Wembury Mill – an illustrated history

David Pinder*

Introduction

Although Wembury Mill and its predecessors were central to the local agricultural economy for centuries, it is now well over a hundred years since the millstones ground to a halt, overtaken chiefly by technological change and the rise of overseas imports. But while these forces resulted in decay and dereliction for so many similar mills, Wembury's has survived and been transformed into an important National Trust visitor facility, operating as a seasonal café and, in the former miller's house, a holiday let. Moreover, at the same time it has become highly valued locally: no longer seen as a degraded workplace at the end of its days, it is now a greatly appreciated piece of heritage. This reversal in attitudes arguably owes much to the mill's striking and attractive location, tucked into a low cliff on the very edge of Wembury Beach (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1 Wembury Mill and the miller's house, 2024

 I am very grateful to Robert Rowland, a lifelong Wembury resident, farmer and local historian, for sharing with me knowledge produced during his own investigations, as well as his personal recollections of mid-twentieth century developments. In places I have also drawn extensively on the efforts of the late Peter Lugar, a former resident, who gathered old photographs from a wide range of sources and annotated many of them with his own recollections and those of others. Peter Lugar's archive is now managed by Wembury Local History Society and much of his material is available online. The monochrome illustrations in this article are drawn from this photographic archive.

Despite its high local profile, a history of the mill and its antecedents has never been written. One reason is probably that documentation before the nineteenth century is almost non-existent; manorial records which could have shed light appear not to have survived. Also, although relevant material from around 1800 onwards does exist, it is highly fragmentary and dispersed. Even so, as this article demonstrates, the jigsaw pieces that are available can be drawn together to give a reasonably detailed account of both the mill's working life and its evolution from one productive life to another.

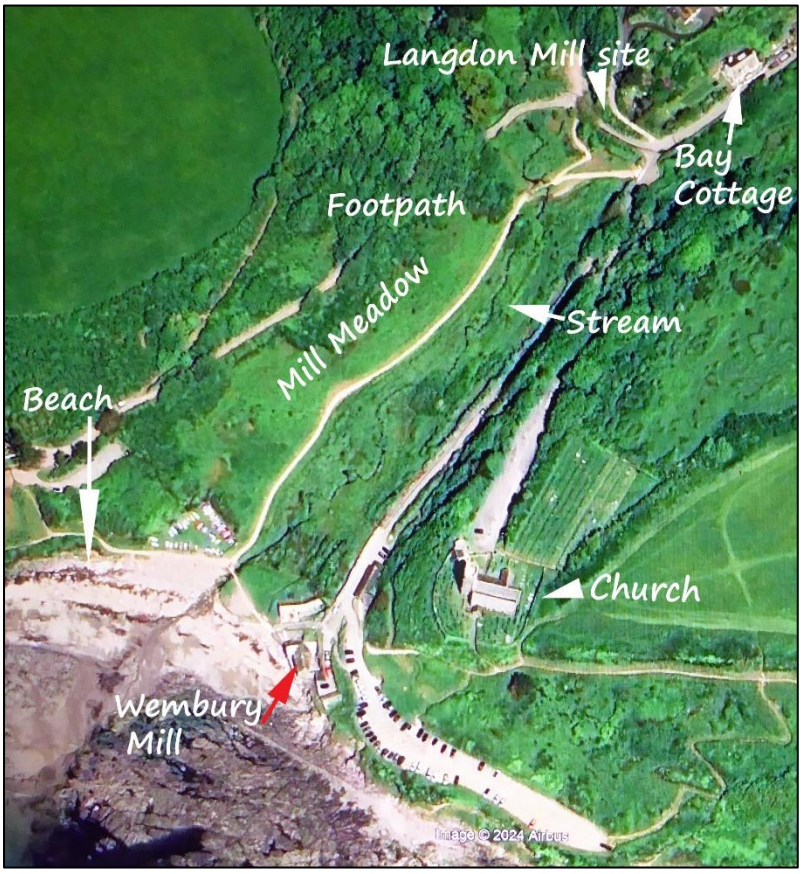


Figure 2 Wembury Mill's setting.
Base image reproduced under Google Earth's educational concession.

The milling years

It is sometimes said that Wembury Mill, with its adjacent miller's house, dates from 1283, but this is a misunderstanding. 1283 was the year when the Langdon Estate's mill, further up the valley and long-since disappeared, was first recorded. There *could* have been a Wembury Mill at that time, but the earliest known reference to one dates from 1581.[1]

Those who originally chose the mill's site would not have shared today's heritage perspective; their decision making would have been extremely practical, not least with respect to efficiency. Although it would have been perfectly possible to locate the mill by the nearby stream, this would have imposed a major handicap. In that position it would have been an undershot mill, its wheel being driven by the flow of water at the base, a system which is usually less than 25 per cent efficient. In contrast, overshot mills – whose drive water is delivered from behind and above the waterwheel – harness the gravitational power of the falling water, which can double or even triple efficiency.[2]

Building the mill into the cliff set the scene for this advantage to be exploited, but also necessitated investment in a water supply system able to drive the water wheel from above. The existence of this has been almost completely forgotten, but an Ordnance Survey map for which the survey was done in the mid-1790s (Figure 3) clearly reveals the approach adopted.[3]

