

## W Nelstrop & Co Albion Flour Mills, Stockport, Cheshire

### Milling journals of the past at The Mills Archive

by Mildred Cookson, The Mills Archive, UK



Last year I had the pleasure of visiting this family run mill, seeing it running smoothly, with my visit enriched by that particular smell of freshly baked bread from their test bakery. This started me wondering, just how many tonnes of flour have been made in that near-200-year-old building?

According to *The Miller* (6 January 1896, p 879) the history of Nelstrop's can be traced back to the 1820s when William Nelstrop moved to the recently built steam-powered flour mill. It was managed by a Mr Oldfield, the maternal grandfather of George Nelstrop, the sole proprietor in the existing firm of W Nelstrop & Co.

Mr Oldfield also ran the Park Mill, in Stockport. Both mills were fitted out with 10 pairs of millstones. Park Mill burned down in 1868, which created the opportunity to increase the capacity of the Albion Mill, which was then greatly extended and worked well. In 1883 it was considered one of the best millstone plants in the kingdom.

Mr Nelstrop had, however, decided to adopt the roller system and instructed Henry Simon to equip the mill with a 15-sack roller plant. This order was promptly carried out, and proved a great success. Sadly, a disastrous fire on Wednesday April 5, 1893, destroyed the entire mill and wheat-cleaning plant. The massive

walls were so damaged that it was necessary to level them. The only things salvaged were the engine and boiler, and a few fittings in a building separate from the main block.

Mr Nelstrop, not put off by the fire, at once decided to make good the loss of this fine mill and set about the erection of a new building with the main lines drawn up by Henry Simon. The structure was designed to hold a mill plant of 15 to 20 sacks capacity, with a full wheat cleaning plant, and room being allowed for further expansion of the mill plant and with ample space warehousing.

In the meantime, a contract had been entered into, with Henry Simon, for the installation of all the necessary plants, as well as a system of grain silos. The new mill was started up on November 7, 1894, and "gave the most satisfactory results". The new mill extended beyond the 48 feet square foundations of the old and measured 154 x 62 x 55ft.

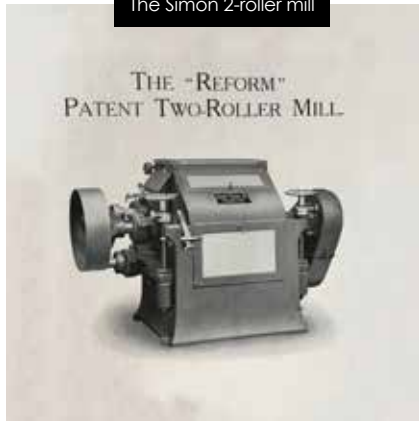


Entoleter at Castleford Mill, Yorkshire

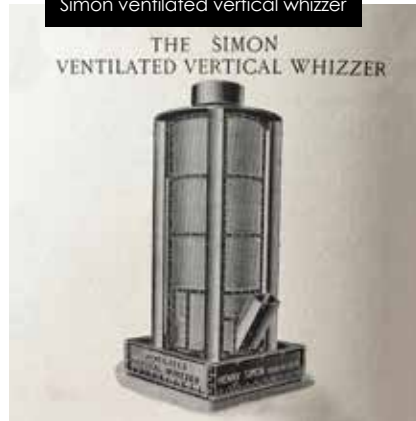


Roller floor (Courtesy of Nelstrops)

