

Tide Mills, East Sussex

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When we hear the words 'tide mill' we tend to think of Woodbridge or Eling. What is found on the coast between Newhaven and Seaford is nothing like these, but once was. The remains are of a tide mill which was started in 1761 by Thomas Pelham and was not completed till 1788. The mill was built here after the River Ouse changed its direction and where it entered the sea from Seaford to Newhaven. As shingle built up and closed the Seaford section it became a tidal creek. This creek was situated in the manor of Bishopstone which at the time was owned by the Duke of Newcastle, who leased the land to three Sussex corn merchants who recognised the potential of a mill that the creek could power. This did prove the case although several times the mill was damaged by storms. Five pairs of stones were used to produce 3500lbs of flour which was taken either up the river by barge to Lewes or by sea to London.

Around 1800 Thomas Barton constructed a new 3-storey mill to house 16 stones. It then passed into different partnerships until William Catt took over in 1808; he continued to expand the site by adding cottages for the workers, these being built from the local flints from the nearby downs or beach, although the mill was brick built. He also provided schooling for the workers' children, a blacksmiths, carpenter's workshop, granary, stores, and an office building. To make life easier he built a communal mangle and coppers for washing clothes for the workforce. At one time a windmill was added so the mill could still be used when the tide was out; also a railway halt was built so grain could be taken to the station at Newhaven. The site became a small village by 1841 with over 60 workers at the mill.



After the mill was demolished in 1901 the villagers found employment either at local farms or at Newhaven port. The village was evacuated at the start of World War 2 and was demolished so it could not be used during an invasion.

Outlines of the buildings remain and the creek still flows through the sluice gates. There is a small car park at the side of the A259 with a short walk across the railway line that still serves Seaford.