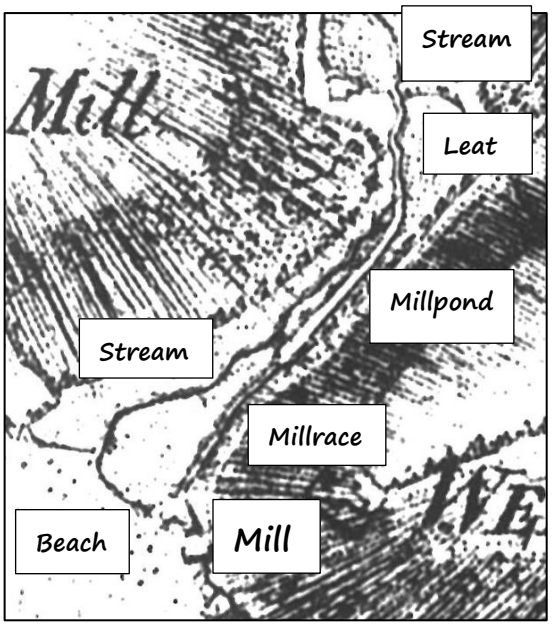


Figure 3 Key components of the mill's water supply system

© Ordnance Survey. Reproduced under the Survey's 50-year rule

The stream which fed the system still runs through Mill Meadow. Entering the meadow from the north at about 14 m above sea level, it fed a short, curving leat which channelled much of the water along the valley's eastern slope, maintaining most of its height. This leat fed the system's central element: a long narrow millpond, excavated into the valley side and running below the road leading to the beach. Then a mill race – essentially another leat – delivered the stored water from the pond to the mill, which it reached at around 8 or 9 m above sea level. Today the remains of the race at this point can easily be seen from the wall behind the mill: the stone-lined channel turns a right angle, beyond which there was a wooden launder to direct the water onto the wheel (Figure 4). Adopting this three-part solution to powering the mill was in no sense innovative, but it was tried, tested and reliable.

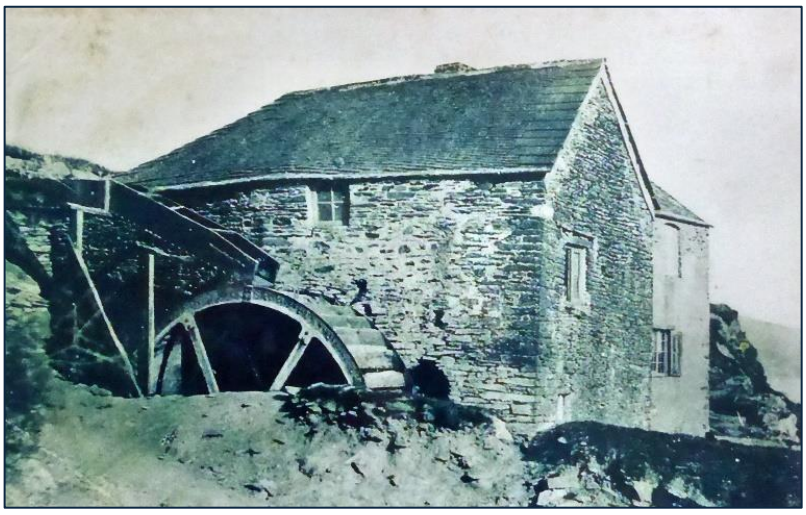


Figure 4 The mill wheel and launder

The mill was originally built for Wembury Manor, which extended over a large part of eastern Wembury. In the late-seventeenth century the manor's tenants were required to take their grain to this local facility, and it is likely that this prevailed over a much longer period because this stipulation was commonplace among manorial mills. Up to this point nothing is known about the millers, despite their key role. However, census returns show that there were at least six during the nineteenth century. One, William Beer, ran the mill for the century's last four decades, but his predecessors came and went with a far shorter average stay – around twelve years. William Beer apart, therefore, milling in Wembury was not a job for life.

Nor was it an easy occupation, even though it usually conferred relatively high social status: heavy work and frequent maintenance of the machinery were inescapable. Moreover, compared with their counterparts running mills inland, the lives of Wembury's millers and their families must have been made even more challenging by the storms to which they were inevitably exposed by their beachside location. As we shall see shortly, at least one such storm had a dramatic impact.

In 1814 a new chapter opened when the Langdon Estate purchased a large part of the neighbouring Wembury Manor; including Wembury Mill. A second development around this time was that Langdon's existing mill shut down having become badly dilapidated,[4] leaving Wembury Mill as the only one in the parish. Precisely when this latter change occurred is unknown; any date around this time is possible but, if it was triggered by a specific development, two events stand out. One came in 1802 when the Langdon miller, William Curry, moved to Wembury Mill. This relocation could easily have been precipitated by the Langdon shutdown. The other was following Langdon's purchase of Wembury Mill in 1814: logic suggests that it would not have made sense for the estate to run two mills, especially when one was in very poor condition.