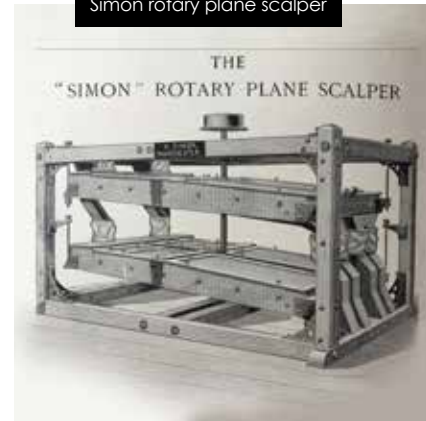
The Simon 2-roller mill



Simon ventilated vertical whizzer



Simon rotary plane scalper



The structure was divided into three sections by partition walls extending three foot through and above the roof. The first of these walls ran longitudinally through the centre, cutting one half off for the warehouse. A transverse wall bisected the other half, cutting 48ft from the lower end for the wheat silos and the wheat-cleaning department. The remaining 106ft constituted the mill proper, and was large enough to receive an additional 10-sack plant. A tower extending 20ft above the highest point in the roof contained a cistern capable of holding 10,000 gallons of water.

The mill was sited alongside the Stockport canal so was well situated for receiving the raw materials and distributing the finished produce. In the warehouse the flour was packed on the first floor. At one end of this floor was an iron trap door that opened when sacks were ready for loading into the barges beneath.

There were 10 silos for dirty wheat, each with a capacity for 1120 sacks together with four assimilating silos with a capacity of 500 sacks each. These were placed one above the other, one floor deep, but connected by a series of valves below the floors,

all of which could be opened or closed simultaneously by the movement of one lever. In addition there were five silos that could hold 200 sacks each for clean wheat.

Along with other machinery the wheat cleaning plant comprised two dustless rotary separators, four Cranston scourers, two Boby graders, 18 cockle and barley cylinders, two dustless Victor brushes and one Simon No 1 washer, two whizzers and one dryer.

The mill plant had 26 pairs of 40 x 10in rolls, two pair of 24 x 9in rolls and three pairs of 14 x 7 in rolls; eight rotary and six-reel scalpers and graders, 20 Reform purifiers and 20 three sheet centrifugal dressing machines. The Miller noticed that one of the double 40in rollers had the shop number 9999. The nominal capacity of the mill was 15 sacks, but could be exceeded. On the first floor there were 26 pairs of 40 x 30in rolls, mounted in four roll frames, two pairs of 24 x 9in rolls fitted in a four-roll frame and three pairs of 14 x 7 in rolls mounted in one frame.

On the second floor were 14 Reform purifiers in pairs, and on the third floor were six purifiers, eight rotary graders and scalpers, again arranged in pairs, while on the top floor were 20

**Milling and Grain** supports the aims and objectives of the **Mills Archive Trust**, based in Reading, England.

The history of milling - no matter where it has taken place - is being archived by the Trust.

