember it there was a square Cotswold stone holding tank some 4 - 5ft. (1.4m.) deep with three or four stone steps down, the top level with the ground level, and a fence round it. Across the road in what is now the Golf Links, was an oak tree, known as the Gospel Oak, at the parish boundary. I remember it as low, as trees

go, with a few spreading branches, not a very worthy specimen and it blew down on a February night in the early 1970s.

The Weavers' Company continued as a reliable, wealthy though strict landlord until 1544.

### *The Seymours and the Thynnes*

During the 1530s Henry VIII had seized ecclesiastical properties. All that was left of this source of wealth was the chantries, and these in turn were seized in 1544. Thus the Weavers' Company lost its means of private devotion and, by losing its property, could not support a chantry priest even if it were allowed to. The Company itself survived as a secular group and indeed continues today with the Trustees meeting annually on St. Catherine's Eve.

The Chantry properties had been valued and Trinity Mill in 1534 was paying an annual tith of 3s.4d. (17p) and mention is made of the pound and also the conduit to Trinity Well. Disposal of the property was now officially in the King's hands and he presented it to his uncle, Thomas Seymour, expecting his avuncular support. Politics complicate matters for Thomas was brother of Edward, Protector Somerset, brother of Queen Jane Seymour, and subsequently husband of Henry VIII's widow, Katherine Parr. How much nearer to the heart of England could a few rural acres get than that? But the Seymours were top people and when at the top you can only come down. And down Thomas came, beheaded on Tower Hill. He had lived at Soudley by Winchcombe, near enough to be almost a local landlord, literally a pony ride up the Whiteway, but not for long.

The next owner, Sir John Thynne, was a steward of the Seymour family. He built Longleat and supposedly also Bagendon manor house, and his descendants, one of whom was created Viscount Weymouth and another the Marquess of Bath, continued as lords of the manor, still the manor with the mill, for some two hundred and fifty years.

In 1580 we find a reference to the baptism of a daughter of John Deynton, miller. The Deyntons were an established family in Bagendon, mentioned as husbandmen, tenants by copyhold. Thirty years later a Denton appears in *Men and Armour*. John Denton, husbandman, was graded in 1608 as middle-aged and a trained soldier. William Stratford, a miller in Bagendon, was middle-aged of lower height.

In 1700 Trinity Mill was let to Samuel Burge, a woolman of Cirencester, for the three lives of himself and his two sons, John and Samuel. The lease was for : 'Mills called Trinity Mills or Leather Mills, milponds, lands, meadows, pastures etc. and 3 acres of arable land adjoining to Milham for 99 years. Rent £3/ 6/ 8 [5 marks] (£3.33p), heriot £2.' In 1729, on the death of his father, Samuel junior paid a heriot of 40/- (£2) and 40/- for a new life.

Here we get a glimpse of use other than as a village corn mill. Samuel Burge may well have belonged to the Weavers' Company and the mill may have been used for fulling for many years. It would entail adaptation of the machinery, or part of it, to rotating the hammers by water power onto the cloth. The plural name - the Mills - may account for corn grinding and fulling at the same time, and the established name of the Rack Orchard indicates a time long enough for a name to become attached and passed on.

In March 1732 the *Gloucester Journal* has an interesting advertisement :-

'To be Lett at Lady-Day next

At Bagginton near Cirencester in the County of Gloucester

A MILL called Trinity-Mill containing two Pair of Stones, one Pair of Flint and Culling, and one Pair of Welch Stones, both very good and new-built; together with a Barn, Stable, Brewhouse, Outhouse, good Gardens and Orchards, and six Acres of good Meadow and Pasture Land. Enquire, for further Particulars, of Thomas Fewster in Gloucester Castle, or of Sarah Fewster at the Mill aforesaid.' (Gloucester Castle was the county gaol).

In the same year at the Court Baron (the Lord of the Manor's own court for misdemeanours of his tenants) Thomas Fewster was fined £1 for not letting the water pass in its usual current, i.e. stopping it flooding the meadows or, by not passing through the mill, preventing the next mill working. Very unusually, Baunton, a later mill, worked off Trinity Mill tail, as I personally had cause to find out in later years. When the flow of water was diverted away from Trinity Mill so that repairs could be undertaken, the fish in the vicinity of Baunton Mill were found to be dying.

In November 1735, Robert Jordan, Thomas Hill, Thomas Harding and Edith Parsley were fined 5s. (25p) at the court for not grinding at the Lord's Mill, reduced

to 2s. 6d. (12½p). Although the fine was halved, they would have had to pay £1 for any future misdemeanours. However loose, the ancient court still upheld its right to control.

Another advertisement, in the *Cirencester Flying Post* of September 13 1742, referred to the mill :-

‘To be sold immediately, a Life in a Lease-hold Estate known by the Name of Trinity Mills near Cirencester, now a Grist Mill, formerly a Cloathing Mill, and easily made so. The purchaser will have the Right of renewing. For further particulars enquire of Thomas Bushe, Esq; or John Burge of Cirencester.’

