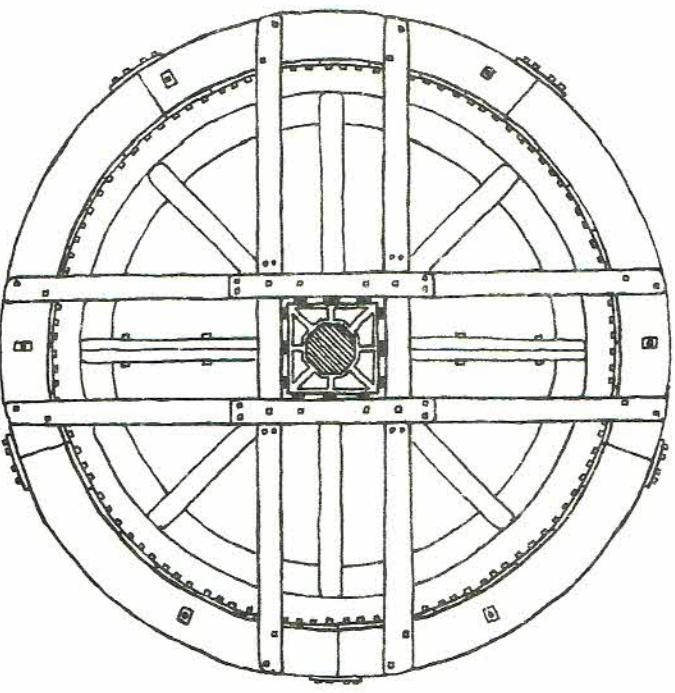


# Warwickshire Watermills

by  
**D.T.N. Booth**



## PREFACE

This survey commenced in November 1969 and was originally intended to be solely a record of the physical remains of watermills within Warwickshire. However, as some historical research was necessary to track down early mill sites, it became clear that the survey would be more complete if at least an outline of the history of each mill was traced. By the end of 1973 more than two hundred and fifty sites had been visited and historical research at the Warwick County Record Office and Birmingham Reference Library was well under way. Other commitments delayed this work, preventing completion until 1977. The important sites were re-visited in the early months of 1978 to up-date the survey. The changing fortunes of the mills in the intervening years for better, and sometimes for worse, were most marked.

The survey is divided into two main parts - a general introduction and a gazetteer of the mills with historical and technical details of each one.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It would be impossible to list the legion of individuals who have provided information for this survey. However, special thanks are due to the staffs of the Birmingham Reference Library and Warwick County Record Office, the members of the Midland Wind and Watermill Group, and all the owners of mills who have so willingly given up time to show me round their properties. The survey would never have got off the ground without the support of Dr. Jennifer Tann, or the initial provision of transport and company by Doreen Fryer. Special thanks are also due to Moura Coleman for photocopying vast quantities of maps and documents, research, and typing historical references. My wife, June, has given constant encouragement and contributed greatly by typing manuscripts and taking hundreds of photographs, some of which are included in this publication.

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## INTRODUCTION

### BUILDINGS

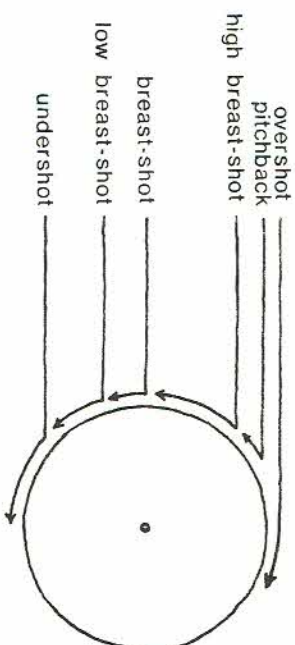
The majority of Warwickshire watermills are small buildings of brick and/or stone with roofs of tile or slate. Many show signs of frequent partial rebuilding. It is quite common to find an eighteenth century mill on much earlier foundations, with nineteenth century additions and alterations. They usually contain two main floors and an attic. In the corn mills an extra half or full floor is often included to accommodate storage bins.

The mills with five floors were either late nineteenth century buildings, using steam as their main source of power, or mills built for processes other than corn grinding.