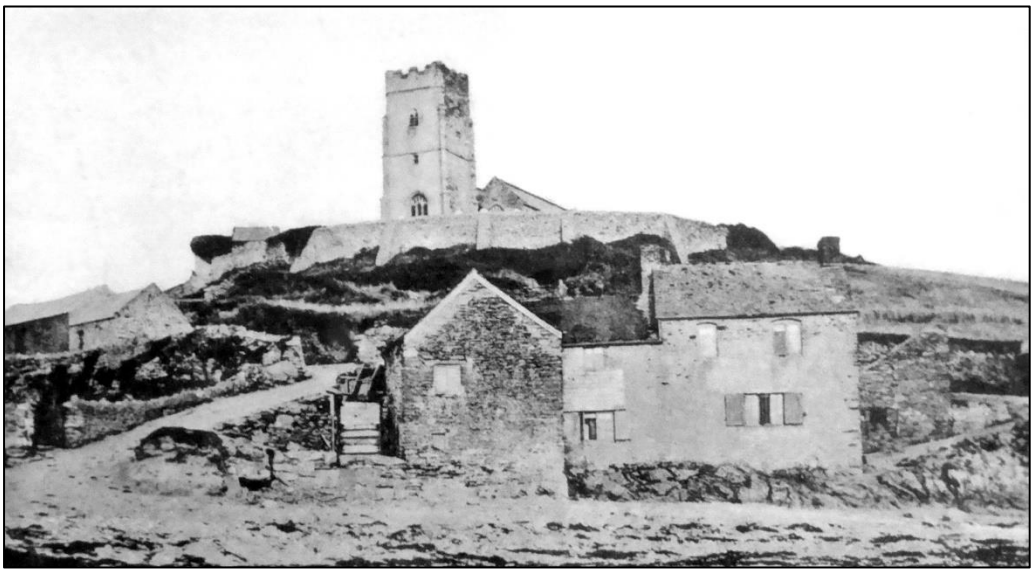


Figure 5 Building age differences

Exactly when Wembury Mill's monopoly came about is not the only unknown. Another is the construction date of the mill buildings we know today. What is clear, however, is that these buildings do not all date from the same era (Figure 5). The style of the miller's house, on the right, is consistent with an early to mid-nineteenth century date.[5] In contrast, the remaining buildings – the

mill on the left, plus a surviving part of what was probably an earlier miller's cottage – are clearly significantly older. How did this contrast arise? The explanation *may* lie with a major event long since forgotten.

In the early hours of 23rd November, 1824, an exceptionally intense storm suddenly struck the south coast of the peninsula, raged for much of the day and coincided with unusually high tides. Although newspaper reports in the following days and weeks prioritised maritime losses, which were admittedly extremely high, the onshore damage was too great to overlook. Several cottages at Cawsand had been swept away; wind and waves had demolished Sidmouth's gravel promenade and seafront houses; at Fleet, supposedly protected by Chesil Bank, the church and almost the whole village had succumbed; and at Portland the fishermen's quarter was devasted.[6]

Two vessels were driven ashore at Wembury that night, but it was Elisha Gullett, the presumably badly shaken miller, who recorded the impact on the mill in his family bible:

> *'This was a most Dreadful storm as ever was witnessed in the neighborhood of Plymouth . . . the water rose so high as to go over the Mill House . . . . and Did considerable damage . . . . It broke down the whole of the windows in the ground Rooms and in the mills it brought down the mill bed and one millstone [into] the lower part of the Mill and filled the Mill with gravel and pieces of wreacked wood.'*

Given the severity of the damage, it could well be that the juxtaposition of the old and the relatively new revealed by Figure 5 was a consequence of the response to this major setback. Restarting the mill's production would no doubt have been seen as the priority - hence a decision to repair the existing structure rather than build anew. Conversely, dealing with the badly damaged house could easily have been considered less urgent – the family could have temporarily moved elsewhere – allowing time for most of the damaged cottage to be replaced by a house no doubt better than anything experienced by previous mill tenants.

Another significant development in the first half of the nineteenth century was an extensive remodelling of the mill's water-supply system (Figure 6).[7] At the northern end of Mill Meadow the entire stream was now diverted into the leat, leaving the natural watercourse dry. From there the water was channelled straight through the millpond section before running on towards the mill via the existing mill race. Just before the mill a control system, probably involving sluice gates, was installed to direct the constantly flowing water either to the mill during working periods or, at other times, down a spillway to the beach (Figure 7). Embarking on this overhaul may have been a response to millpond deterioration, such as silting or the encroachment of vegetation, after a long working life. But it is also likely that there were advantages. In particular, milling no longer had to stop because the millpond was empty and, as the entire stream was harnessed, more power was available. As with other twists and turns in this story, precisely when the revamp was undertaken is unknown, but the survey dates of OS maps indicate a timeframe of between 1800 and the early 1850s. Within this span, however, the work *may* have been linked with the mill's repair following the 1824 storm. An ideal time to undertake the work in Mill Meadow would have been while the

mill was out of action, and an improved power source could well have been necessary to take advantage of new machinery.

