

Twyford's Historic Landscape:

The Mill at South Twyford

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Description

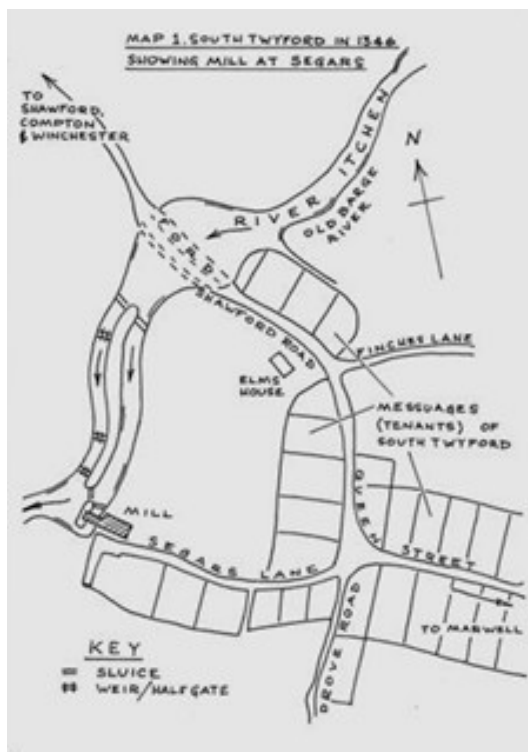
One of the views most looked at in our village is the one from Norris Bridge which carries the Shawford Road over the Itchen.

The river runs quietly and purposefully beneath. There is everything you could wish for in a river view, the fish, the plants and insects, the birds, the play of light and shade, the overhanging tree. Upstream the view is more open; the river winds towards the church, across the meadows, but down stream, after 50 yards or so, like the sacred Alph, it is lost to sight; it vanishes into a brick culvert with 6 arches and a trellis on top that blocks all further views.

If you stand on the Shawford side of the bridge, you can just see the some water flowing in a channel to the left but you cannot see where it goes or how far.

I suspect that few Twyfordians (or anyone else) have seen what the river does below this point; the next public view of the Itchen is a mile downstream, below the Malms, where the Navigation and the River come together again.

So our map 2 is the guide to what happens in the 300 yards or so below Norris Bridge.



Map 1 South Twyford in 1346 showing Mill at Segars (left), Map 2 Twyford: Norris's Bridge to Segars, 2012 (right), numbers **1-10** refer to locations identified in the text

At the six arches...No 1... the river divides; straight on, through the brick arches, the level of the water drops by five or six courses of bricks so, about half a metre, but giving a sharp increase in speed.

This is the main river which continues in a channel ...No 2; the 1:2500 OS map of 1936 shows it as 7m wide, the width of the Six Arches, but my measurement is about 10 metres. It runs straight for 110 metres down to a low weir...No 3. About 15 metres further on there appears to be another low weir...no 4.

Throughout this stretch, the 7m- 10m channel has been narrowed to about one third of the more normal width of the Itchen. Below the downstream weir, the river widens out to a more natural and irregular width, with much less evidence of interference.

Back at the top, the river is divided to the left of the brick arches in a channel of approximately 12 metres width, narrowing to about 10m. This is the Segars Drain... No 5. It flows at a much gentler gradient, parallel to the main river and is retained at a higher level by a bank which divides it from the main river. Its flow is regulated by the hatches within the Six Arches. The Drain continues along the edge of the garden of Elms House and its neighbours, then past the yard of Segars farm....No 6. Here the retaining bank narrows and the two watercourses are tight up against each other, but with a one metre difference in level.

In the bank is a hatch from the Drain into the main river...No 7. Where this discharges into the lower of the river channels, there is a deep pool, formed it would seem by a strong flow over a long period. Segars drain then continues past Segars Farm...No 8... through the Water meadows ...No 9... of Manor Farm past Twyford Moors House and so eventually back into the Itchen.

There is, so far, as the reader will have noticed, no mention yet of a mill, let alone the mill of South Twyford which Mike and I have boldly illustrated in the third drawing. However if you look at map 1 and you will see " mill" at the bottom of Segars Lane. Today there is no sign of a mill; there is no memory of one; no street or place name; none of the local histories refer to one in this location.

How to explain all this? Is there an explanation for the surviving watercourses which can be reconciled with the known history?