Most mills have accommodation for the miller adjoining or adjacent, and some provision for the miller's horse and cart. A few have separate granaries, while others are associated with farm buildings. Some corn millers operated bakeries with ovens in an extension to the mill or separate building. One farm wheel remains, never a commercial mill, providing power to drive farm machinery and produce animal foods for Temple House Farm at Temple Balsall.

### WATERWHEELS AND WATER SUPPLY

Thirty-six waterwheels, in greatly varying condition, are known to exist in Warwickshire watermills. Another is thought to exist but permission to view it has been consistently refused. These waterwheels illustrate all the usual types - overshot, pitchback, high breast-shot, breast-shot, low breast-shot and undershot.



Undershot wheels are turned by the momentum of the water striking their floats. The other types rely partly or wholly on the weight of water to turn them. This is usually effected by forming enclosed buckets with a shroud and sole plates or drumboards. However, some breast-shot and low breast-shot wheels have open floats and must rely on fitting the wheelpit very closely to retain the water.

Where a fast flowing stream was not available the maximum head of water obtainable was an important consideration in the location of mills. In the flatter regions of Warwickshire it was sometimes necessary to divert the stream a great distance upstream from the chosen site. An extreme example of this occurs at Cesters Over Mill where the leat to the mill is one and a half miles long producing a head of water

sufficient to drive a 10ft. diameter overshot wheel. The tail race from the mill back to the river is over three hundred yards long. Where the volume of water available was not sufficient for continuous operation of the waterwheel a storage pond was constructed. This could be emptied during working hours and allowed to refill overnight. The majority of breast-shot, low breast-shot and undershot wheels were situated at the end of comparatively short races from the more substantial rivers.

The waterwheels themselves show considerable differences in the details of their design and construction, but fall into two main categories - clasp arm and compass arm. In compass arm wheels the differences in design are most noticeable at the hubs, and the way the arms are attached to them. Whereas in the majority of wheels the arms are bolted to the hubs, on a few they are held in position by keys.

Most wheels are constructed of cast iron with wrought iron floats or buckets. The two clasp arm wheels are of wood, strengthened with iron plates and a few others are of composite construction, with the rims and/or hubs of iron. Wooden axles are not uncommon, occasionally surviving after an iron waterwheel was dismantled for its scrap value.

A brief description of each surviving waterwheel is included below. The dimensions given are as accurate as the awkward situation of many wheels will allow.

#### Arbury Mill:-

high breast-shot - compass arm, 18ft. diameter, 4ft. wide  
axle - wood, octagonal, 2ft. across  
hubs - iron  
arms - wood, 2 sets of 8  
shrouds - wood, 12in. deep  
buckets - wood, 13in. deep  
drumboards - wood

#### Arrow Mill:- (formerly at Bubenhall Mill)

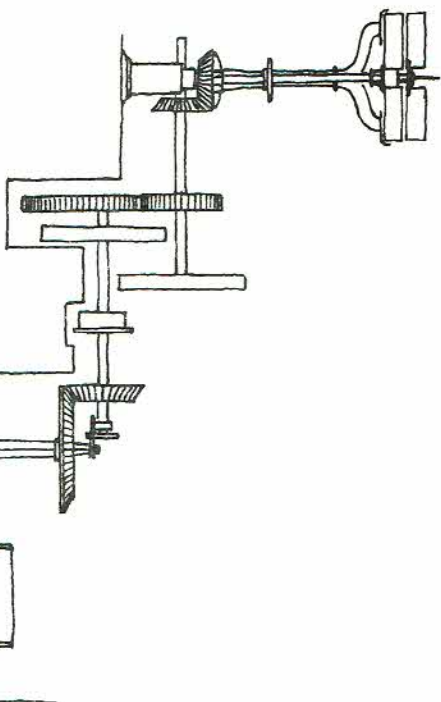
undershot - compass arm, approx. 14ft. diameter, 4ft. wide  
axle - iron  
hubs - iron  
arms - iron  
rims - iron  
floats - wood, on wood starts  
sole plates - wood

