

The Origins of My Interest in Watermills and particularly Gomshall Mill, Surrey

Nigel Harris

My interest in watermills began whilst carrying out some family history research in 2003. I discovered that my 4 times great grandfather (David Harris) had leased Gomshall Watermill in Surrey in 1752. He obviously did well, as he was able to buy the mill from the Lord of the Manor of Shere in 1759. The Harris family operated the mill until 1806.

Further research would indicate that David did not originate from Surrey but was most likely the David Harris baptised in Crondall, Hampshire in 1719. Maybe he obtained his milling experience somewhere in Hampshire.

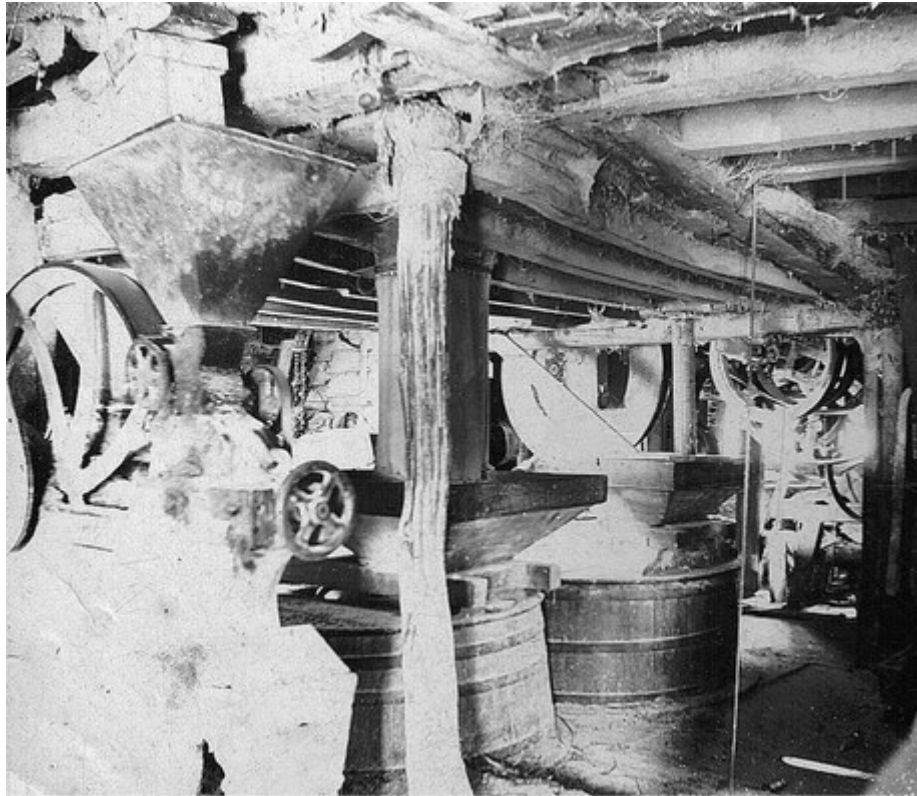
In 2005, I wrote and published a booklet entitled "Gomshall Mill the Harris Millers and their Shere Connection" (ISBN 9780955150104) and shortly afterwards I was asked to give an illustrated talk to members of the "Shere, Gomshall and Peaslake Local History Society". At this meeting, a gentleman came up to me and introduced himself as a Robin Egerton, a descendant of the last miller of Gomshall Mill.

Through the courtesy of Robin, I have obtained a copy of what I believe is the only known photograph of the stone floor of the mill, which was taken circa 1930. Robin is happy for me to share this picture and another one with readers of the 'HMG Newsletter'.

The other photograph shows Gomshall Mill bridge and ford with the mill in the background. The gentleman in the cart is William Egerton who was the last owner of the mill.

According to Derek Stidder ("The Watermills of Surrey"), this two-story mill worked commercially until its closure in 1953 and lay derelict until 1964, when it was purchased and converted into a restaurant and antique shop.

The mill had contained line shaft drives from two waterwheels. Although the waterwheels remain, very little of the mill drive machinery is evident.



The Stone Floor of Gomshall Watermill c. 1930 *Image © Nigel Harris*



The Last Miller of Gomshall Watermill - William Egerton *Image © Nigel Harris*