

Australian flour mills: Messrs W Webb & Co's New Roller Flour Mill, Sandhurst, Victoria



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There were few mills in Australia better known than the one described in *The Miller* of November 5th, 1888. It was situated in the main street and close to the shaft of the numerous gold mines in Sandhurst, so making it an object of interest to the numerous visitors to this “Golden City of Victoria”.

Few could visit Sandhurst without noticing the fine building. The layout of the mill, as seen in the illustrations, gives some idea of the arrangement of the machinery inside the mill; the engraving of the exterior, which was done from a photograph, shows the appearance of the building from the outside, although this apparently did not do full justice to the mill.

Mr W Webb built his mill in 1873, when no expense was spared to get “the most model stone mill” that could possibly be obtained. The stones and hursting frames came complete from Messrs Bryan Corcoran of Mark Lane, London, and ample dressing and purifying machinery was also added, fitting up the mill throughout in a style worthy of so fine a building.

The mill had always been known for the excellent quality of flour it supplied, the finest wheats obtainable being used. Although the district around Sandhurst was not considered the best for wheat growing, its situation was so central that almost every class of wheat grown in Australia could be procured there.

The flour from the mill enjoyed such a high reputation that Mr Webb was one of the last millers of note to feel the competition of the roller flour mills and to see the necessity for adopting the roller system.

After inspecting roller mills already erected in Australia by Messrs Thomas Robinson of the Railway Works, Rochdale, Mr Webb decided to place an order for the firm to put their most complete system of machinery into his mill. The mill was started up in May 1887 with the most satisfactory results.

The roller mill proper was a building with five floors, on which the machinery was arranged. The layout of the mill, complete with their new rotary scalping and purifying system, was similar to that used in other well-known mills already erected by Robinsons in Australia.

Mill layout: Cross section and longitudinal section



Messrs W Webb and Co's New Roller Mill, Sandhurst



Bryan Corcoran showrooms at 31 Mark Lane

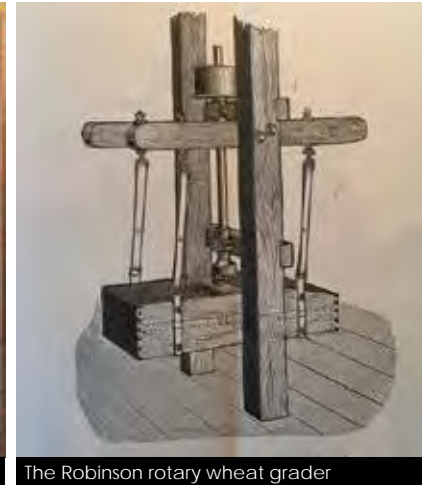
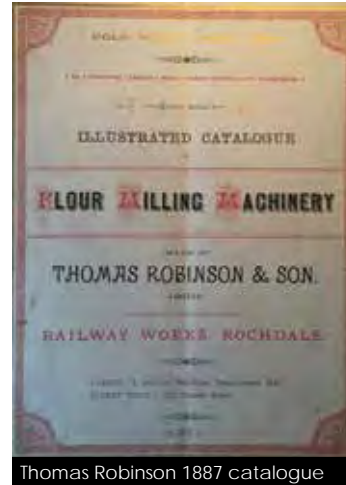


As the wheat was received at the mill it was either shot into the large bin or into a set of elevators that conveyed it to the bins supplying the wheat cleaning machinery. The wheat cleaning machinery was well arranged. The wheat first passed on to a sieve separator and then was graded on one of Robinson's rotary graders, preparatory to passing on to the oat and barley cylinders. The rotary grader comprised a rotary sieve suitably clothed, to which a fan could be attached when required.

It took up little room and had an enormous capacity as its rotary motion prevented the sieve getting clogged up with wheat. After this the 'drake' was removed by means of 'drake' cylinders. The wheat on leaving the cylinders was scoured and brushed on a Eureka horizontal brush.


The motive power required to drive the mill was obtained from a horizontal high-pressure steam engine having a 22-inch cylinder and 42-inch stroke. The steam was supplied by a large multi-tubular boiler and the power transmitted directly off the flywheel by one continuous rope on the main shaft in the mill proper.

Adjoining the mill were extensive warehouses capable of storing a large quantity of wheat and flour, and there was also a mechanics shop in which repairs could be executed. The two classes of flour manufactured at the mills were appropriately



named 'Golden Eagle and 'Silver Eagle' and these names earned a high reputation in Victoria and the surrounding colonies.

The head miller was Mr J Wigful from Sheffield, UK, where he had gained a thoroughly practical knowledge of Robinson and Co's systems in his uncle's extensive mills. Robinson machinery was rapidly growing in popularity in Australia and examples like Messrs Webb & Co's mills regarded as "a splendid flour mill, containing machinery which cannot be surpassed for excellence", would only go on to help Robinson's popularity increase.



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