‘To be sold’ refers only to the addition of a new life. Thomas Bushe was known for his involvement, perhaps as a solicitor in Cirencester and John Burge is mentioned in the lease of 1700.

### *More Changes*

At this point we come to a new phase in the mill’s history. It is recorded in 1788 that a letting was made to Sarah Lane, widow of Edmund Lane, by Viscount Weymouth, later the Marquess of Bath. Before we go into the story of the Lane family, a word must be said about land tenure. In 1792 the Enclosure Award for Bagendon changed the old ways of cultivation of variously owned strips to one based on tidy fields in private ownership and this increased land values manifold. The Marquess of Bath co-operated and enhanced the value of the property, and set about its sale. With no apparent change in the tenancies the manor of Bagendon, now developed into a village and parish, was sold to Joseph Pitt, the developer of Pittville in Cheltenham, for £5,963.2s.3d. (£5,963.11p). That included the fine manor house built by Sir John Thynne, the church and the right to ‘present’, the farmsteads, the inn at Perotts Brook (the New Inn) and the river and lands at Trinity Mill as far as the Gospel Oak.

### *The Lanes and the Barkers*

I start by quoting from Jean Welsford, a local historian and much missed : ‘... a craft [in Cirencester] was that of edge-tool manufacture - particularly the fine carriers’ knives [for shaving leather] which it was claimed found a market all over Europe and America ... this

enterprise declined in the nineteenth century although two family businesses, the Deightons and the Lanes, continued to operate until the second half of the century.’

We are concerned with the Lanes. Edmund and Sarah Lane we know of in 1788 as tenants of Lord Weymouth. A reference to ‘mill for grinding edge tools’ in a mortgage deed dated 1808 links the Lanes to this trade. An Indenture dated 1819 again refers to a ‘water grist mill and edge tool mill’ but by 1841 the only reference in legal documents is to a ‘grist mill’. The Lane family were the tenants when Joseph Pitt bought from the Marquess of Bath, and then they were paying £3.6s.8d. (£3.33p) per annum. In 1804 they bought Trinity Mill with its house, buildings and meadows for £476 from Pitt, at last really freehold.

The family fluctuated in its residence at the millhouse and included relations. Robert Lane’s will of 1839 is a fascinating document and mentions Edward Habgood of Trinity Mill as an occupant. The Habgoods and Lanes were close relations and appear repeatedly as edge tool grinders, millers, yeomen, and a butcher. The lease to Edward Habgood for 14 years at £120 per annum was granted in June 1834 but in 1839 Elizabeth Lane was living in a ‘newly erected messuage and garden’, now Trinity Cottage. The Lanes worked the

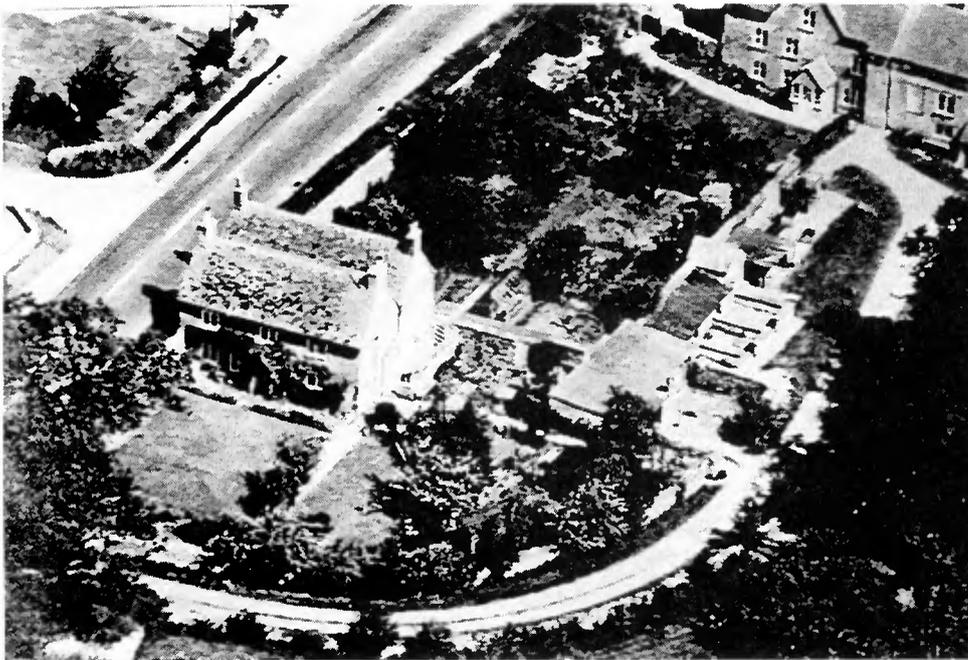


The mill earlier this century showing dormer-windows

mill as an edge tool mill and corn grinding as well, continuing there until 1866. By then the Lanes’ property was heavily mortgaged, their works and shop in Cricklade Street less profitable with the growing trade in the Midlands, and the family’s business ability was not what it was.

