

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE HISTORICAL MONUMENTS OF ENGLAND
YORKSHIRE TEXTILE HILLS SURVEY**

**GEDHAM MILL, OSSETT, WEST YORKSHIRE (N.230):
REPORT AND DOCUMENTATION**

DECEMBER 1986

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**ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE HISTORICAL MONUMENTS OF ENGLAND
RCHME, THE WHITE HOUSE, 10 CLIFTON, YORK**

GEDHAM MILL, OSSETT, WEST YORKSHIRE (SE 278 206) (N.230)

INTRODUCTION

Gedham Mill was built as a shoddy and mungo factory in 1897-8. Built originally by R. E. Phillips, an established mungo manufacturer, it was worked after Phillips' death in 1899 by John Henry Glover and Walter Ellis, originally Phillips' partners, and after 1918 sole shareholders in the firm of Glover and Ellis. The mill comprises a group of brick buildings, mostly single-storeyed, with most of the unpowered processes - storage and sorting - concentrated in the largest block, a multi-bay shed, and the powered processes - rag grinding and scribbling - restricted to a separate range with an attached steam engine house. Other processes - carbonizing and dyeing - were carried out in a third range of buildings. A contemporary account describes the installation of electric lighting and of telephone.

HISTORY

Gedham Mill was built by Robert E. Phillips after 1897 as a mungo manufacturing works. It was built on land put together in a number of purchases; by 1897 three pieces of land had been amalgamated (one of 3 roods and 29 perches, another of about 1 acre, the third of 760 square yards) and later purchases (of 1395 square yards in 1898, and of 1021 square yards in 1900, all plots shown in Document 8) added land to the north. The resulting plot forms a long, narrow parcel of land, set back from the main thoroughfare in Ossett town centre and in all probability originating in either croft holdings or field strips of medieval Ossett.

Robert Phillips was an established manufacturer, but it is not known where the company had been based before its purchase of the Gedham property (Documentation). The new mill at Gedham was noted in the local newspaper in 1898 (Document 3), and was designed on modern principles, being largely single-storeyed, powered by steam and lit by electricity generated on site. Telephones were also an original feature of the mill. The 1898 description lists the departments as rag warehouses, shaking and sorting rooms, dyehouse, grinding sheds, willeying and carding rooms and other buildings. The inclusion of a dyehouse, the surviving fragments of which lie on those parts of the site bought in 1898 and 1900, indicates that in 1897 Phillips may not have owned the whole site at first but instead leased neighbouring land which he was very soon to purchase.

Phillips died in 1899 and his estate was maintained in trust for a number of parties (Documents 8, 9). The following year Gedham Mill was leased to Glover and Ellis for ten years at £300 per annum (Documentation). The Glover family had been active in the textile industry since the mid-nineteenth century. William Glover had been a mungo manufacturer in Ossett before moving to Wakefield. His son John Henry Glover had returned to Ossett to work with Robert Phillips (Document 7), and entered the family through his marriage to Phillips daughter Mary Helena Glover's partner in business, Walter Ellis, was among the interested parties listed in Robert Phillips' Will, where he was described as of Gedham, Manufacturer (Document 8). The partnership formed after Phillips' death, therefore, was an association of two men involved in Phillips' manufacturing enterprise probably since the establishment of Gedham Mill.

Glover and Ellis occupied Gedham as tenants for the next decade and more. They renewed their lease in 1907, and in 1910 the mill, recorded as being owned by the executors of R. E. Phillips, was valued at £280 per annum for rating purposes (Documentation). The business was evidently a success, for in 1913 the partners bought Northfield Mill, a little to the north of Gedham (Documentation). They were able to purchase Gedham Mill in 1916 for £4,000, and in 1918 the partners transferred their property at both Gedham and Northfield from their own names to a newly formed company, Glover and Ellis Ltd (Documentation and Document 5).

The articles of association name only two shareholders, John Henry Glover and Walter Ellis, both rag merchants and mungo manufacturers (Document 5). Northfield Mill was sold in 1919, possibly indicating a post-war slump in the fortunes of the business. The firm continued in production at Gedham, however, and the mill remained in company ownership until 1959, when it was sold to Charles Reginald Vause (Document 8). It is reported to have ceased mungo production only in 1965 (Documentation), and is used today as a base for a carpeting service, owned once more by the Glover family.

DESCRIPTION

Gedham Mill is a complex of largely single-storey brick buildings providing all the components of a mungo mill (see Block Plan). Built on land grouped together in 1897 (probably originally partly owned and partly leased), it was complete by 1898, when it was described in a newspaper account (Document 3). The main buildings are a large shed, a two-storey warehouse, and a range of rag-grinding sheds with attached engine house. The boiler house, dyehouse, chimney and carbonising plant have been demolished. At the west end of the plot is a pair of semi-detached brick houses.

The following description will link the surviving remains with an account and plan of the mill's workings by Mr. Arthur Donovan Glover (Document 10). Each building will be described, therefore, in approximately the order it contributed to production.

