

The Rex Wailes Collection

Hallam Ashley and Roller Mills

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In previous articles in *Milling and Grain* magazine, I have mentioned Rex's productive working relationship with the important mill artists Karl Wood, Thomas Hennell and Vincent Lines. Over more than half a century he also built strong, mutually beneficial partnerships with several significant photographers, influencing their work and ensuring an unparalleled record of the decline of traditional mills.

Early photography of mills, fueled by the Victorian and Edwardian appetite for postcards, concentrated on landscape-style images of mill exteriors, the more romantic the better.

This was to change when mill expert Rex Wailes met freelance photographer Hallam Ashley. This was in 1926 when they were both in their mid-20s. It was the beginning of both a lifelong friendship and a lifelong love of wind, water and steam mills. Rex asked Ashley if he could photograph any interesting mills he came across in his journeying. He went on to take many mill photographs for Rex's books, and the two often spent short breaks together.

Hallam Ashley's photographs, along with the drawings of Vincent Lines, ensured the lasting popularity of Rex's main work "The English Windmill". As I mentioned last month, The Mills Archive has a few copies of the book available free to any reader prepared to make a small donation to cover post and packing. If you would like to email enquiries@millsarchive.org, we will operate on a first-come, first-served basis!

Rex's collection contained a significant number of Ashley's photographs so we have scanned them all and you can inspect a treasure trove of more than 1500 beautifully taken images at <https://catalogue.millsarchive.org/hallam-ashley-mill-photograph-collection>.

The glass plates shown here are representative of his focus on interiors and the care he took in setting up photographs. This sample from the 1920s relates to the early introduction of roller mill machinery.

Deben Mill in Wickham Market, Suffolk was naturally equipped with a set of roller mills manufactured by local millwrights and engineers Whitmore and Binyon. Similarly, Walter Green's Castle Mill in Beccles was equipped by local engineers ER & F Turner.

The purifiers in Caudwell's Mill in Derbyshire were made by Henry Simon Ltd. and were probably installed in the 1930's as there is a Henry Simon drawing dated 9/12/1930 proposing to introduce new purifiers.



Purifiers, Caudwells Mill, Rowsley, Derbyshire



Walter Green & Sons rollers, second floor, Castle Mill, Beccles, Suffolk



Whitmore & Binyon roller mills, Deben Mill, Wickham Market, Suffolk