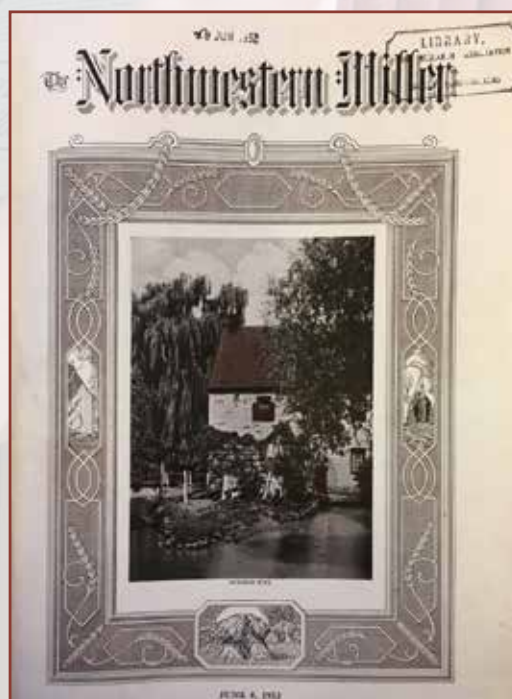
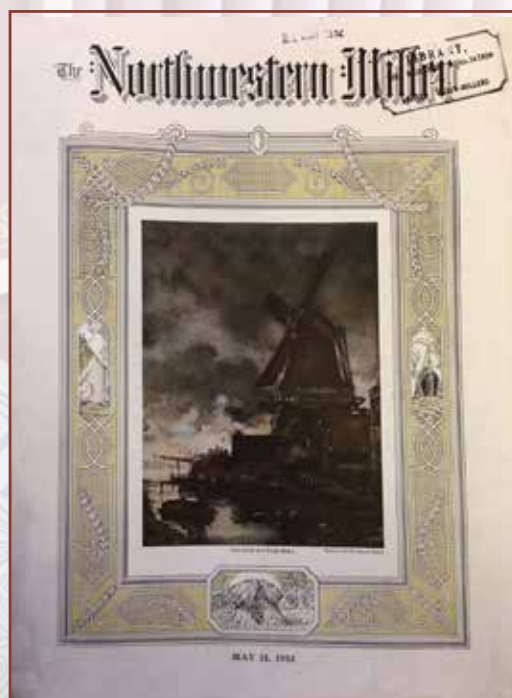
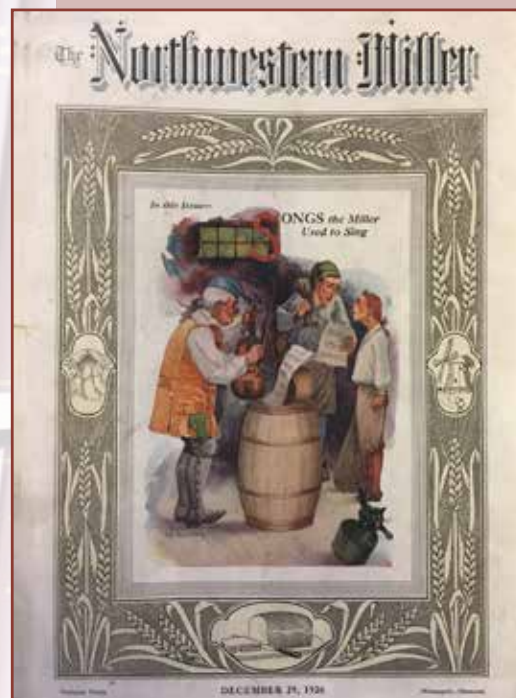
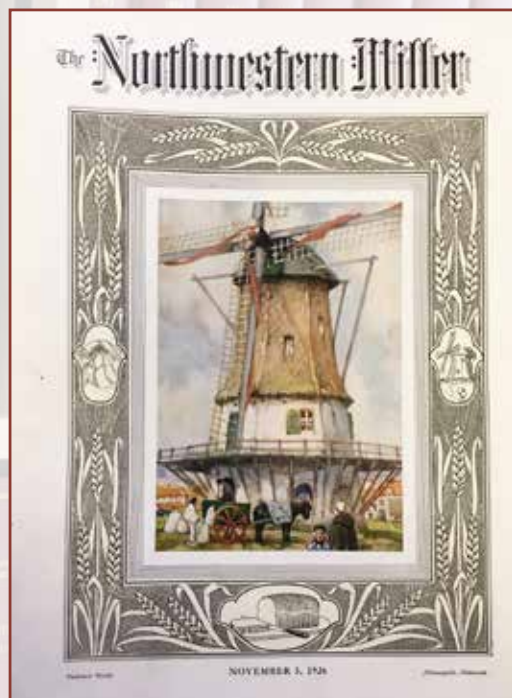
For well over 100 years milling technology has been global with many magazines serving or having served our industry from flour and food to feed and oilseed processing and now to fish feeds.

A most recent contribution to the Trust's collection is a complete century of past edition of the now out-of-print 'North-Western Miller' from the United States.

We are proud to present here, front cover illustrations from this valued and long-serving publication as a visual reminder of the important contribution past magazines provided to our industry.