#### Baginton Mill:-

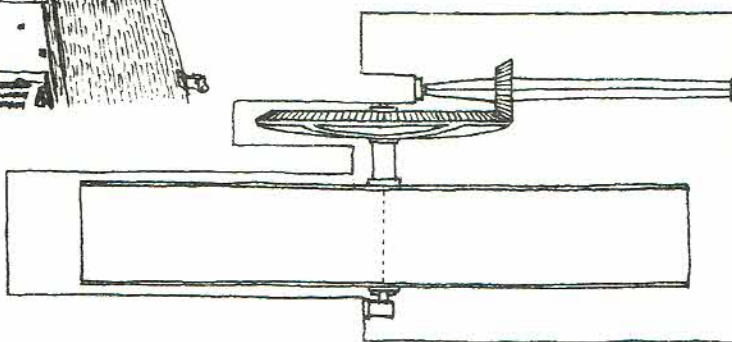
undershot - compass arm, approx. 18ft. diameter, 3ft. 10in. wide  
axle - iron, circular  
hubs - iron, circular  
arms - iron, 2 sets of 7, T-section  
shrouds - iron, totally enclosing floats  
floats - iron, slightly curved  
sole plates - none

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Temple House Farm Wheel 69



#### Blackdown Mill:-

low breast-shot - compass arm, approx. 18ft. diameter, 8ft. 6in. wide  
 axle - iron, circular  
 hubs - iron, circular  
 arms - iron, 3 sets of 6, T-section, most are broken or missing  
 shrouds - iron, only a few sections remain  
 floats - iron, curved, most are missing  
 sole plates - none

#### Blackford Mill, Henley-in-Arden:-

breast-shot - compass arm, 15ft. diameter, 8ft. wide  
 axle - iron, cruciform, 15in. across at hubs  
 hubs - iron, circular  
 arms - iron, 3 sets of 6, T-section  
 rims - iron  
 floats - iron, curved and mounted on iron starts, formerly 36 in number  
 sole plates - iron

#### Blyth End Mill:-

undershot - compass arm, 17ft. 10in. diameter, 5ft. 10in. wide  
 axle - iron, circular, 7in. diameter  
 hubs - iron, circular, cast in two sections  
 arms - iron, 3 sets of 6 with cross braces  
 rims - iron, perforated  
 floats - iron, angled, 28in. deep, mounted on iron starts, 42 in number  
 sole plates - none  
 'R. Sumners, Tanworth' on rims

#### Burton Hastings:-

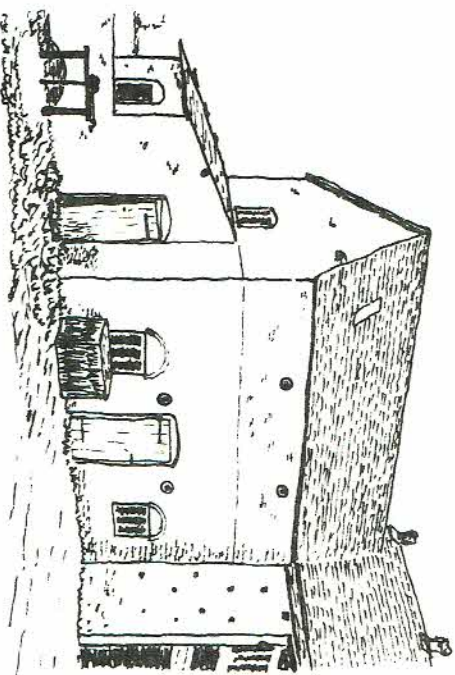
No details known

#### Castle Mill, Warwick:-

undershot - compass arm, approx. 16ft. diameter, 6ft. wide  
 axle - iron  
 hubs - iron  
 arms - iron  
 shrouds - iron  
 floats - iron, curved, formerly 36 in number  
 sole plates - none

#### Cesters Over Mill

overshot - compass arm, 10ft. diameter, 3ft. 7in. wide  
 axle - iron, square, 5in. across  
 hubs - iron, circular  
 arms - iron, 2 sets of 6, T-section  
 shrouds - iron  
 buckets - iron, curved, 24 in number  
 drumboards - iron



Charlecote Mill:-

West wheel - undershot, compass arm, 18ft. diameter, 3ft. 10in. wide  
 axle - iron, circular, 6in. diameter  
 hubs - iron, octagonal, octagonal castings between hubs and axle (14in. sides)  
 arms - iron, 2 sets of 12  
 rims - iron  
 floats - iron, flat, 12in. deep, most are missing, formerly 36 in number  
 sole plates - none  
 'Ball and Horton Stratford-upon-Avon'

