

Milling

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In his fascinating book on "Yorkshire" Mr. J.S. Fletcher remarks that in Malton on a market day you can hear more talk of wheat and barley than in any other town of the same size, or even larger. The truth of this statement can be easily demonstrated, and it is not accidental that a certain part of Yorkersgate was once known as Mark-lane. The corn trade in Malton is still of great importance, and the kindred business of flour milling continues to occupy a prominent position. Malton possesses two flourishing milling businesses, and the mills along the side of the river give the town an air of industrial importance.

A recent article in our "Bygone Maltonians" series dealt with the late Mr. William Metcalfe, who was the well-known principal of the firm Messrs. W. Metcalfe and Sons, Castlegate and Yorkersgate, although it should be borne in mind that the firm goes back several generations. In pre-railway times Castlegate and Low-st. was the most important part of the town so far as concerned industries, which comprised a tanyard, three flour mills, four breweries, several coal staithes, and later a biscuit mill. From these centres the district extending over twenty miles was supplied, and consequently this part of the town was exceedingly busy. In those days corn intended for grinding purposes was brought to Malton from the district farms by road, and the unloading of the large wagons gave employment to a number of local labourers, who were dubbed "Butcher-corner men." From the fact that they used to congregate at Butcher-corner when waiting for work. It was no uncommon thing for Wheelgate and Castlegate to be lined with wagons awaiting their turn to enter the cornfactors' yards to be unloaded.

Messrs. Metcalfe had a large number of vessels on the river, which were used for conveying grain to

the West Riding, and returned from the collieries laden with house and engine coal. In a recent interesting speech Ald. R. Metcalfe said he could remember as many as seventy vessels plying backwards and forwards bringing grain and coals from and to Malton. All this has been done away with, owing to the advent of the railway, and the Alderman added that he believed his firm was the last which had "one single, solitary vessel plying on the river." He gave it as his opinion that the river navigation would not be reintroduced owing to its slowness when compared with the railway.

Messrs. Metcalfe were the first firm in Malton to follow the lead of the larger mills in introducing the roller system for the manufacture of flour. In March, 1898, Messrs. Metcalfe's mills were gutted by fire, and on the rebuilding of the premises they were fitted with the most up-to-date machinery.

Another old firm carrying on business at Malton is that of Messrs. Russells and Wrangham. The firm was founded by Mr. James Russell in 1771, and was known for many years by the name of James Russell and Son. In 1897 Messrs. Russells acquired the business of Messrs. William Wrangham Ltd., and the firm's name was then altered to its present title of Messrs. Russells and Wrangham Ltd.

Of the bygone milling firms perhaps the best known is that of Messrs. Hurtle who carried on business first at Old Malton and afterwards at the large premises in Railway-st., which they vacated on moving the business to Hull, where it is still continued. Then Messrs. Samuel and W. King had a mill near the present gas works, and this firm carried on a large trade with York shopkeepers. This was before the coming of the railway, and Messrs. King used to send flour to York by road. For many years the firm's wagons, which left Malton on Friday night each week, and returned from York the next day, were one of the principal means of communication between the two places. Large quantities of goods

were conveyed by the wagons, and even passengers were carried. There are still living several Maltonians whose first journey to York was accomplished in the wagons carrying the weekly supply of flour to the city.

There used to be an old windmill for the grinding of corn in Middlecave, on the site of the Uplands. The mill was carried on by Mr. David Blair, grandfather to Mr. D.S. Blair, and a large number of the smaller farmers took their corn to be ground at this mill. If

The End of the Metcalfe Mill

At some point the mill of W. Metcalfe & Sons became a subsidiary of Leetham & Sons, of York. In September 1928 it was taken over by Messrs. Rank, of Hull. At that time Mr. H. Wise was managing director and 'could not say whether it was intended to continue milling, or whether the premises would be used simply as a store.' [1] Clearly milling stopped within months as in March 1929 a

Re-construction of Russells & Wranghams Flour Mill

Messrs. RUSSELLS & WRANGHAM, Ltd., MALTON THE RE-CONSTRUCTION OF THE FLOUR MILL COMMENDABLE ENTERPRISE A representative of the Malton Messenger had the privilege of inspecting the new flour milling plant which Messrs. Russells and Wrangham, Ltd., brewers and millers, have installed at their extensive works in Castlegate, Malton. It will be remembered that at the annual meeting of Messrs. Russells and Wrangham, last month, allusion was made to the fact that the mill had been stopped for six months for the carrying out of a scheme of entire reconstruction by Messrs. Henry Simon, Ltd., of Manchester, now completed, and that one of the main objects of that reconstruction was to enable the company to use a larger percentage of locally-grown wheats, which would be of great benefit to the farmers in the neighbourhood.