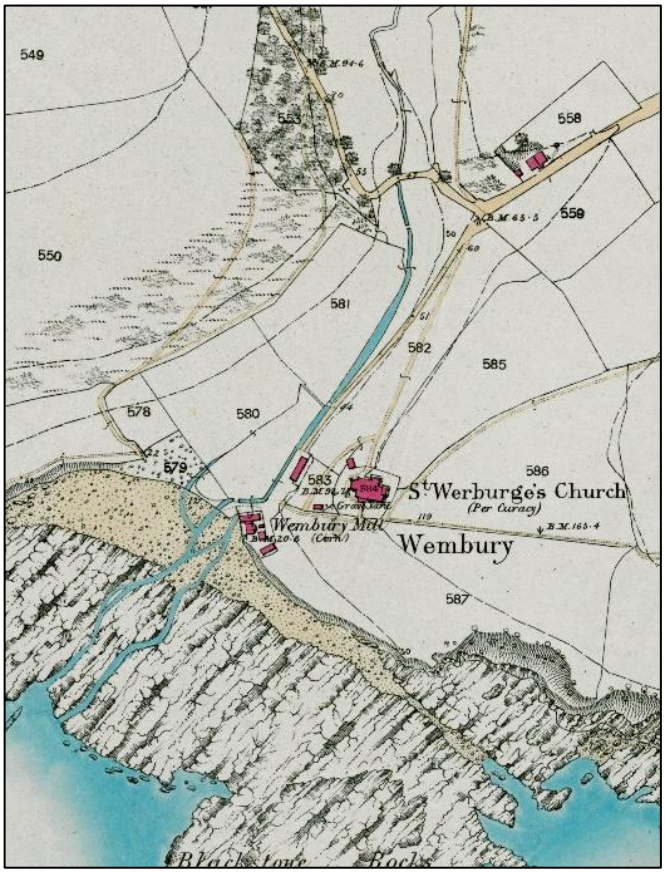


Figure 6 The mill's modified water supply system c. 1850

Figure 7 The line of the modified system's former spillway. Today, the public toilets are on the right and the steps on the left.

Two strings to the bow

The mill operated under Langdon ownership for most of the nineteenth century. Census returns show that, throughout this period, the tenancy included a small farm of around 36 acres, which the millers sometimes expanded by renting a further 20 acres or so. Working at the mill was, therefore, a dual-income activity (Figure 8).

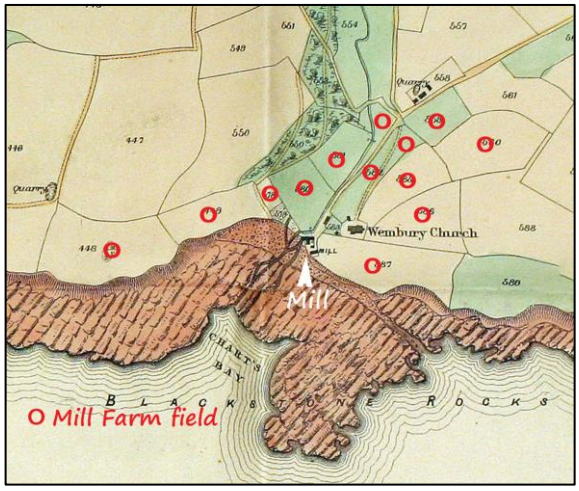


Figure 8 Extent of the mill's farm, 1872

Further light on the mill farm is provided by a Langdon Estate prospectus prepared in 1872 when the profligate owner, Vincent Calmady, attempted to solve his debt problems by selling the estate lock, stock and barrel.[8] This prospectus shows that there were two groups of farm buildings, one just above the mill - where ice cream and beach goods are now sold - and the other close by on today's Marine Centre site. Beyond this it highlights two significant and related features of the tenancy arrangements.

First, the business was treated as though it was one of the estate's standard farms. In other words, it was a comprehensive tenancy – covering land, barns, house and mill – with no separate financial arrangements for the mill. Second, the cost of the tenancy was remarkably low compared with other small farming activities. For example, Home Farm also had only 36 acres and paid an annual rent of £128, just over £3 per acre. Similarly, fields rented out to farmers by the year were £3 an acre. On this basis the mill tenancy's rent should have been around £110; in fact it was only £65.[9]

Various factors could have resulted in this substantial discount. At one extreme it could simply reflect the fact that the supply system needed to deliver drive water to the mill occupied a significant part of Mill Meadow, inevitably reducing its agricultural value. At the other end of the spectrum, much wider considerations could have been influential. As we will see later, from the mill's viewpoint times were changing for the worse. Was the sizeable discount largely an attempt to maintain a struggling mill for the benefit of local farming?

Spreading the load

Milling and farming are labour intensive, and the millers could not run the business single handed. Workmen were therefore employed to assist with both activities, at least some of whom lived on the farm. Successive censuses show that most of the resident employees lived in the miller's house, as was common in the farming community. However, these records also show that other workers occupied another dwelling – Mill Cottage.

Maps of the day do not identify this cottage, but life-long Wembury resident Robert Rowland remembers its remains, including domestic features such as the fireplace. It stood just 65 m from the mill, at the northern end of today's Marine Centre site, and was attached to the adjacent small barns. Presumably it was a long-established worker's cottage, yet by the mid-nineteenth century its days were numbered. The last occupant known to have worked the land, recorded by the 1861 census, was George Baker. Ten years later his son James was the chief occupant, by which time the link with the farm and mill had been broken: James Baker was a mason. After that, the cottage appears to have fallen into disuse quite rapidly: the 1881 census makes no mention of it, and evidence in the Langdon Estate sale prospectus suggests that it could even have ceased to be a dwelling as early as 1872. Page 19 of this document lists the farm's features in considerable detail –

"Open shed with Loft over, Cow house for 8 cows, Calf's Pen, Barn, Stable for 3 Horses with loft over (all Stone and Slate), Potato House (Stone and Thatch)".