East wheel - undershot, compass arm, 18ft. diameter, 3ft. wide  
 axle - iron, circular, 2 hubs on each side of wheel to take sets of arms  
 arms - iron, 2 sets of 12  
 rims - iron  
 floats - iron, flat, 12in. deep, most are missing, formerly 36 in number  
 sole plates - none  
 Cherington Mill:-

breast-shot - compass arm, 12ft. 6in. diameter, 5ft. wide  
 axle - iron, hexagonal, 7in. across  
 hubs - iron  
 arms - iron, 2 sets of 8, T-section  
 shrouds - iron  
 buckets - iron, curved  
 drumboards - wood  
 'James Dagnall, Todenham' on shrouds

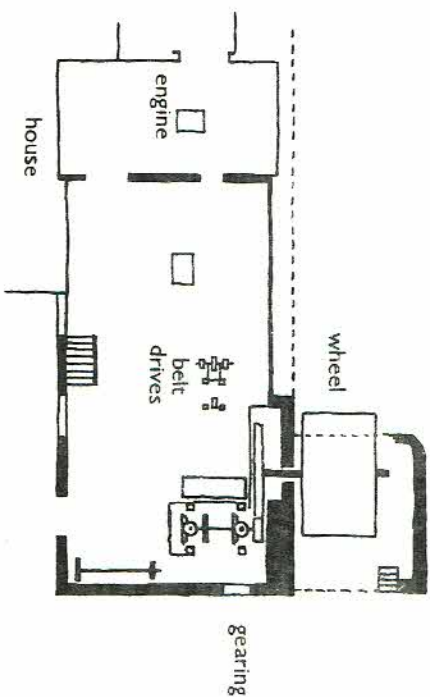
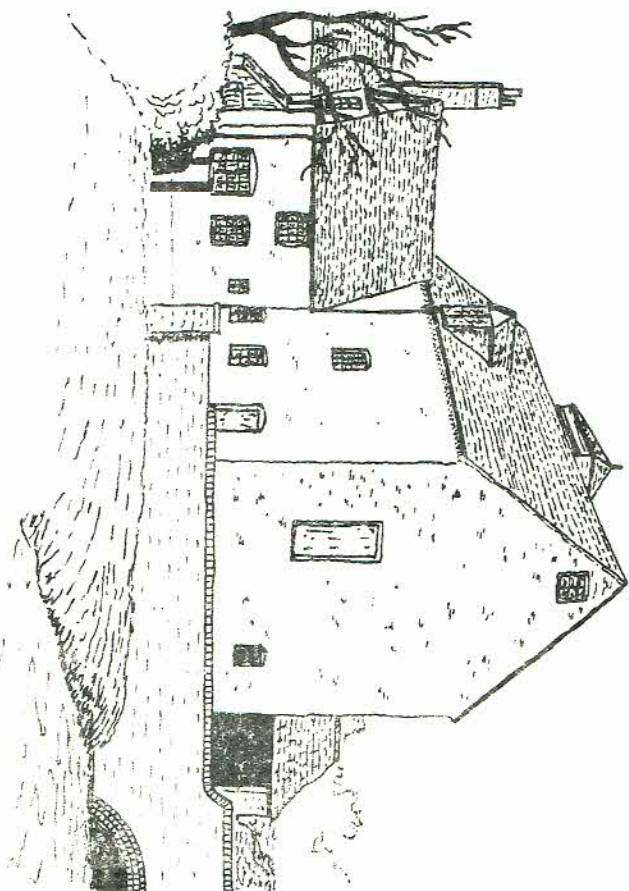
Chesterston Mill:-

overshot - compass arm, 17ft. 6in. diameter, 2ft. 10in. wide  
 axle - iron, circular with 4 grooves for wedges, 12in. diameter  
 hubs - iron, octagonal at centre with packing between hubs and axle  
 arms - wood, 2 sets of 8  
 shrouds - wood, 11in. deep  
 buckets - iron, L-shaped, 15in. deep  
 drumboards - iron

