

Donnington Mill House and Garden

One visitor to Ashok and Jane Vaidya's Open Garden day in June was Tom Hine. Whilst researching his family tree Tom traced one of his ancestors to be milling at Donnington Mill, Berkshire. Ashok had already shared the mill's history with Tom who then took the opportunity to see around the part of the mill which is in the Vaidya's domain, and get the feel of the house his Great Great Aunt and her husband lived in. Tom has written this account of his research for us, ending with a plea for help in learning more.

A former journey-man-miller and his wife at Donnington Mill.



Ashok explains all to Tom



The Turbine



Enjoying the garden

Caroline HINE was born June 1819, the eldest daughter of Richard and Esther (nee RAGGETT of Mortimer) HINE at Reading where her father was working at Abbey Mill as a 'Miller's Servant' and residing in the Master Miller's house at 11 Friar St. Reading, (possibly Mr BARTHOLOMEW's). *(Richard must have simply walked across Friar St to St Laurence's Church almost opposite on the day he married Esther about 1812!)*. By 1823 Richard was the miller at Hyde End Mill, Brimpton, Hampshire, on the River Enborne.

In 1832 Henry EVERARD a journey- man-miller from Hartley Wespall, Hampshire, took over Woolhampton Mill owned by George FRANKUM & Sons only three miles or so from Hyde End Mill and then some six years later Caroline married Henry. A son Richard Henry EVERARD was born in 1840. *(Notice she named her son firstly after her father and secondly after her husband. She was very close to her father and sadly it was she who found her father dead when he was only 48 years old. She was the 'informant' on the Death Certificate)*.

Caroline and her little family were still at Woolhampton in the 1841 Census, but by 1847 they had moved on to the more powerful Donnington Mill together with Henry's brother Edward to work the mill. So now my Great Great Aunt was ensconced at this impressive building. I am not sure how long they were at this mill, but for some unknown reason by 1854 they had moved on to Hamstead Marshall Mill on the River Kennet near Kintbury and from here on nothing further is known of them.....

So, if you the reader do know anything further, I would be delighted to hear from you! I also notice that George and William EVERARD were milling at Caversham Mill, at Reading, but I've no idea if they were in any way connected to my Henry. **e-mail:** tomhine@hotmail.com)

Berkshire's Donnington Mill - A brief history



Donnington Mill House (by the red car) and Mill to the right: an aerial view taken circa 1963

Donnington Mill is sited on the River Lambourn to the north of Newbury in Berkshire. The village is described as *Deritone* in the Domesday Survey, the name being derived from the Celtic '*dwr*' which is common in river names, and '*ton*' denoting the village on or by the water. In 1167 it became *Dunintona* and in 1236 came closer to the present spelling and pronunciation *Doniton*. William Lovet held the land for the King Edward; the mill was assessed at 15 shillings.

In 1367 the builder of Donnington Castle, Sir Richard Abberbury, appears to have created a second mill as two mills are recorded as 'contiguous' down the centuries until more recent times; one belonged to the Castle estate and the other to a family who also formerly owned the adjacent Donnington Priory.

Later, the civil war battles took their toll on the mills as Donnington village was burned by the Royalists, led by Sir John Boys to hamper the Parliamentarians. Both mills were rebuilt when the dust settled and peace reigned but the mill caught fire again in 1733. At that time they were separately owned by Mr Winchcombe Howard Packer and Mr Thomas Cowslade; subsequently Mr Packer's mill, plus mill house and outbuildings, was let to Mr Cowslade for a 100 year term at an annual rent of £10, dependant on the mill being rebuilt by him. Riots at Shaw Mill, not far away, which were against the high prices of flour in 1766, do not appear to have reached Donnington. All was well until 1889 when serious floods meant that sections of walls had to be opened up to release the water and presumably milling was held up for some while. In 1892 many ancient relics were found whilst in 1896 the river was found to be full of dead fish but the cause isn't stated.

Donnington Hospital accounts reveal that the last sacks of corn were milled in 1900. The buildings were put to a variety of uses including as a soldiers' billet in WWI; a soft toy factory was founded there in 1918 by Mr J W Lawrence, employing 50 girls, but 2 years later on, 20th July

1920, the mill burned down for the third time and was then used as a store until in the 1970s when part was converted to a private house. The remains of the wheel and a complete New American turbine form part of the Mill House's estate. The New Millennium began with new owners Jane and Ashok Vaidya moving in, and as you know, Ashok is an HMG member and our webmaster.

Written by Sheila Viner from Ashok's history notes and with his kind assistance.