- yet there is no mention of a cottage. The most likely cause of this change is suggested by the late-nineteenth-century censuses. By the 1871 survey the miller, the long-serving William Beer, was approaching his late 50s and had clearly decided on a new employment strategy. Between 1871 and 1901, his main help was provided first by his son, William H Beer, and then by his grandson, Wallace Beer. Whether he also found it necessary to hire in additional labour at various times is unclear, but in the main he was keeping it in the family.[10]

Milling's end game

While the estate prospectus produced in 1872 disguised the fact, the mill's future was increasingly undermined by economic and technological trends. Roller-milling technology, providing faster milling and a finer product, spread to Britain from the continent. New forms of power freed the industry from flowing water (and wind), opening the way to a greatly increased scale of operations. And, especially after 1870, cheap grain imports forced arable agriculture into a long depression.[11] Evidence that this last factor was seen as an issue locally is provided by a single telling sentence in the 1872 prospectus:

> *"The soil is of red marl, rich in quality, and admits of a large increase in pasture land."*[12]

In other words, a shift to animal husbandry would help resolve the problems of lacklustre grain farming. [13]

The inevitable result of this clutch of factors was that countless traditional local mills could not survive, Wembury Mill being no exception. As with Langdon Mill, the exact closure date is unclear; various times have been quoted in the late 1890s and up to 1900. What is certain, however, is that the 1901 census records that William Beer and his family still lived at the mill, but Beer now simply described himself as a farmer.

Transition

Not long after milling ended, a significant change occurred with respect to the farm. The 1911 census shows that the house was occupied by William Bryant and his family, but he was not the tenant. He was, in fact, the employee of William Sherwill, the tenant of Knighton Farm. This 103-acre holding was a substantial enterprise, with extensive farm buildings, a large, well-appointed farmhouse and piped water from two local sources. Despite the scale of this operation, it seems Sherwill had ambitions to expand. In 1907, and possibly several years earlier, he therefore took on the mill farm as an additional tenancy, following the death of William Beer in 1902. Sherwill then installed William Bryant in the mill house, not as a farmer but, as he recorded in his 1911 census return, a "Shepherd on a farm". This change was not a passing phase. When William Sherwill died in 1913, his son Maurice took on both tenancies and still ran them in 1927 when, as we shall see, the Langdon Estate was broken up and sold.

Now separated from the farm, the mill house continued to be occupied up to WWII. At the same time, bus services and rising car ownership meant that new opportunities arose for the residents to supplement their income: living almost on the beach, they were ideally placed to offer visitor refreshments (Figure 9). According to locals' recollections, these were initially sold on a takeaway

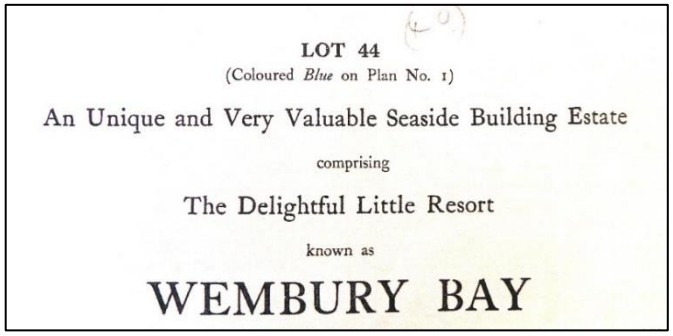
Figure 9 The mill's surroundings in the 1930s. By now the house had a French window giving access to the café, a tennis court had been added in Mill Meadow and the car park had been created. Meanwhile, the farm's barns (top left) were falling into disrepair.

basis, run from a 'shop' at the rear of the house. Then a café was added, based in the house's only substantial downstairs room and entered through French windows at the front. In addition, photographs suggest that the business may have been diversified in two other directions. At times there was small-scale camping in the field just above the mill – now part of the car park - and a grass tennis court appeared in Mill Meadow, immediately inland from the coast path.

While these changes were afoot locally, other trends made life increasingly difficult for the owners of landed estates throughout the country. Continuing cheap food imports, recession after WWI, escalating inheritance taxes and eventually the Depression all took their toll. The consequence was that many owners decided to rid themselves of their unprofitable, often loss-making, land.

In Wembury these forces were to decide the long-term future of both the former mill and its house, but this did not happen quickly. In 1876 the cash-strapped Vincent Calmady had eventually managed to sell the Langdon Estate to Richard Cory, who was insulated from the deteriorating rural economic situation by the fact that his great wealth was based on highly lucrative coal trading. This cushion continued to provide protection when his son inherited the estate in 1904 but, on his death in December 1926, his widow quickly decided that enough was enough. An agreement was soon reached to sell the entire property to a land speculator,[14] who by mid-1927 had divided it into 72 lots, produced a sixty-page catalogue and organised an auction for the following September.

