



## The Platt Flour Mills

by Mildred Cookson, The Mills Archive, UK



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

**M**y attention was recently captured by an article on a mill in Kent in the Christmas 1899 edition of 'Milling'. It told the story of a mill built at Boro' Green in middle of the county, a region I used to know well 20 years ago, when I was advising the National Lottery on a UK£1million project to repair seven Kent windmills.

The mills were located near Wrotham Station, in the village of Platt on the Swanley and Maidstone section of the London, Chatham and Dover Railway. Wrotham itself stands at the foot of the North Downs, which boast the highest point on Kent at 770 feet above sea level. They were built in 1880 by a Mr Jull.

At that time the mill was equipped with six pairs of millstones. The firm owned by Jull and his partner Mr Watts gave up the business after working the mill for ten years when Mr Frank West purchased the whole property and made it a commercial success.

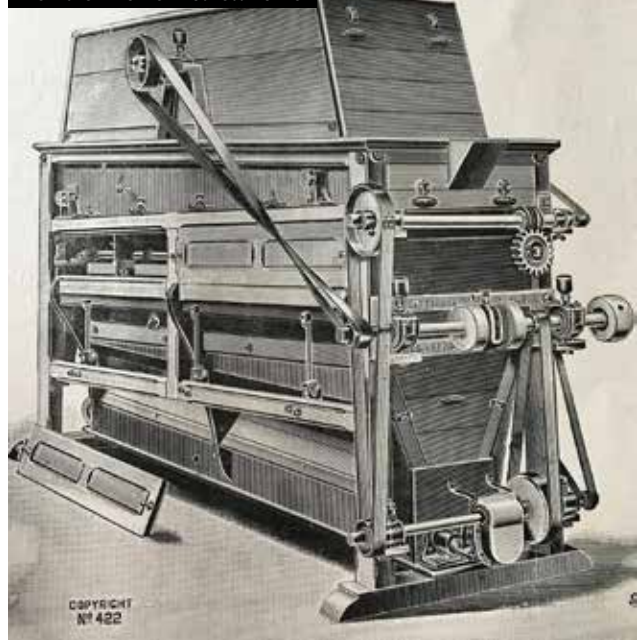
West, prior to taking on the Boro' Green mill, was mill manager for Alfred Robinson of Southall. Although he retained the millstones, combined with smooth rolls and purifiers, he was unable to compete with elaborate roller plants.

As competition was becoming keener than ever, and rather than allow his reputation for making standard grades suffer, he chose to follow the trend and become a roller miller. He was

determined that no expense would be spared to stand in the way of the Platt Mill being equal to the best.

After careful investigation of the different systems of the various flour mill engineers, his choice fell to E R & F Turner of Ipswich. The firm had a world-wide reputation as always at the

The Patent Turner Dustless Purifier



forefront for excellence of machinery in design, high finish, and durable qualities.

### Excellent work

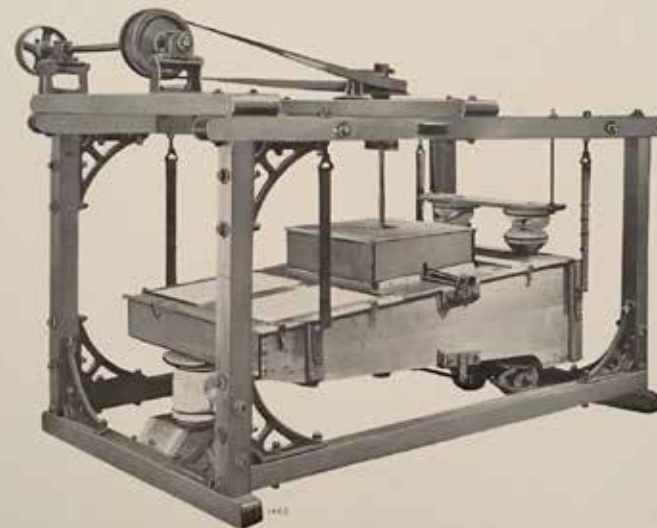
The system adopted for the breaks was the then fashionable one of three, the first being on a single pair of 18-inch x 9-inch rolls, the second and third were done on one of Turner's four roller mills with 18-inch x 8-inch rolls. The first and second break chop had the distinction of being treated on Turner's famous 'Vibromotors,' the third break went to a one and a half sheet centrifugal scalper.