That modest announcement was all that Messrs. Russells and Wrangham had caused to be made known concerning this important development, notwithstanding that a large sum had been spent in bringing the flour mill up to date by installing the most modern machinery to be obtained. For many years large employers of labour, it is within the range of possibility that the number of the

we remember rightly, the sails of the mill were blown off, and eventually the mill was pulled down and Mr. Ed. Rose built the Uplands on the site.

An article on the milling industry would hardly be complete without a reference to the Beck Mills, Norton, carried on by Mr. A.S. Ash. The mill has a most rustic appearance, and has been the hunting ground of many noted artists.

newspaper advertisement announced the 'Dismantling Metcalf's flour mill, Malton, all Machinery for Sale at knockout prices, and including Sifting Machines, Elevators, Worms, Dickey's, etc., and many items of interest to farmers. Send for catalogue. Richard Sizer, Ltd., Wilmington, Hull' [2] Further advertising took place in June, including the sale of the boiler [3]

company's employees may be further increased. That of course, depend in a large measure, on the support given to this old-established, and undoubtedly enterprising company. At present the work is being carried on in one shift, but we believe it is hoped that as a result of this latest development the demands for the product in this department of the company's vast concern will eventually lead to the employment of two shifts of workers.

The work of reconstruction, splendidly carried out by Messrs. Henry Simon, Ltd., Manchester, is on the "Simon" Alphega-Plansifter system, and turns out 4 1/2 sacks of flour per hour. A new 50in. "Reform" flour roller mill has been installed for the first and second breaks, and the "Alphega" system has been introduced in the first three breaks. These breaks and the Alphega stock, are graded on a "Simon" freeswinging plansifter, placed on the top floor of the mill. A reel deals with the stock from the fourth break. Several new rolls have been added on the reductions, and new centrifugals for dressing reduction stocks. The run has been completely re-arranged, and now spouting has been introduced throughout the mill. Indeed, a very complete reconstruction has been carried out, and Messrs. Russells and Wrangham now have a mill of which

not only they, but the town may be justly proud. The flour is in three grades - Top Patent, Malton Pride, and Double and Double Supers - and uniformity, and high quality are the keynotes in this busy hive of industry.

After seeing the network of machinery in motion, one could not easily escape the conviction that it is the last word in flour milling, with a smoothness in the running, and cleanliness everywhere.

The actual process of manufacture commences on the first floor. The wheat, already carefully cleaned, is fed to the first break roller, of which there are four and in all of which the grain passes through corrugated iron rolls, one surface holding it whilst the other shears it open, getting out the kernel. The broken-up product (now known as the break-stock) is lifted from the break-roller through beautifully finished spouting to the plansifter two floors above, the plansifter being a species of sieve in four compartments, which sifts the already available semolina, or finer constituents, from the coarser

portion, which goes down to the second break-roll, to come up for a second sifting. This alternate breaking down and sifting takes place four times in all, finding work for each of the break-rolls successively. The semolina passes from the plansifter to the purifier on the floor immediately below. This machine is another sieve, along which the stock is propelled, meanwhile being subjected to an air current from below, the effect of which is to lift the offals out of the mass until they come over the tail of the machine as sharps. The residue again drops to the roller floor to pass through the reduction rolls- smooth rolls which gradually reduce the it to flour. There are nine of these machines, and through the glass panels, what has gone in as coarse semolina can be seen falling beautifully white. Even then its journey through the spouting is not finished. It next goes to the top floor of the building, to the centrifugal or revolving drum covered with fine silk, through which it passes and is delivered to the sack. The driving power is in the basement, a Woodhouse and Mitchell compound condensing engine of 120 horse power [4].

References

[1] The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer, 26th September 1928.

[2] The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer, 16th March 1929

[3] The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer, 26th June 1929

[4] Malton Messenger, 23 June 1923