

Knapp Roller Mills Christchurch near Bournemouth



Milling Journals of the past at the Mills Archive

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During my researches at the Mills Archive in Reading, England, I sometimes come across material from the beginning of the last century relating to successful country mills. As a water miller for 30 years,

albeit with French millstones, I have always found these fascinating accounts. Over the next few months in *Milling and Grain* I will highlight some of the more interesting. This first appeared in *The Miller* in March 1904.

The water-powered, Knapp Roller Mills were situated in the beautiful open countryside approaching Christchurch, near Bournemouth, on the river Avon under the shadow of Christchurch Priory. The mills were in the ownership of Messrs Barnes and Maidment at the time the article was written and *The Miller* was taken round the mill and explained the workings by a Mr Troke, “one of Mr Armfield’s able representatives”.

In 1898 the mill was gutted by fire, but rebuilding commenced immediately and the mill was fitted out with a JJ Armfield & Co, model one and a half sack plant. There were three double sets of 24 x 7in rolls for three breaks and three reductions.

By a clever arrangement there were two undershot waterwheels, one at each end of the main line shaft. This was said to equalise the strain and add stability and regularity to the whole structure. Each of these wheels could, however, be run independently when required; particularly when, for instance, the auxiliary provender plant, which was a valuable addition to the mills business was needed. The water wheels were both 14ft diameter by 5ft wide.

The mill was fitted out with the usual complement of cleaning machinery, along with the usual arrangement of Armfield’s in putting the machinery on two floors only of the mill.



Above the rollers are the purifiers, one double scalper, a chop reel, three centrifugals and a bran duster.

The mill owners did not follow the usual custom of other mills in the making three or four runs of flour from the same mixture of wheat, but studied the individual requirements of its customers and were able to make practically straight run flour, which met all the requirements of their competitors.

The Mills Archive Trust, a registered charity is actively collecting material, records and anecdotes relating to the early years of roller flour milling as well as more contemporary material where that is available. If you would like to help please email me at mills@millsarchive.org

