



Castleford. Dam & Mill,

## *Thomas Allinson:*

### The doctor/miller struck off for advocating healthy eating

by Vaughn Entwistle, Managing Editor, Milling and Grain

**E**arly on in the COVID-19 pandemic, millers finally received the recognition they have long deserved as both print and television media covered their heroic efforts to keep the country in flour by doubling shifts, recruiting retired millers to return to work, and working 24/7 to keep the flour coming. One of the mills visited by a BBC film crew was Allinson's mill in Bishop Stortford in Hertfordshire, England. The original mill first opened in 1892, and was the brainchild of an ambitious entrepreneur, Thomas Allinson, who is

unique in that, in addition to being a qualified miller, he was also a practicing physician.

#### **Healthy food = healthy body**

Born in 1858 near Manchester, Thomas Richard Allinson qualified in medicine at just 21 years of age. Dr Allinson was keenly interested in nutrition and a dedicated practitioner of Naturopathy (a form of medicine that believes health can be maintained through the consumption of natural foods, rather than through the use of drugs). His ideas soon became known as "Allinsonian," and when he opened a practice in London, he advocated healthy eating and the benefits of wholemeal flour





in bread. In fact, he even authored two books on the subject: “A System of Hygienic Medicine” and “The Advantage of Wholemeal Bread.” In 1892 he followed his own words with deeds when he purchased a stone grinding mill in North London and established the ‘Natural Food Company.’

He then followed up by opening his own bakery producing wholemeal bread. But, at the time, many of Allinson’s beliefs were deemed radical by the medical establishment. In 1892, the Royal College of Physicians ridiculed his theories and he was struck off from the medical register. Luckily, Allinson continued with his Natural Food Company that used the slogan “Health Without Medicine” and continued baking his stone-ground wholewheat bread. Sadly, Allinson had to wait until the First World War for medical orthodoxy to finally catch up when the

health-giving properties of wholewheat bread were officially recognised. The General Medical Council even offered to reinstate him as a doctor, but Allinson turned them down.

However, with official recognition of the benefits of wholemeal bread, demand for Allinson’s flours radically increased and the company continued to expand after Allinson’s death in 1918. Additional Allinson mills were opened in Newport, Monmouthshire and Castlerod, Yorkshire where the legacy of producing wholesome, high quality flour and nutritious bread carries on to this day.

Thankfully, Thomas Allinson’s contribution to health and nutrition has finally be recognised, and a portrait of Allinson now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in London—the physician/miller who was struck off for advocating healthy eating.