The speculator's aim was to sell as much land as possible for residential development, this being the main way of profiting from land at the time. Given their attractive location, the former mill and its adjoining house were bundled with the beach and the surrounding fields and grandly marketed as:



LOT 44

(Coloured *Blue* on Plan No. 1)

An Unique and Very Valuable Seaside Building Estate

comprising

The Delightful Little Resort

known as

WEMBURY BAY

By the early 1930s housing development around the beach appeared imminent, but events then took an unexpected turn, with far-reaching consequences for the mill. Faced with the prospect of the locality disappearing under bricks and mortar, four prominent Wembury residents[15] formed the Wembury Preservation Society and launched an appeal for funds to save the area.[16] As the situation was urgent the appeal committee took out a bank loan for which they were personally liable, enabling them to buy the mill and the surrounding 10.5 ha (27 acres) at development value. Raising the money to pay off the loan was not achieved until the end of 1938 but the fields and mill, now owned by the preservation society, were protected in the interim. With the loan repaid, the committee moved swiftly to safeguard the locality permanently: in February 1939 the mill, its associated buildings and the land around the beach and church were all donated to the National Trust.[17]

Revival – Wembury Mill in the National Trust era

With the outbreak of WWII, only seven months after the mill became a National Trust property, everything changed. Recreational travel, even locally, was discouraged, the beach was blocked off by entanglements and the café closed (Figure 10).

Figure 10 WWII beach entanglements. These extended over the entire beach and were supplemented by rolls of barbed wire, plus two 'pill boxes'. One of these can be seen top left. Other obstacles were put in place in Mill Meadow.

Things could not return to normal immediately peace came, but by the late 1940s the beach had been cleared, the house was reoccupied, visitors were returning and the café and takeaway were once more up and running. This was the situation well into the 1950s, but change was in the air. Towards the end of the decade significant improvements were made to the mill's environs, largely due to the beach's steadily growing popularity. Around 1957 today's steps were constructed on the main access to the beach, which had previously been a steep and rather slippery slope traditionally

used by farmers' carts to collect seaweed. And, with this improvement complete, the local authority built today's public toilets – up to this point, the only toilet facilities provided were a closet in the buildings just above the house and another in a lean-to shed in the mill's wheel pit.

These positive developments naturally encouraged even more visitors, to which the National Trust responded by bringing the former mill back to life as a café (Figure 11). Externally, the change was not dramatic, but the wheel pit closet was demolished (no doubt to general acclaim), the mill's exterior was extensively repaired and a new window allowed more light into the interior. Once the mill itself had been cleared, the major work undertaken was the removal of most of the upper floor, giving a sense of space, additional light and a view of the roof timbers. Then, as today, the necessary preparation facilities for food and drink were installed at the rear. Residents have recalled that the star attraction was Wembury's first espresso machine. By 1960 the former mill was once more back in action, rebadged as the Old Mill Café and still run by the house's tenants.