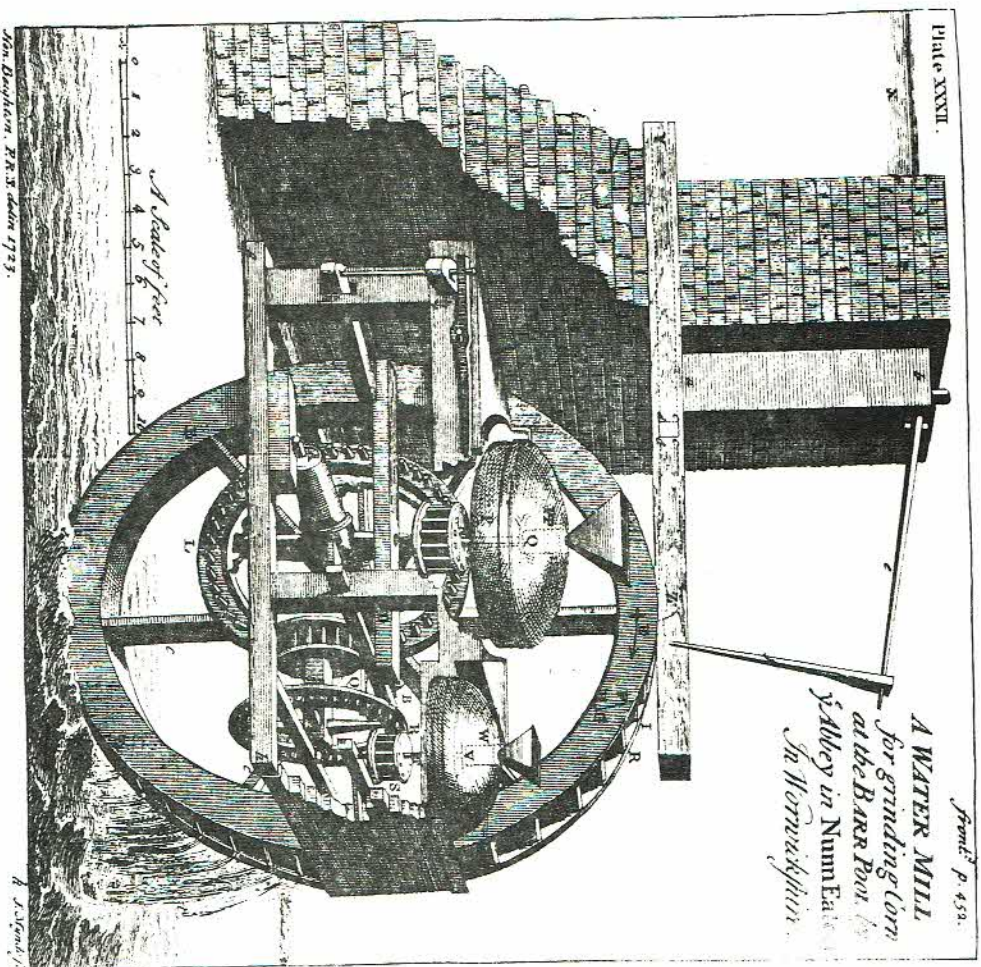
Clifford Chambers Mill:-

low breast-shot - compass arm, 14ft. diameter, 3ft. 8in. wide  
 axle - wood, 18in. diameter  
 hubs - iron  
 arms - wood, 2 sets of 6  
 rims - wood, 7½in. deep  
 floats - wood, on wooden starts, connected by iron tie-rods, 14in. deep  
 sole plates - wood

New Hall Mill 173



Ground Plan



A drawing of the machinery in the mill at Barr Pool, Nuneaton, drawn by Henry Beighon in 1723 and published in J. T. Desaguliers's 'A Course of Experimental Philosophy', (London, 1744).