The eastern half of the mill complex is occupied by a large shed, eleven bays long east to west and nine bays deep, tapering to eight at the west end. Despite the evidence of straight joints in the upper courses of the brick work on the north wall, the shed is of a single build. It is largely utilitarian in style, with an equal-pitched roof to each bay, but some decorative effect is given by the use of pairs of round-headed windows in most of the bays on the south wall (95L 31A), and, on the east wall, a round-headed doorway with a pediment over (BB86/1433).

The mill was approached from the east, and the central doorway on this front was originally wide enough to allow wagons to enter a loading area. The north-eastern corner of the shed was occupied by offices; two rooms were heated, and the doorways have reeded architraves.

The shed is and was divided into a number of different working areas by brick internal walls. Throughout the shed the roof has wooden roof trusses of king-post and V-brace form. The trusses are supported by cast-iron columns, many bearing the maker's name, J. E. Hainsworth, Dewsbury (95J 4A). The form of the columns differs in detail in different areas of the shed. All columns, however, lack a bolting head, indicating that the processes performed in the shed were probably largely unpowered.

The large area of five bays by five bays next to the loading bay was used for the reception and initial storing of rags (95J 3A). Mr. Glover's description of processes states that the rags were then removed to the carbonizing plant for the removal of cotton and other non-woollen ingredients. The carbonizing plant is situated at the west end of the mill complex, and survives only as a perimeter wall. This retains the square flue serving the fire which produced the gas for the carbonising process. The inconvenience of the siting of the carbonizing plant, distant from both the initial storage of the rags and from the shaking room, is probably to be explained by the wisdom of removing a potentially dangerous and noxious process to a remote position within the complex.

After carbonizing, the rags were returned to the large shed where they were shaken to remove dust. A shaking machine was housed in a small division of the shed, segregated to confine the dust and noise generated by the shaking process. The shaking machine demanded power, but there is no evidence for line shafting having been led from the mill's main source of power, the steam engine in a detached range of buildings. It is possible that electrical power was used, for the contemporary description of the mill (Document 3) shows that lighting was provided by electricity generated on site and that the mill had a twelve horse-power electric motor. A small room to the south of the shaking department was probably used for the storage of the extracted dust, sold as fertilizer.

After shaking the rags were sorted by colour and quality in the sorting department (95J 1A) in the south-east corner of the large shed. The large area at the west end of the shed, divided into two rooms, of three and two bays, was probably used for the storage of the sorted rags (95J 5A, 6A).

The grinding sheds

The other principal block of building at Gedham Mill is a range of sheds at the south-west corner of the site (95L 31A). The range comprises a series of eight bays, divided into a two-bay scribbling department at the

east end and six single-bay grinding rooms, with an attached engine house at the west end. Each of the grinding bays housed a rag grinding machine, powered by belt or rope from a line shaft running east from the engine house throughout the range next to the south wall. Each bay appears to have had an internal brick wall forming a division at the north-west corner; the scars of the wall remain visible. The grinding bays are all entered independently from the yard by doorways in the north wall; some of these doorways have been blocked. The bays are lit by windows in the gable to the north, and the roof employs king-post trusses. The two-bay scribbling room at the east end of the range has a pair of cast-iron columns on the central line, of similar form to although larger than the columns in the large storage and sorting shed (95J 7A, 8A). The engine house is largely featureless, but it is known that it housed a horizontal steam engine of 30 horse power, by Robeys (Document 3 (95J 12A)). The arrangement of the sheds and engine house at Gedham is very similar to that recorded at Runtlings Mill, Ossett (N.215), and provides an economical plan concentrating the principal powered processes into a single range. A boiler house was formerly attached to the west of the engine house, with a chimney beyond (see Document 10).

Warehouse and minor buildings

To the north of the grinding sheds is a two-storey building, now used as offices (95L 35A). This was built as a warehouse for the storage of finished shoddy and mungo. The ground floor was open on the south side and may have been used for loading vehicles; Mr. Arthur Glover's plan shows that the weighing office was located here. On the first floor the warehouse was linked to the yard by two taking-in doorways.

At the west end of the mill complex are remains of further buildings, identified on Mr. Glover's plan as the dyehouse and carbonizing plant (Document 10). The latter has been described above, but the dyehouse survives only as a brick paved area. Mr. Glover's description of the dyeing process shows the need for steam heating, but it is not clear whether the steam was generated by a boiler contained within the building or derived from the boiler house serving the site as a whole. The boiler house was sited across the yard from the dyehouse, but in reasonable proximity. A drying chamber over the boiler used the rising heat to dry the shoddy after dyeing.

The Transport Department described by Mr. Glover has been incorporated into the modern office block and partially rebuilt.

Beyond the mill to the west, on land bought by R. E. Phillips, is a pair of semi-detached houses, brick built and probably contemporary with the mill (95J 13A, 11A). It is reported that the houses were occupied by the partners working the mill, Messrs. Glover and Ellis.

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DOCUMENTATION

No Building Control Plans survive at Wakefield MDC Planning Department.
(DS) denotes information kindly supplied by Mr. David Scriven, 20 Fairfield Gardens, Ossett.

