

## CRIPPLEGATE MILL AND HOUSE

On 15 November 1806, Nathaniel Chantler of Horsham paid John Ireland of Rudgwick £ 50 for about a quarter of an acre of ground near the turnpike road leading from Horsham to Steyning on which to build a smock mill. By the early of part of the following year it was completed and ready for use. It had a single storey brick base, with walls 1ft 9ins thick, and three floors above; one pair of 4ft 6in peak millstones, and one pair of 4ft 4in burr millstones, stage, fantail, and four spring sweeps.

During the next eighty-four years the mill changed hands many times:

- 1812 Edward Etheridge of Shipley
  - Daniel Grinsted of Bottings Hill (died 25 April 1869)
- 1871 John Sawyer (died 1876)
- 1876 Purchased for £ 500 by Daniel Grinsted (son of former miller) - leased to John Lewry of Brick Kiln Farm
- 1879 Fanny Grinsted (Daniel's widow)
- 1882 Miller listed as Francis Richardson
- 1882 Job Johnson
  - Robert Piper, blacksmith, carried out various repairs in 1883 costing 5s 4d



By 1885 the freehold property had been greatly improved, as described in the particulars for its auction in October of that year:

*"..substantial brick and timber built erection of a Windmill, with the appurtenances thereof a two stall stable, cart shed, piggeries etc. together with the pleasantly situate brick-built and tiled Cottage Residence containing five bedrooms, two cheerful sitting rooms, office, large kitchen fitted with kitchener, pantry, cellerage, WC., large garden and outbuildings; also two well-stocked Orchards adjoining the foregoing and abutting the Bottings Hill Lane and two well brick built and slated cottages, containing the usual living and sleeping rooms, good gardens etc. contiguous to the foregoing."*

The purchaser was Charles Pickshaw Christie, a brewer from Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, who let the mill to John Stoveld, from Old Place Watermill, Pulborough. Once again, Robert Piper was employed to undertake repairs to the mill's ironwork and also kept Stoveld's horses regularly shod. Henry Baker took over as miller following Stoveld's death in 1886.

During the next five years the mill was partly rebuilt and new equipment installed. Christie also purchased the old Hoddesdon Town Hall clock for his Cripplegate property and had it installed in a tower above the granary.

The final owner, John George Turner of Balcombe, came from a long line of watermillers. He purchased the windmill in December 1891 and soon afterwards installed a new pair of sweeps. His millers included Maurice Evershed, Brown, Weller and, lastly, Ernest Clark.

The mill's working life came to a sudden end on the morning of Monday, 25 May 1914, when it burnt to the ground. The West Sussex County Times reported the dramatic event three days later:

*"CRIPPLEGATE WINDMILL DESTROYED BY FIRE - A tremendous blaze - Good work by the Horsham Fire Brigade.*

*Cripplegate Windmill, an ancient landmark at the junction of the parishes of Southwater and West Grinstead, standing just off the main Horsham to Worthing road, was totally destroyed by fire on Monday morning. Fortunately the Horsham Fire Brigade reached the scene in time to save everything except the mill itself, the old wooden structure burning so fiercely that it collapsed within about forty-five minutes of the fire being discovered. The damage, which is covered by insurance in the Guardian Insurance Office, Brighton, is estimated at about £ 800.*

*It appears that Mr. J.G. Turner, the owner of the mill, left soon after eight o'clock that morning for Worthing and Storrington, a journey usually made once a month. The mill was not in use at the time and at 9.30 am, when the foreman was last in the yard, everything appeared as safe as usual. But at 10.15 am, when Mr. H. Ward, a grocer of Shipley, was driving past, he noticed smoke coming from the top of the mill. He at once ran into the yard, thinking that there might be horses to release, but could only hear the roaring of flames inside the mill.*

*Driving hurriedly to the Railway Station, Mr. Ward found that he could not telephone to Horsham, so he went to the Post Office (Mr. Burchett's). Here the Horsham Fire Brigade was telegraphed for. It was about a quarter to eleven when the fire bell rang at Horsham, and as soon as possible the steamer was on the way. Messrs. Rice Bros. motored to the scene with Captain H C Hunt and P C Burritt; and a motor from Messrs. Jackson Bros. conveyed Supt. Wakeford, Sergt. Stenning, Sergt. Walder and PCs Chapman and Cudley. The steamer arrived just after 11.15. A few minutes had made a marvellous change. From the few flames bursting through when Messrs. J & T. Rice arrived, the fire had grown to a roaring mass towering hundreds of feet high. The sails were still in position, but only in skeleton, and three or four minutes after the arrival of the Brigade it was seen that, influenced by the strong breeze, the windmill was toppling over towards the stores midway between the mill and the Mill House, a double fronted cottage occupied by Mr. Alfred Ansell. Warning shouts were raised, as firemen and volunteers had been saving corn from the store. With a tremendous crash the mill collapsed and the flames ignited the store. At the same time the clock tower and granary to the south of the windmill caught fire, first at the edge nearest the flames and afterwards in the pinnacle over the clock. It was evident that smart work alone could not prevent the extension of the conflagration. Fortunately there was a good supply of water in a pond in front of the Mill House, and very speedily, with assistance from the police and volunteers, hoses were directed on the points mentioned, with marked effect. Soon afterwards the firemen were able to concentrate their efforts upon the centre of the fire itself, and to get absolute control, but there was long and toilsome work before the outbreak was absolutely extinguished. The Brigade remained on the scene till about 2.30 pm, and was credited by all those who saw the fire in its comparatively early stages with excellent work. The supply of water from the pond was exhausted before the operations ceased. The windmill is about three and a half miles from Horsham, and in the course of the day there were many visitors to the scene. Postcard photographs of the mill, before and after the fire, are on sale at the Bon Marche, Queen Street, at 1d each.*

*Mr. Turner returned before the Brigade left, and could throw no light on the origin of the fire. There is a suggestion that in the recent thunderstorm the mill was struck by lightning; in this*

case, it would have smouldered for some time. The mill has belonged to Mr. Turner for well over twenty years, and the clock already alluded to has a history. It was originally the Hoddesdon town clock, but about twenty five years ago, at the time of considerable changes in the Hertfordshire town, it was purchased by Mr. Charles Pickshaw Christie, the then owner of Cripplegate Mill, and erected where it now stands, a kind of public clock in the midst of rural Sussex. Throughout the fire on Monday it kept good time and appears to have been in no way injured. The Mill House, as we have said, is occupied by Mr. A. Ansell, the owner of the mill residing at Oakleigh, well away from the mill. Mr. Turner has steam power for driving the mill, so that he was never solely dependent upon the huge whirling sails which are yearly becoming a still rarer feature of the countryside. "

The cost of rebuilding the mill was estimated at approximately £ 1,700, so Mr, Turner decided not to have the work carried out and sold the wind shaft and other ironwork to H. & E. Lintott Ltd., the Horsham iron foundry, for scrap. The base of the mill remained fairly complete until about 1931 when it was dismantled and the bricks were sold to Pepper & Son of Amberley for use in the manufacture of "rustic" fireplaces. Bygone Corn Mills in the Horsham Area by George HW Coomber



Captain Irvine was living in Mill House by 1924 and used it as a base for the Home Guard during the Second World War.

Photo

and bills thanks to Bob Piper