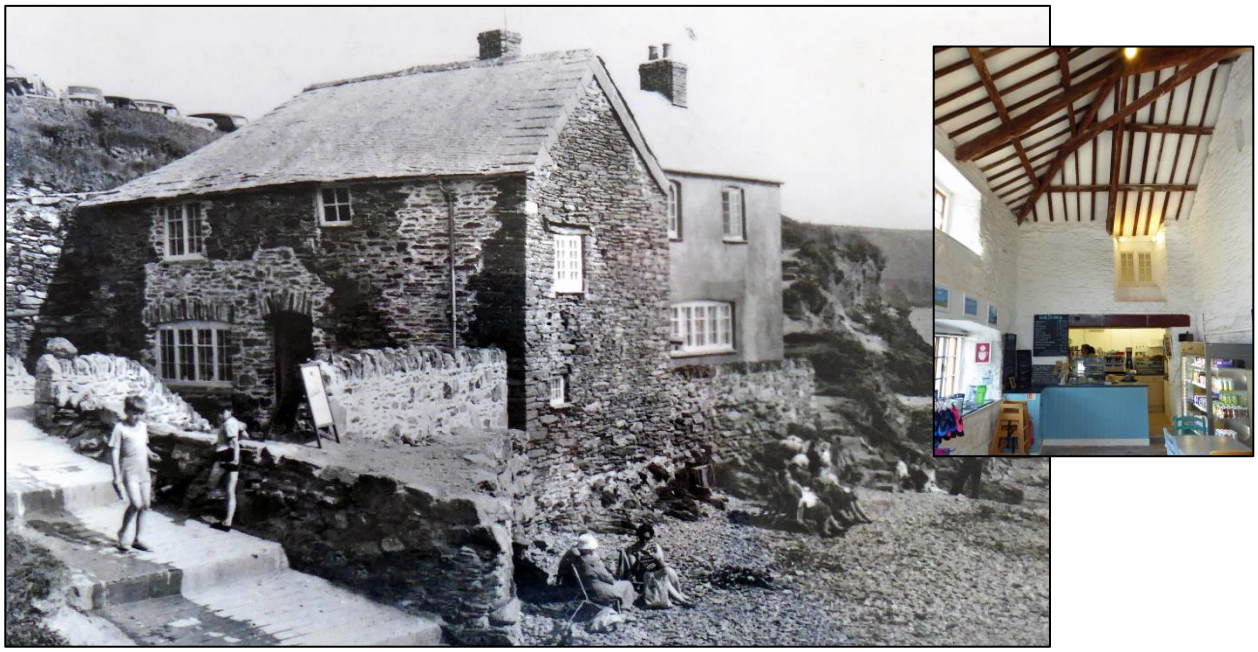


Figure 11 The Old Mill Café c. 1960 and, inset, the café interior 2024

Whether the National Trust's makeover of the mill extended to modernising the interior of the house is unclear. Externally, however, two improvements must have made life better. One was the construction of a low wall on the outer edge of the terrace – the first sign we have of a modern response to the property's exposure to storms. The other was the removal of the French window, which had previously been used as an entrance by the café's customers, and its replacement by a standard wide window above waist height. Several problems were probably behind this change. The French window was narrow and let in limited light at the best of times; when there were storms the shutters had to be closed, plunging the interior into darkness; and, because the French window came down to the floor, there was a clear risk of flooding, even with the shutters closed.
Various families lived in the house and ran the café, the last being the Boyces, probably in the late 1970s. But then the future of both the house and the mill took a new turn. At this point the National Trust was expanding its lucrative holiday-let business and it was now the house's turn to be

revitalised. After thorough modernisation, including total re-roofing, by 1984 a National Trust survey could record it as an established holiday let, as it still is.[18] And, at the same time, the Old Mill Café continued to be let as a seasonal business, though the tenants could no longer live next door.

Meanwhile in Mill Meadow

Against this background of improvement, how has the mill's water-supply system in Mill Meadow fared over the decades? Immediately the mill closed the system became totally redundant, and an OS map of 1907 shows that the stream was quickly returned to its normal course. For five or six decades the abandoned remains probably degraded steadily. Then, in the late 1950s, they were severely damaged, partly by the installation of a sewer, causing disturbance the length of the system, but also by the construction of the public toilets. These obliterated the last section of the mill race and the stream's spillway to the beach. More recently, while the passing decades have probably not witnessed further physical damage, the spread of scrubby undergrowth on the eastern side of the valley has made it considerably more difficult to identify what, if anything, remains.

Despite these obstacles, three sources suggest that all may not be lost. The National Trust surveyor's report in 1984 noted earthworks in Mill Meadow that were consistent with the remains of the mill's water-power system. Today, Google Earth images strongly suggest the outlines of the millpond, picked out by contrasting vegetation shades. And, remarkably, with a magnifying glass it is possible to see the unmistakable outline of a millpond on today's OS 1:25,000 map.[19]

Figure 12 The western millpond embankment. Today's stream occupies the ditch between the embankment and the path.

Figure 13 Remains of the leat leading to the millpond

Against this background, it is no great surprise that significant remains can indeed be identified in Mill Meadow. Towards its northern end, and east of the stream, there are two lengthy, almost parallel, earthworks on a roughly north-south axis. Of the two, the one closest to the stream is particularly prominent and can easily be viewed from both the footpath through the meadow and the path running above the road leading to the beach (Figure 12). These features are clearly the remains of the embankments which enclosed the millpond. Moreover, vegetation clearance at the very northern end of the meadow early in 2024 opened up a view revealing part of the leat's route into the pond (Figure 13).

Neglected though they are, and modest though they may seem, these rediscovered remnants deserve far more than a passing footnote. Their survival is a reminder that the role of Mill Meadow in the mill's story was just as crucial as its waterwheel or its millstones: no power, no mill.

Into a new era

Although the supply system has lain largely forgotten, the resurrection of first the mill and then the miller's house can now be seen as a successful heritage conservation story. But this does not mean that their long-term future is secure. In recent years the local impact of climate change has become ever clearer. The front wall of the house has already needed extensive repairs. On at least two occasions there has been serious erosion of the rock platform on which the buildings stand; one of these events came very close to undermining a corner of the house. A nearby wall originally built to support the miller's vegetable garden has been badly damaged twice, part of a wider process of active erosion now affecting the low cliffs west of the mill. As the earlier discussion has underlined, storm damage is nothing new - many batterings have been survived. Yet now the strong probability is that, even if storms do not become more frequent, their intensity will greatly increase.

Figure14 Erosion of the rock platform on which the mill is built

Figure 15 Wall collapse, 2024

At the national level the National Trust, the owner of more coastal land than any other organisation in the country, has adopted a firm policy that its properties should only be defended when it is technically and economically viable. Against this background, Wembury Mill's exposed location - so important in enabling an overshot mill to be built, and also in today's heritage-aware tourist era - may come to be a major handicap. As was the case at the end of the nineteenth century, and again early in the twentieth, the long-term future of the mill and its house is once more bound up with a force over which there is no local control. Will they survive the next hundred years? And, if they do, what state will they be in?

Notes

1 Collings A G (undated) *A Wembury History, Medieval to Modern,* Exeter Archaeology consultant's report, pp 3 and 5. Available as a download from the Wembury Local History Society (WLHS) website (wemburyhistory.org.uk). Also Evans (1910) Wembury: its bay, church and parish, *Report and Transactions of the Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Science,* v 42, pp 517-537.

2 To overcome the inefficiency problems, undershot mills are typically located on rivers with a substantial, preferably fast, flow. Wembury's mill stream is no more than a brook.

