

West Mill

Unlike the Mills that have already been covered in our Chronicle of Watchfield, there is no such doubt as to the whereabouts or name of West Mill. Its name matches its location on the westerly edge of the Parish Boundary, right alongside the B4508 Highworth Road and on the County Boundary of Wiltshire and Oxfordshire (*until recently Berkshire*). But as with most Mills there is very little documentation to be found about its day to day working life. At the West Mill location there was a busy farm, most likely for centuries. It had been normal practice for centuries that the mill was often operated and maintained by a separate person other than the owner. For instance, in the 17th century the Manor of Watchfield and the property at West Mill was owned by Sir Humfry Forster and after him the Willoughby family. However, the mill was operated first by William and Edward Fairthorne and then Richard Franklyn.

An agreement dated 29 September 1814, (WRO 2424/300) gave details of the Wilts & Berks Canal Company agreeing to pay William Smith, described as the '*live holder*' of the Mill called West Mill, the sum of 9 Guineas per annum in compensation for all the drainages he may sustain by the company taking water from the local streams.

Another agreement dated to 21 January 1874. (WRO 2424/252) This was between Henry Crowdy of Highworth, for and on behalf of Wilts & Berks Canal Navigation, to rent to George Looker of Friars Mill, '*All those three Water Grist Mills situate and lying and being in Watchfield commonly called or known by the name of West Mills.*' The rental charge is £50 per annum.





Above. West Mill conveniently close to the road. The building with the red roof in the centre of the picture housed the mill gear

A considerable amount of research has been carried out by Shrivenham Heritage Society and what has been learned has been written up. To read a copy in PDF format please go [HERE](#)





The three photos above show that the building that housed the mill mechanism has been converted into a comfortable living room annex, with the mill gear and some of the grinding stones displayed as features. The photo below shows the mill building next to the farmhouse circa 1925.



Walthamfield (W613)

Fred. C. P. Swindon