As we have seen in my earlier articles , there were five or six mills in Twyford in the Domesday Book of about 1080 . In the Pipe Roll of 1301 (translated by Mark Page and published by HRO) there are five mills and all are named. The mill of South Twyford is one of these.

Where is South Twyford ?

The next step is to locate South Twyford, Here there is ample evidence which is summarised in the excellent survey of Twyford in the Winchester section of " Historic rural settlements" by Hants CC in 2004. This suggests that North Twyford is the original location of the village; that is where the church has been back to Saxon times and it has its own mill "the mill of North Twyford" ...now Hockley Mill.

North Twyford Mill is recorded in the 1209 Pipe Rolls, which suggests that South Twyford is already a distinct part of the village. Historic Rural Settlements even suggests a pre Domesday foundation for South Twyford, and that it was a planned settlement. My own training as a town planner leads me to the same conclusion.

The plan of Queen street shows to this day small tight rectangular plots, which are the classic “messuages” of the manorial village. Most villages of this age do not have the same formal arrangement. One or two of the houses of this part of Twyford date from the late 1300’s and several from the 1400’s; many front the street,- again typical of a village street of that age.

Again it is typical of a manorial village to have its own mill, provided the water power was available, so the existence of a Mill of South Twyford fits in with the normal manorial practice as well as being confirmed by the 1301 pipe roll.

A location at the bottom of Segars lane makes it both close and convenient to the people who used it. The mill of south Twyford fits snugly into the yard of Segars farm. So two of the tests for the location of a mill are met, namely that of access and the need for it. All this is consistent with Map1 which suggests the layout of Twyford in 1346; it is remarkable how close this is to the present day.

Would a mill work in this position?

Two further and basic requirements for a mill are adequate flow and adequate head of water.

The Itchen at this point gives both. To create the head, the weir is built at **1**; this is far enough below the ford, **10**, so as not to interfere with its use by creating excessive depth. Segars drain gives it both an ample flow. The fall down to river level is about 1 metre. The channel to the left, (the eastern one) **5**, is the mill leat and this maintains an artificial height for the head. Between the mill leat and the river and shown on the OS maps is the sluice...No **7**. This is the bypass which allows the mill to be shut off for repairs and to regulate variations in flow; the deep pool at its foot is an indication that it flowed constantly for long period. As Mike’s drawing of Twyford in 1346 shows, the mill wheel would then be immediately below this sluice with its race discharging into the river. This channel for the mill less easy to identify but there is a dry, grass channel below where mill is shown on Map1.

The mill leat would have stopped at this point; Segars Drain was probably not extended until it was put to the separate use as a feed for the Mildmay’s water meadows in the 1700’s.

When was the mill of South Twyford first built?

There is no easy answer to this question. The mills of Shawford and North Twyford are older; both are close to South Twyford and could have provided the necessary milling for the villagers. There are however tantalising references to the building of a new mill in the Pipe Roll of 1209:

“Expenses of the mill – in iron bought for making the spindles, mill-rinds and picks [for dressing mill stones] for the new mill, and for the Shawford mill, and the Compton mill, 4s. 3 d. In wages of the smith 12d. In planks bought for making mill buckets, and for the repair of the wheels of the new mill, 10d. In wages of the carpenter, for the same, 3d. For the purchase of one mill-stone for the aforementioned mill, 21s.” (trans: Charlotte Bellamy)

When did the Mill of South Twyford cease to operate?

The lack of any reference to the mill of South Twyford in the Pipe Roll of 1409/10 (ed Mark Page: published HRO) suggests that it was a casualty of the Black Death and that, from then on, Shawford Mill and the Mill of North Twyford, were the mills for Twyford Village; however there are about 250 of the Pipe Rolls which have yet to be read in the sort of detail which the 1906 translation of the 1209 Roll and Mark Page’s more recent ones, have made possible. So it is best not to be too dogmatic.

To sum up, Mike and I have, in this article, located the mill of South Twyford and made the first drawing of it and suggested a date for the mill and the weir and the Segars carrier of 1209 .

We suggest that the channels were constructed then and have remained in place to this day. Are we right? The existence of the mill of South Twyford in the yard of Segars Farm is, I hope, plausible enough to encourage some one to explore the ground further.

Note: The name Segar occurs as one of the tenants of Twyford in the 1209 Roll; it seems likely that people in those days were named after the places they lived in; Hockley is a similar Twyford case. The A/S “sigan” is the verb “drain”.