### *Within Living Memory*

It is impossible to give full value to the work and influence of the earlier Lane families. Older natives of Cirencester will remember Mr Jackson's ironmongery shop in Cricklade Street (opposite Dorothy Perkins, more or less). The last Mr Jackson lived up the Whiteway and I wrote down a conversation I had with him sometime prior to 1973 and a year or so before he died. He knew the last local Lane, Albert, as a member of his family. Mr Jackson's father had bought the business from what he called a 'down-at-heel Lane' and brought up young Albert and took him as an apprentice alongside the Mr Jackson I was talking to. Albert remained at work for 58 years. Mr Jackson explained to me that the edge tools, which were so successful, were made of Swedish iron, slit down, and a piece of shear-steel was welded-in. He could make them but his descendants were all female and so it all came to an end.



Aerial view of mill with Trinity Cottage by the road

Mrs Elizabeth Lane, living in Trinity Cottage, was buried in Bagendon in 1861. At this time the mill was let to James Burrows. Joseph Hayward, a farmer in Baunton, rented the cottage, garden and orchard adjoining the mill for £15 p.a. for a short time after 1861 but settled in Baunton Mill, further downstream, followed by his son Walter and his grandson Joseph whose three sons were my contemporaries. Elizabeth Lane's death released the mill for sale and after many mortgagings and financial loans it was sold in 1866 to TW Chester Master of Abbey House, Cirencester. This was the moment for a great refurbishment and we are

fortunate to have copies of the bills of the work done, wages paid and even the names of those employed during the period 1866-70. The head, the hatches, stone and woodwork were renewed. New mangers, doors, windows to house and mill, and a large bread oven (which I remember) were either built new or renewed.

We can now follow a separate strand of the story. Some time before 1861 Mrs Jane Barker, a widow, became schoolmistress at Baunton. She lived at the school house with her five children, Alice, Thomas (my grandfather), Jane, Olive and George. By 1879 her daughter Jane had taken over as schoolmistress, perhaps helped by her sister Alice. Alice, Jane and George remained at the school house until 1891. Meanwhile, in 1871, George, aged 17, was recorded as 'miller and baker', probably helping the miller, George Giles and later Charles Taylor, and using the new bread oven. The mill was only a short walk from the school house, past a sheep wash recently restored by members of the Cotswolds Voluntary Wardens Service, and across a meadow. By 1881 George was a stone dresser but before 1889 he was miller at Trinity Mill and was running it as a private business - not attached to land, as a grist mill, working for farmers as far away as Sapperton. Jane was untrained and had to leave the school and school house in 1891 when an Education Act decreed that all heads must be trained. The patron of the school, Miss Chester Master, rehoused them at Trinity Cottage. Since then the cottage and mill house have been home to twenty-two members of my family. Although untrained, Jane was evidently highly thought of and took temporary charge of the

school on at least two later occasions as recorded in the Baunton School Log Book. In 1893 the Rector wrote : '... Miss Barker, looking happy at her old post and among her former pupils.'

My father, Denzil Barker, helped George as well as being a dairy farmer. He had to cut short his honeymoon in 1907 on the sudden death of George so that he could take over as miller and I was born at the mill. The tenancy continued until 1929 when the Barkers bought from the Chester Masters. At that time

the mill was in full working order - I could operate it myself - and some milling continued until about 1940 although for a long time my father's main interest had been farming.

The 1929 purchase was of the Mill and Buildings, Trinity Cottage, the orchards and two meadows. In my turn I was able to add the fishing rights which the Masters had retained and in 1985 my cousins bought the meadows beyond the Churn. As near as we can tell the holding is almost identical to the Trinity Mill of the Weavers' Company in 1382.

I must end on a sad note. The new road avoiding Cirencester has to cross the Churn Valley somewhere and the so-called viaduct is planned to be built just yards behind Trinity Mill. This has involved geographical surveys from the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, archaeological investigation by the Cotswold Archaeological Trust for the Ministry of Transport and much disturbance. One thing it has done is to bring to the notice of people the historic water meadow system existing along the valley. The Royal Commission survey showed that there is still sufficient evidence of this system to make restoration possible. As to the mill itself, the far set of hatches need repair to give a controlled head of water but the



Trinity Mill in 1998 showing a lorry passing over the new viaduct

wheel and machinery are complete and could be put into working order relatively easily.

(The comment about the viaduct was written in 1995. By 1998 the viaduct was in use.)

### *Acknowledgements*

Unfortunately not all the sources, personal or documentary, used by Joyce Barker have been traced. She would have wished to state that she was particularly indebted to Mr K W Duncumb and Mrs Duncumb (née Barker), the present owners of the mill, to Mrs L Viner of the Corinium Museum, Cirencester, and to the staffs of the Bingham Library, Cirencester and the Gloucestershire Record Office for their help. I also am indebted to these same individuals and organisations.