Daw Mill, Fillongley:-

pitchback - compass arm, 14ft. diameter, 5ft. 4½in. wide  
axle - wood, octagonal, 20in. across  
hubs - iron  
arms - iron, 2 sets of 8  
shrouds - iron  
buckets - iron

Guy's Cliffe Mill:-

undershot - compass arm, approx. 16ft. diameter, 2ft. 3in. wide  
axle - iron, circular  
hubs - iron, circular  
arms - iron, 2 sets of 6  
rims - iron  
floats - iron, mounted on wood starts  
sole plates - none  
'Paul Smith, Coventry' on rims

Henwood Mill:-

breast-shot - compass arm, 12ft. diameter, 5ft. 10in. wide  
axle - iron, circular  
hubs - iron  
arms - iron, 2 sets of 8, circular  
rims - iron  
floats - iron, L-shaped, connected by iron strengthening stays  
'R. Coles & Co.' on hubs

Hoo Mill:-

low breast-shot - compass arm, 18ft. 6in. diameter, 5ft. 6in. wide  
axle - wood, square section, 20in. across  
hubs - iron  
arms - wood, 2 sets of 8  
rims - iron  
floats - originally iron, now mostly replaced by wood. 15in. deep on iron starts  
sole plates - wood (replacing iron), 8in. deep  
'E. White, Redditch'

Long Compton Mill:-

high breast-shot - compass arm, 13ft. diameter, 4ft. wide  
axle - iron, circular  
hubs - iron, hexagonal  
arms - iron, 2 sets of 6, T-section, bolted together around hubs  
shrouds - iron, 11½in. deep  
buckets - iron, curved  
drumboards - iron

#### Maxstoke Mill:-

undershot - compass arm, 14ft. 8in. diameter, 5ft. 4in. wide  
 axle - iron, square section, 9in. across  
 hubs - iron, circular  
 arms - iron, T-section  
 rims - iron  
 floats - wood, 9in. deep, wooden starts  
 sole plates - wood, 7in. deep

#### Mercote Mill:-

overshot - compass arm, 15ft. 2in. diameter, 5ft. 4in. wide  
 axle - iron, cruciform  
 hubs - iron  
 arms - iron, 2 sets of 6, circular section, keyed into hubs  
 shrouds - iron  
 buckets - iron, curved  
 drumboards - iron

This wheel has partly collapsed.

R. Summers, Tanworth' on shrouds

#### New Hall Mill:-

overshot - compass arm, 11ft. diameter, 6ft. wide  
 axle - iron, 9in. across  
 hubs - iron  
 arms - iron, 2 sets of 6  
 shrouds - iron  
 buckets - iron, curved  
 drumboards - wood  
 'T. Price' on shrouds

#### Packington Mill:-

overshot - compass arm, 14ft. diameter, 6ft. 3in. wide  
 axle - wood, 18in. diameter  
 hubs - iron  
 arms - iron, 2 sets of 8, diagonal braces between arms  
 shrouds - iron  
 buckets - probably iron, L-shaped  
 drumboards - probably wood

This wheel is partly destroyed - the buckets and drumboards are missing

#### Ragley Needle Mill:-

breast-shot - compass arm, 13ft. 6in. diameter, 5ft. 6in. wide  
 axle - iron, circular, 7in. diameter  
 hubs - iron, circular  
 arms - iron, 2 sets of 8  
 rims - iron  
 floats - iron, curved, 14in. deep, mounted on iron starts, formerly 32 in number  
 sole plates - rusted away

'Ball and Horton, Stratford-upon-Avon' on rims and hubs

remained with some of the shafting. The only machinery in the mill consisted of a grindstone and a lathe. In 1854 the buildings were leased to Daniel Rowbotham, followed by Thomas Rowbotham in 1861. By 1886, when Messrs. Jagger and Company became the tenants, the building was in poor condition. Most of the windows were broken, and repairs were needed to the floors and ceilings. The buildings stood until the 1950's when they were demolished in the course of redevelopment of the area.

The majority of the water supply to the waterwheels came from a leat cut from the canal system. The water was carried over Collycroft Locks on an aqueduct to reach the mill. The tail races ran underground to return the water to the canal below the locks. Additional water for the mill was provided by a small stream.

\* \* \*

This is by no means the end. In the nine years since the survey commenced, references to more than four hundred mills have been discovered. The sites of some have yet to be located, and there are some probable mill sites to which no historical reference has been found. In the nineteenth century, pumping wheels and farm wheels were installed on estates without publicity, and several may yet remain un-recorded, abandoned but intact. Only when the records of every estate have been thoroughly researched, and every mile of river and stream thoroughly studied, will this survey be finally complete.