3 This early survey date reflects the strategic importance of the Devonport naval base and the surrounding area. The Ordnance Survey had been established as recently as 1791.

4 Pinder, D and Rowland, R (2023) *Langdon's Original Mill*. Available as a download from the WLHS website. Prior to its closure, Langdon Mill's water supply system was almost identical to the arrangements for Wembury Mill at the turn of the eighteenth century.

5 An additional factor making a later date unlikely is that substantial investment in rebuilding would have seemed decreasingly attractive following the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. Thereafter, grain imports at first grew steadily and then rapidly as greatly improved cargo ships made the British market easily accessible to New World producers.

6 The British Newspaper Archive does not hold papers relating to Plymouth and the surrounding area at this time. However, the storm was so momentous that reports from Plymouth were used as the basis for lengthy articles around the country. See, for example, 'The late storms - Plymouth', *The British Press*, 27.11.1824; 'Effects of the late gale', *Durham Chronicle*, 4.12.1824; 'The late storms', *Morning Post,* 6.12.1824.

7 Figure 6 is an extract from the Devon Sheet C.XXX.6 of the Ordnance Survey's 25-inch map of this part of Wembury . It is reproduced under the OS's fifty-year rule. The fact that it is coloured indicates that it was one of the earliest to be produced and was probably surveyed no later than the mid-1850s. The National Library of Scotland (NLS) has a substantial collection of these maps, which were produced in a series of editions up to 1956. Scans of specific sheets can be purchased online from the NLS.

8 Digital copies of both the prospectus and its accompanying map are available from WLHS. Contact via the WLHS website. Among many other things, the map shows the mill's restructured water-supply system, as detailed in Figure 6.

9 Langdon Estate sale prospectus, 1872, p 19.

10 The 1871 census described a second dwelling as Mill Cottage. This was one of two semi-detached cottages which, by 1881, had been combined into today's Bay Cottage (Figure 2). Whether this additional Mill Cottage actually housed mill employees is far from clear. It was certainly not the case in 1871, when the occupant was John Symons, a blacksmith. It is possible that it was occupied by mill labourers between 1830, when the pair of cottages was built, and the 1860s. But this cannot be verified because, most unusually, the cottages were not covered by the censuses from 1831 to 1861, inclusive.

11 Cookson, R (2021) *Feeding the World: Roller milling: a gradual takeover,* Mills Archive, new.millsarchive.org. O'rourke, K H, Prados de la Escosura, L and Daudin, G (2010) 'Trade and Empire' pp 96-121 in Bradley, S and O'rourke, K H (eds) *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Europe: v I Globlization, 1870-1914,* Cambridge University Press. Perren, R (1995) *Agriculture in Depression, 1870-1940,* Cambridge University Press. Avner, A (1991) *The First World War: an agrarian interpretation,* Oxford University Press. See particularly pp 93-103.

12 Langdon Estate sale prospectus, 1872, p 3.

13 By 1914 grassland and animal fodder crops accounted for over 80 per cent of Wembury's farmland. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food: *Statistics Division: Parish Summaries of Agricultural Returns*. These annual data are an important source for historical studies of agriculture at the local

scale. They are housed in The National Archives. Parish data are organised alphabetically in county volumes, and scans can be ordered online.

14 Born Albert Edward Crundall, the speculator later added Becheley to his name, and eventually changed it by deed poll to Albert Edward Becheley Becheley Crundall (no hyphen). No family connection explains these changes. They were very probably meant to impress his clients, many of whom had standing in 'Society'. Crundall purchased, broke up and sold at least twenty country estates during his career, and had irons in a wide range of other fires: building, hotel ownership, timber dealing, land development and even coal mining.

15 The residents who took the initiative and comprised the committee were Mr Rhys Nicholas (Chairman and Hon. Sec.); Commander E T W Church (Vice-chairman); Mrs Cecil Walker (Hon. Treasurer); and Captain R P Giles (Hon. Assistant Secretary).

16 The appeal aroused considerable interest locally and generated numerous newspaper articles dating from 1935-39. These were published chiefly in the *Western Morning News*. This was not the only stretch of threatened coastline in South Devon; there were similar, but much larger, appeals east of Wembury. In particular, the 1930s witnessed the coast from Bolt Head to Bolt Tail being purchased and donated to the National Trust. East of the Salcombe Estuary an appeal was launched for an even longer section of coast stretching to Prawle Point, but this made little progress and was abandoned with the outbreak of WWII. See Pinder, D (2018) 'The National Trust and coastal conservation in Devon', *Report and Transactions of the Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Science,* v 150, pp 365-400. This article can be downloaded from the WLHS website.

17 Parry, J (ed 1997) *Properties of the National Trust,* The National Trust, London, pp 124-125.

18 The National Trust (1984) *Wembury Bay and the Yealm Estuary – Report of Survey.* Archived in Devon County Council's Environment Record (HER1731).

19 Current Google Earth images may not give a focused view of Mill Meadow. However, earlier images can be selected by using the 'History' button. The pond's embankments can best be seen when the image is greatly enlarged. The digital version of the current OS 1: 25000 map shows the millpond's outline much more clearly when it is enlarged on screen. This version can be downloaded when the map is purchased. It can also be viewed, and enlarged, if access to OS Maps Online is available. This requires an annual subscription.