

JW Aizlewood's Crown Mills Sheffield Part 2

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Milling journals of the past at The Mills Archive



This article follows on from last month by describing changes at Crown Mills since 1906. The Miller in June 1928 described a visit to the mill following Henry Simon's reconstruction of the mill and its wheat cleaning department.

The firm, by 1928 named John Aizlewood Ltd, was founded at Masborough, a town near Rotherham in 1857, and was transferred to Sheffield in 1861 to the Albion Crown Mills. As business developed and larger premises were required, the founder, the late Mr John Aizlewood, purchased a site in Nursery Street and erected the current buildings, known as the Crown Flour Mills in 1878. By the time The Miller's visit occurred, the mill was marking its jubilee in the same year as that of the National Association of British and Irish Millers.

John Aizlewood died in 1907 and two years later the mill had become a private limited company, two of the sons being the directors and shareholders. George, one of his sons, owing to ill health, appointed James Gillespie as Director and Secretary of the firm.

Mr Gillespie had worked for 20 years at the Battersea Flour mills, run by Colonel Mark Mayhew. It is also notable that Mr. Gillespie became the Technical Editor of Milling for some time, whilst Mr Walter Peacock became the inside mill manager and was a man who had much experience in milling engineering and milling in general, having apprenticed under Mr Thornton of Retford.

Crown Flour Mills when first opened used millstones. There were fourteen pairs with the necessary accessories, such as sieves and bolters. This plant remained in use until 1884 when a roller system was installed and put into operation the following year. In 1905 a

thorough remodeling was undertaken under the guidance of the Mr GH Aizlewood, a son of the founder, who had been apprenticed to the trade and was a thoroughly practical miller.

Meeting the demands of modern competitive milling

The firm continued to make steady progress, and from time to time the mill was reconstructed in order to meet the demands of modern competitive milling. The question of power had to be considered and in 1912 a new horizontal compound condensing engine was put in by Pollitt & Wiggell, Ltd, of Sowerby Bridge. A new Green's Economiser was also installed and the steam raising plant completely overhauled.

Towards the end of 1926, Aizlewood's decided to carry out a major reconstruction in order to bring the plant right up to date. They placed the order with Henry Simon Ltd, Manchester. The contract included a complete overhaul of the wheat cleaning and flour milling plants and the installation of a number of Simon's latest type machines.

After the completion of the work, the screen room had been rearranged, with almost entirely new machines. A large-size Simon self-balancing separator with 'Juby' drive was added. A new Reform combined washer, stoner and whizzer (Mumford patent) and the latest type of 'Reform' conditioner was also installed together with six new conditioning bins.

This gave ample facilities for thorough washing and conditioning of the wheat. The screen room was now exhausted by means of a central system that made it a healthy department for the mill operatives to work in.

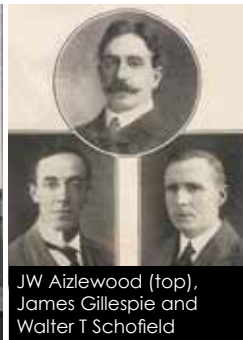
In the mill proper, a Germinal brush had been installed after the mill bins and immediately preceding the first break rolls. The wheat was then fed into a new Simon 60" x 10" four roller mill by means of an 'Exact' measurer following an Avery weighing.



The main roller floor



Aizlewood's Crown Mills Sheffield 1928



JW Aizlewood (top), James Gillespie and Walter T Schofield



Henry Simon's Reform wheat washing and stoning machine

The Alphega system had been adopted and this worked well, allowing the middlings to pass to their respective graders free from flour particles and bees wing. An elaborate system of grading had been adopted and the new Simon fanless purifiers dealt with coarse and medium semolina.

The reduction system included a B2 run and was extended down to N. The flour dressing was done on centrifugals, eight new three sheet Simon machines having been installed to give a clear dressing of flour and a thorough separation of dust stocks.

Four brands of flour were produced by the firm including Five Crowns, a top patent; Four Crowns, a second patent; Corona, straight run; and Three Crowns, a baker's grade. At the Sheffield Master Baker's Exhibition, held in the Cutlers Hall, Sheffield, on December 17, 1927, the gold medal and silver challenge cup of the Association were won by a user of Aizlewood's Five Crowns.

All trade of the mill was done within a radius of twenty-five miles and delivery of the products was done by means of the firm's own fleet of transport vehicles, which included a 5 ton Karrier, a three and a half ton Commer, and two Morris Commercial vehicles, with the mill running continuously, having a three-tier system in force.

The mill is still standing

I am grateful to Philip Aizlewood for enabling me to bring the story up to date. He is the last surviving family member who worked at Aizlewood's Mill before its closure as a flour mill in 1969.

“George Henry Aizlewood died in 1927, and his brother John William in 1929, his son, my father, Philip John took over in 1930 and ran the business until 1962 when ABF (Westons) bought the mill,” he writes.

“I worked at the mill as Mill Manager until 1966 when I emigrated to Canada. The good news is the mill is still standing, looking as good as it was when opened in 1861, and is now a business centre.”

www.aizlewoodsmill.co.uk



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