

**ROBERT BOBY LTD**  
**ST. ANDREW'S WORKS.**  
**BURY, ST. EDMUNDS.**

## Robert Boby Ltd of Bury St Edmunds

by Mildred Cookson, The Mills Archive, UK



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

According to The Miller of 4 October 1909, most millers, particularly the traditional ones, knew the name of Robert Boby as the manufacturer of the mill machinery needed in the process of grain milling. His impressive premises were situated in Bury St Edmunds, the historic market town in county of Suffolk in the UK.

Sixty years earlier, Robert, the founder of the business, was an ordinary ironmonger. Living where he had ample opportunity to study the needs of a wheat-producing district, and his observations and inventive genius led him to patent and produce a machine for separating corn from chaff and dust.

The demand for this machine, which he constantly improved, was so great that in 1856 he gave up his retail business and devoted all his time to manufacture. He was hoping to become a worldwide name.

By 1909, The Miller affirmed that there were few in any branch of the corn trade across the world, who did not know what a Boby machine was. The late Mr Boby had retired from active management of the business some years previously.

He left his partner and relative, Mr Mumford, at the head of affairs, although much still depended on the efforts of Mr Boby who could often be seen in Mark Lane in London.

The Boby machine was being used increasingly by maltsters, which was good news for Mr Boby. The company turned into a limited concern in 1898 and two years later, Mr Sidney Allingham and Mr Arthur G Bristow became directors.

#### Made from plain smooth, rolled zinc sheets

The St Andrew's works of the firm covered around six acres

in the centre of the town. The article describes in some detail how the firm manufactured cockle and barley cylinders, one of their main lines. They were made from plain smooth, rolled zinc sheets with all the work in connection with the cylinders carried out in their own works.



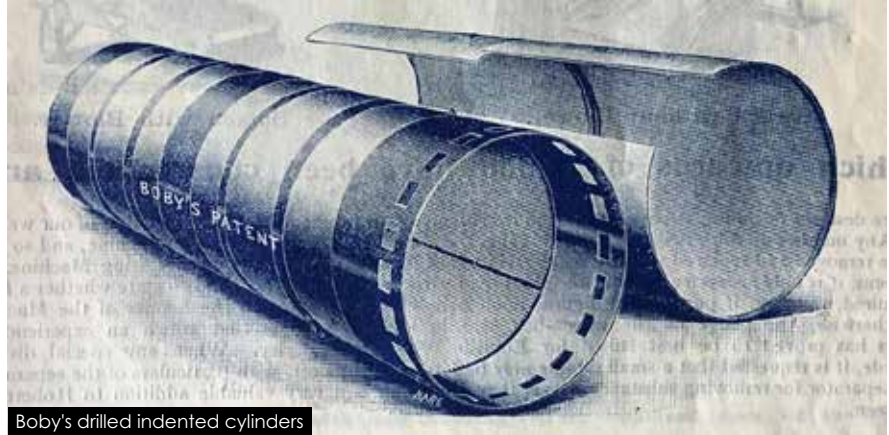
Boby's "Eclipse" oat cutter



Boby's latest winnowers



A corner of the machine shops



Boby's drilled indented cylinders

In one part of the works the machine shops were fixed with a number of special drilling machines for drilling the necessary indent in the zinc sheets.

Each drilling machine looked like a combination of drills and planing machines, with a large travelling bed plate to which the sheets of zinc were attached. Above and across the bed a row of drills extended, set at the double angles required to drill the special indents.

One of the angles was set to allow for the inclination of the cylinder when at work. A dozen or more indents were drilled at once, the actual number was regulated by the size and pitch of the indents, so that on the finished sheet there was no indication where one drill left off and the other began.

The speed and automatic accuracy of these machines was said to be marvellous. One machine was kept running just to create

special indents for extracting half grains of barley from malting barley.

Another machine worked on large indents for separating wheat and barley, and yet another for cockling. As these were standard sizes the machines seldom required altered settings.

After drilling the sheets were rolled through curving machines to bring them to cylindrical shape after which they were hooped and finished in the way they appear in mills and granaries.

Besides the angle of indention, the internal trays were edged with leather where they approached the side of the cylinders to catch the elevated material and the makers claim that this enabled a better separation. This tray was adjusted by means of a worm and pinion instead of the more usual handle and wing nut.

The Boby screens for corn were also well known. The screening beds were constructed of straight stout wire rods passing through



Building cockle and barley cylinders at the St Andrew's works

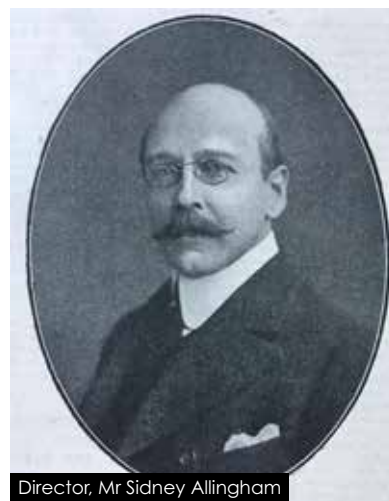
flat bars. These were punched precisely to create long parallel openings with a special cleaning device consisting of washers between each wire of the bed.

The screens were supplied to millers for grading wheat before the cockle and barley cylinders and were easily interchangeable.

### Very strong & neat oat clippers

Boby produced very strong and neat oat clippers that would clip from 60 to 80 bushes of oats an hour. Grain elevators were also manufactured with either iron or wood tops and bottoms with the trunks built of iron.

The firm manufactured a number of self-contained friction sack hoists. One in particular had two barrels, so that two loads could be lifted from opposite directions, or from the same truck or barge.



Director, Mr Sidney Allingham

Both chains could be worked independently or at the same time without interfering with each other. Their malting machinery was popular, and they had fitted out many of the great maltings, supplying them with every requisite, including their powerful malt rollers.

The blacksmiths' shop had a long row of forges and anvils arranged with the object of saving useless manual labour as well as a powerful steam hammer to help the heaviest forgings. The foundry, located near the railway, was a large lofty building with the usual cranes.

Boby winnowers were much sought after. At the time of the article, the number stored with the other finished machinery in one of the large warehouses was described as rather stunning. Apparently orders often came in to clear out all their stock in one go except for a few that were always kept in hand.

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