The Vibromotor scalpers were provided with a second sieve, which was clothed with 36 GG, and which tailed over the coarse semolina which was perfectly dusted. The coarse semolina was sent directly to the purifier, whilst the throughs of these sieves went to a two-sheet centrifugal, when the break flour was dressed out and the overtails had been sent to No 2 purifier. The purifiers consisted of one double and one single and were of the Turner's latest at that time of the dustless type and did excellent work.

Reductions were done on four pairs of Turner's smooth rolls, two pairs 15-inch x 18-inch., and each reduction had a separate centrifugal one and a half sheets long. Attached to two of these were small Vibromotors, for dividing the overtails, so that at every step in the reduction process low grade material was extracted and sent direct to the place for which it was suited instead of going to the following reduction which would contaminate the flour from the same.

### Devoted to dressing flour

Another advantage of the Vibromotors was that the entire length of the centrifugals could be devoted to dressing flour



**THE "VIBROMOTOR"  
ROTARY SCALPER & SIFTER**

only, whereas a centrifugal that had a coarse meshed tail sheet in addition to the flour dressing portion of silk, would have had a dividing board between the two sections.

No miller had yet been convinced that the dividing boards could be guaranteed to prevent some of the offal stive flying about the tail section when passing through the joints into the flour dressing compartment.

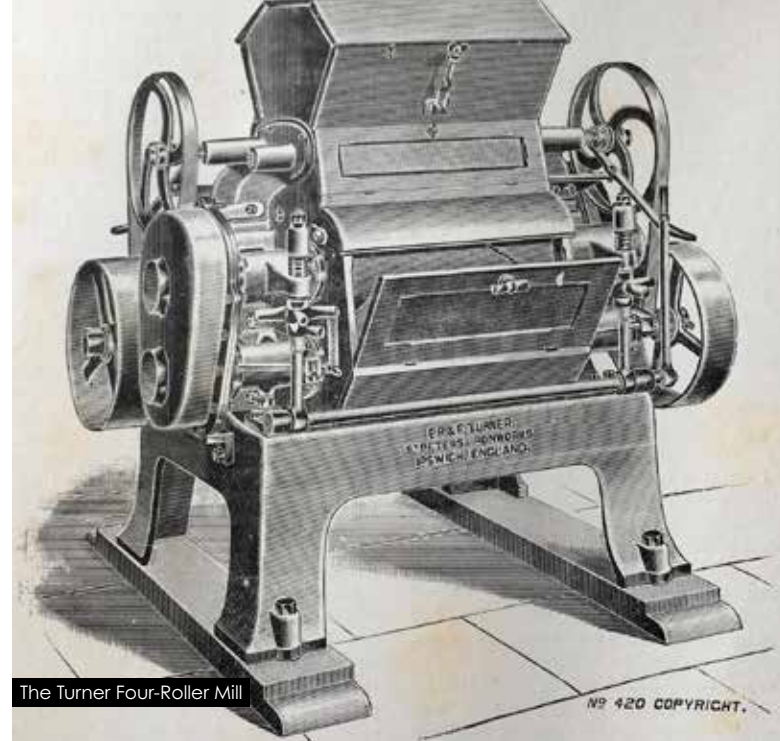
The Vibromotor sieves were so small compared to the large amount of work they were required to do that they would make a miller smile on seeing them for the first time. The report claimed that “those for small mills need be no larger than a ‘first violin case’ and a shoelace could drive them; they were indeed a small miller’s friend.”

West never lost sight of the three main factors behind his achievements: choice wheats; the best available machinery, and thoroughly trained skills for the operators. The working of the mill was ably supervised by him, with his intimate knowledge of every detail, as well as the main principles that went towards making a successful miller.

### Smartly appointed

The power plant comprised a Lancashire boiler with a working pressure of 80lbs, a high-pressure horizontal engine, 12 inches cylinder and 24 inches stroke, built by Messrs. Marshall and sons, of Gainsborough in Lincolnshire. Water could be drawn from a 90ft deep well in the mill yard across the road from the mill itself.

The mill also had a good provender trade, and opposite the mill stood a large warehouse and the mill offices, the former being exclusively used for the provender business. Hay-chopping machinery was sited in a building on the other side of the mill yard and was driven by a one-inch cotton rope from a counter



The Turner Four-Roller Mill

shaft over the well.

Adjoining the hay chambers were smartly appointed stables. To complete the picture, Mr West’s residence and garden was across the road and opposite the mill. He was a keen grower of fruit of all kinds, his favourite was “Cox’s orange pippins which grow to perfection in Kent.”

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