

Dewlish Mill, Dorset

Andy Fish

Information from the research of Tony Yoward



Postcard from the John Willows Collection



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Dewlish is a village a few miles north east of Dorchester. The watermill, which originally had an overshot wheel, is situated about three quarters of a mile north of the village on the Devil's Brook. The long building is constructed mainly of brick and flint and consists of the mill and mill house (complete with a bread oven), and also a mill cottage which is partly built of cob and was at one time stables and looks out onto an orchard.

The first mention of Dewlish Mill is in an Assize Roll of 1318, and involved a dispute over the ownership of land. It next showed up 482 years later in the land tax returns of 1780, when William Oxford owned the mill; he lived there until 1785, but in 1786 he let it to John Adams and John Michael.

In the 1841 census Levi Riggs is the miller. Four years later *The Tithe Rent Apportionment* records that Levi had four plots of land (one of which was a dwelling house), a gristmill, and an orchard; there is still an orchard attached to the property today. The parish records of Dewlish show that Levi had two brothers John and George. The 1851 census says that George had become miller and was employing two labourers. In the same census Levi is shown as having moved to Cheselbourne and had become a farmer employing 16 labourers and farming an area of 380 acres.

The 1861 census shows Stephen Cutler as the grist miller at Dewlish and *Kelly's Directory* shows him as a miller until 1875 when he became a farmer. No further references to a miller at Dewlish have been found which would suggest it was no longer operating as a mill, although it is still shown as a flour mill on the 1902 Ordnance Survey Map.

By 1900 the mill had passed into the hands of 'Old Farmer Kent' who had a reputation for being mean. By the 1920s it was in the hands of the Chester Estate and then in 1933 a Mr Frampton bought it; he also owned Manor Farm, Dewlish. Soon after this a misunderstanding led to the loss of the waterwheel. Some scrap dealers called and asked Mr Frampton if he had any scrap metal; he said they could have the old junk down at the mill, meaning the old rusty tools, buckets and things. When he next came to the mill he was flabbergasted to find that the dealers had taken his waterwheel away. Finally, in 1969 a Mr Phillips was looking for a holiday home and bought the disused mill with its two cottages. The mill cottage was grade 2 listed in 1987.