- 1841 Plan of Gedham Field.
(WYAS, Calderdale MISC 80/8 Plans of Sundry Estates by S. Washington, surveyor, 1841)
(Document 1)
- 1864 Birth of John Henry Glover.
(Ossett Observer 23 May 1929, 3)
- Conveyance of the Gedham Field, 3 roods 29 perches, from John Dearden of the Hollins, Halifax, to John Jagger of Ossett, Innkeeper.
(WYAS, HQ Deeds Vol. YL, p.15, No. 21, 7 September 1864)
- 1888 Purchase of Northfield Mill by Frank Glover, Commercial traveller, and others. (WYAS. HQ Deeds 1888 Vol. 21, p.331, No. 217)
- 1889 Founding of company Robert E. Phillips, formerly Charles & R. Phillips.
(Seyd 1915/6, No. 1921)
- 1897 Purchase of about 1 acre of land from the Earl and Countess of Yarborough by Robert Elston Phillips of Ossett, mungo manufacturer. "Land with cottages" and Little Gedham Close, bounded on north and south by property of R. E. Phillips. Plan included.
(HYAS, HQ Deeds 1897, Vol. 19, p.854, No. 413) (Document 2); (see also Document 8 for details of other parcels of land making up Gedham Mill property)
- 1898 Description of all departments, method of power, etc., of "the new mill premises recently erected by Mr. Robert E. Phillips, mungo manufacturer and rag merchant, at Gedham".
(Ossett Observer, 21 May 1898, 5) (DS) (Document 3)
- 1899 Death of Robert E. Phillips 8 January 1899.
(WYAS, HQ Deeds 1899, Vol. 12, p.134, No. 6? Will and codicil of R. E. Phillips of Sunnybank, Ossett, mungo manufacturer)
- Estate administered by trustees, including John Henry Glover and Walter Ellis (Document 9)
- 1900 Lease of Gedham Mill by the widow of R. E. Phillips to Glover and Ellis, 10 years at £300 a year. List of fittings. Mill "lately in the occupation of R. E. Phillips". (Wakefield H.D. Libraries John Goodchild Loan MSS hereafter WAG Ossett Textiles Miscellaneous)
- 1901 Date of establishment of Glover and Ellis, rag merchants. (Seyd 1915/6, No. 1921)
- 1901 Phillips, Robert Elston, Mungo manufacturer and rag merchant, Dale Street.
Glover and Ellis not included.
(Kelly 1901, 666)
- 1904 Glover and Ellis, mungo manufacturers and rag merchants, Dale Street. R. E. Phillips no longer included.
(Kelly 19014, 693)
- 1905 John Henry Glover of Gedham, Ossett, manufacturer, bought a piece of land - evidently for a house - on a new street in Ossett off Wakefield and Dewsbury Road.
(WYAS. HQ Deeds 1905 Vol. 35, p.169, No. 68, 8 September 1905)

- 1907 Renewal of lease on Gedham by Glover and Ellis.
(WAG Ossett Textiles Miscellaneous)
- 1910 Gedham mill, shoddy mill, occupied by Glover and Ellis, owned by the executors of R. E. Phillips. Rateable value £280 p.a.
(WYAS. HQ 243/136 Valuation book of the Board of Inland Revenue) (DS)
- 1910/1 Mungo and shoddy manufacturers: Glover and Ellis, Gedham.
(Worrall 1910/1, 189)
- 1913 Gedham Mill (Mungo).
(O.S. 25" 248/1, Revised 1913, Published 1922) (Document 4)
- Purchase of the Northfield Mill and land by "John Henry Glover and Walter Ellis, mungo manufacturers, both of Ossett, carrying on business in partnership under the style of firm of Glover and Ellis".
(WYAS, HQ Deeds 1913, Vol. 24, p.229, No. 71)
- 1915/6 Glover & Ellis, rag merchants, South Ossett.
(Seyd 1915/6, No. 1921)
- 1918 Transfer of property from Glover and Ellis, co-partners, to Glover and Ellis Limited: Northfield Mill with warehouses, carbonising place, dyehouse, boiler house etc. Gedham Mill "and two dwelling houses erected by Robert Elston Phillips."
(WYAS, HQ Deeds 1918, Vol. 6, p.520, No. 167} p.523, No. 168, 14 February 1918)
(See also Abstract of Title, 30 Jan. 1918, Document 8)
- Articles of Association, Glover and Ellis Ltd. (Document 5) (Ref: papers held at Gedham Mill by RGS)
- 1919 Sale of Northfield Mill.
(WYAS, HQ Deeds 1919, Vol. 8, p.994, No. 385, 17 February 1919)
- 1920 George William Glover buys land adjoining Gedham Mill to North.
[Ref?] (Document 6)
- 1920/1 Mungo and Shoddy manufacturers: Glover & Sills Ltd., Gedham.
(Worrall 1920/1, 232)
- 1929 Death of John Henry Glover.
(Ossett Observer 23 May 1929, 3) (DS) (Document 7)
- 1959 Gedham Mills sold to Charles Reginald Vause by conveyance July 1959.
(See Document 8)
- c.1965 End of Gedham Mill's life as a mungo factory. (Mr. Richard Glover, Gedham Mill)