**YOUR GLOBAL PARTNER**



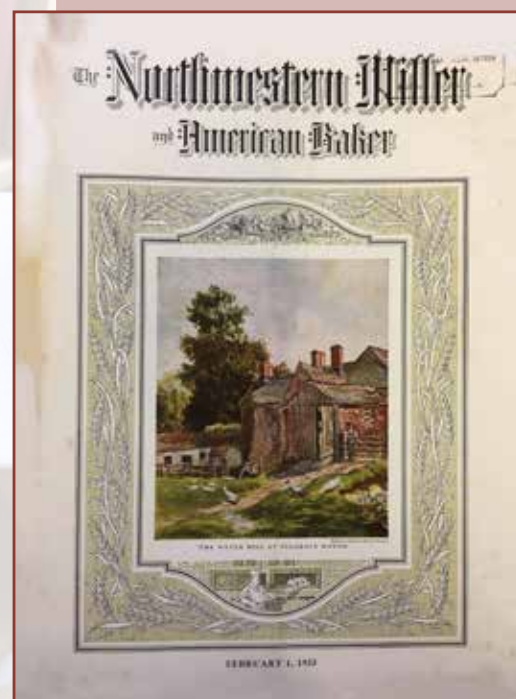
## Art in the Archive

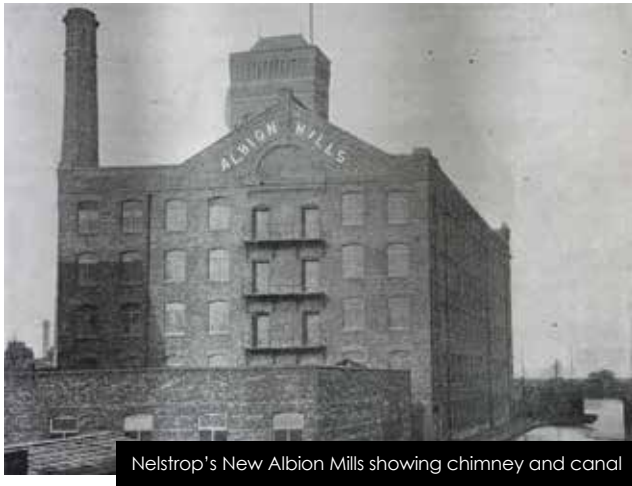
We are a charity that saves the world's milling images and documents and makes them freely available for reference. We have more than two million records. We aim to cover the entire history of milling, from its ancient origins up to the present day. Find out what we have and how you can help us grow.

[millsarchive.org](http://millsarchive.org)

The Mills Archive Trust  
Registered Charity No 1155828

# Mills Archive





Nelstrop's New Albion Mills showing chimney and canal



Albion Mills Stockport in the 1970s (Mills Archive)

centrifugals and six reels, placed two-high.

The motive engine for the mill was a horizontal compound condensing type identical to that saved from the fire, built by Murgatroyd of Stockport. Both in the construction and fitting out of the mill every endeavor had been taken to prevent a fire, there being no communication between the mill and the cleaning department, or between the latter and the warehouse or packing room, or between the warehouse and the mill, other than by outside iron galleries.

During the Second World War all the central Manchester roller mills were destroyed and family mills, like Nelstrop's in the suburbs, stepped up production to meet the urgent needs of the people. A second mill was added to the site in the 1990s and continues to run to this day. It is interesting to note that during the excavation for a new office complex a millstone was discovered. Was this millstone evidence of a windmill which originally stood on the site

The family was the first to use the Simon Entoleter milling system which enabled the control of a much higher level of water absorption. In the 1990s when the second mill was built they were the first millers in the world to commercialise the use of Peritec in flour milling, a process which removes the outer layers of bran from the wheat before milling. This, in turn, produced a flour of brighter colour and free of bran specks while retaining the nutritional components.

The holdings at the Mills Archive mean that I can only provide geographical and historical snapshots. If you would like to know more please email me at [mills@millsarchive.org](mailto:mills@millsarchive.org)

