

Part 1, A Short History of the Parish, continued.

Here various goods were on sale, and there were also sports and competitions. The prize in one curious contest was given to the first woman to drink a pint of boiling hot tea! In the later half of the 19th century the fair was the scene of a great deal of rowdiness, and it fell into disrepute. As a result, in 1870, it was suppressed by the authorities.

Most of the villagers were employed in farming, and consequently there was a demand for a corn mill. Buttsbury had a watermill in 1295, and probably for long before that, but the first mention of a mill in Stock itself is in 1476, when it was owned by Thomas Tyrell.

In 1583 Henry Motte, miller of Stock, was fined 3d because "he made illicit flour and took excessive toll from his neighbours." The Stock miller of 1602, Stephen Martyn, was far more severely punished for a similar offence. He was fined 3/3d because "he took excessive toll for his flour."

In the early 17th century there were two mills at Stock, and an 18th century map shows two mills working - one beside the "Bakers Arms", and the other on the common.

Sometime about the middle of the 19th century the post mill by the "Bakers Arms" was shifted to a new site on the common. The wooden body of the mill was placed upon a flat wooden trolley, and drawn to its new site by a team of horses. At one stage it was feared that it would overbalance and crash to the ground, but the operation was fortunately completed without mishap. It stood in the same field with two other mills for about forty years, but eventually the two post mills were demolished, leaving the comparatively modern tower mill standing. It has been stated that these were demolished because "there was not enough wind to work them!" A more likely explanation is that they fell into a dangerous state of disrepair because of a decline in work, and had to be demolished.

Despite the predominance of agriculture a large number of Stock people were engaged in various rural industries - pottery, tilemaking, and most important of all the manufacture of the "Stock Brick", to which Stock has given its name. In his book on Stock Mr. L.D. Jarvis states that about 40% of the village's working population were engaged in these industries at the turn of the century.

Let us first of all deal with the pottery industry, which was **most** important during the 17th century, as is shown by countless references to potters in the Stock parish registers. The "Braintree Ringers' Urn" in Colchester Museum bears the inscription "Made In Stock, 1685". Further evidence is included in a Manor Roll of 1607 which states; "It is ordered that William Hankyn shall have removed Outside the streets of the vill of Stock all refuse, clay, dung, and other, things of that kind, which he by reason of his art of pottery Making cast out, raised up all around, and heaped up in the same (vill), and that he should remove it before the feast of St. John, under penalty of forfeiting to the Lord five shillings."

The potteries appear to have stood on the sites of "Brick House" and "The Lattices", and tiles also appear to have been made. Numerous fragments of pottery, and remains of kilns, have been found at "Brick House".

The pottery trade continued to be important in the 18th century, but died out at the beginning of the 19th century.

Allied to the pottery trade, and equally, if not more, important was brickmaking. According to L.D. Jarvis a brickworks existed in Mill Road up to about 1900, fifty people being employed. The last building to be built with local bricks was the Congregational Church. "Stock Bricks" were made with an mixture of ashes for their burning.

Evidence of brickmaking as early as 1606, is given by a court roll extract, which records the issuing of licences "for making clay - to complete with it bricks". These cost sixpence per year.

A Court Roll extract of 1607 refers to the digging up of loam on Stock Common. It states; "It was directed that all potters and others who in their own persons or by their servants dig loam and white clay on the waste called Stock Common for cups, tiles, bricks or other earthen vessels shall fill up their pits right up to the top immediately after digging and casting out the white clay."