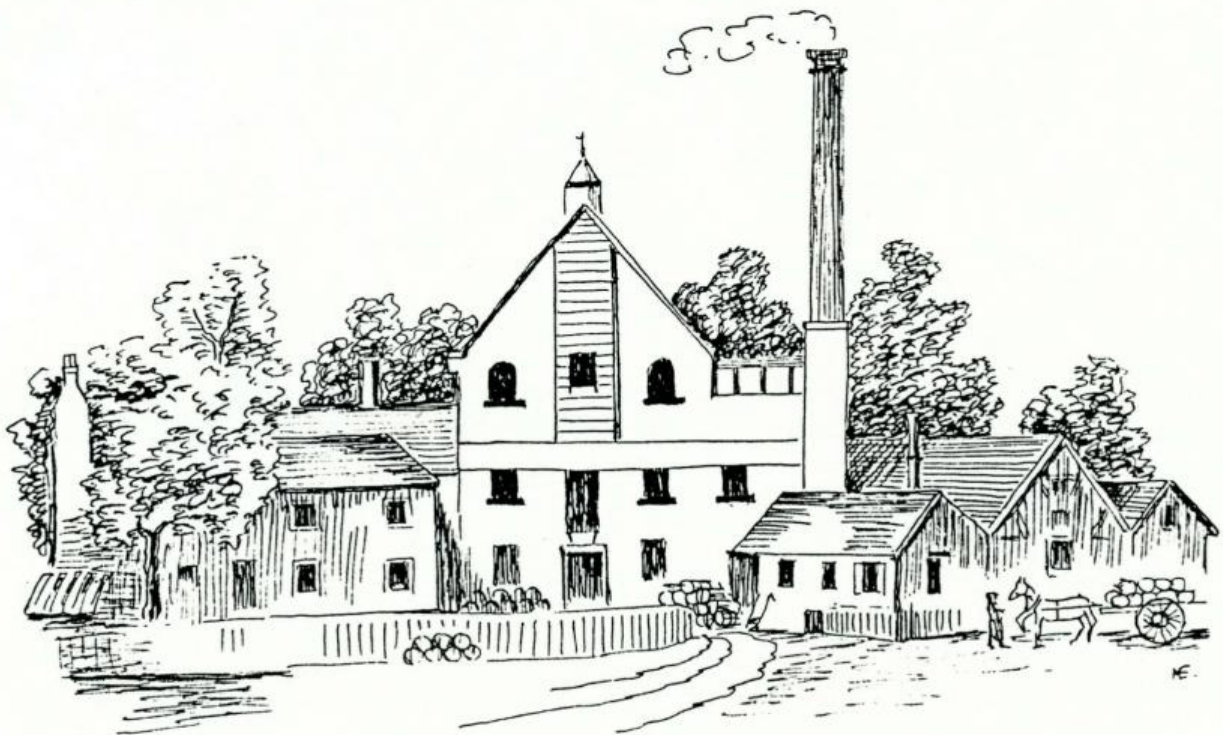


Notes on Industry in Harefield

(1870-1900 Middlesex Gazette)



Harefield Brewery, 1862.

In 1871 a Factories Inspection Act stated that children under 13 must attend school regularly, and that Saturday half-holiday should be given to workers.

Harefield had mills from the time of Doomsday. In the late C19 the Coppermill was converted for the manufacture of paper; capable of turning out "12 tons of writings" per week. It had two steam engines, three Cornish boilers, and 24 acres of land. Mr T.F. Newell, the owner, was a keen Baptist and invited the villagers to tea-meetings, lectures and spelling-bees. Unfortunately in 1879 he was bankrupt.

United Asbestos Co., formed in 1880, took over the mill, and advertised for women over 18, of good character.

In 1889 a Coppermills Fete was held in the field near the Fisheries with swingboats, coconut shies and racing but it was spoilt by the "inclement weather."

Stag-hunting took place frequently in the valley, and following a meet at Maple Cross, the stag plunged into the canal, then landed at

the mill and dashed into the spinning room. He was ultimately noosed and taken in a van, doubtless to be hunted another day.

The Mills ran a Benefit Club ~ there was no sickness benefit at that time ~ and in 1890 and 1893 members received back 90% of their cash, proving, said the reporter, "that regular employment is more healthy than the erratic way of life of the agricultural labourer." Their cricket team was active in the neighbouring villages and in May '96 a new ground was opened in Harefield Park for their use. That year the employees went on an outing to Hampton Court in five brakes, with a band.

The floods of 1888 blocked the footpaths used by employees and the canal was joined to the Colne with footbridges swept away. Carts ferried people to work, though some horses were reluctant to enter the water.

By 1888 the company had contracts for the Royal Navy, Railways, Steelworks etc., and for the German Navy and firms in Europe, Canada, Australia, Japan and others. Though the village benefitted from the steady employment, there was no doubt

danger in the asbestos dust which in spite of ventilators, filled the air in the workshops. One fatal accident was due to the repairing of a belt on a revolving shaft without stopping the machine. The Coroner "remarked on the danger of this practice."

The other main industry in Harefield was the Cement works developed by Coles, Shadbolt & Co, first mentioned in 1882. They advertised for 20 good, strong men for chalk-getting, clay digging etc., 4s. to 6s. per day on piecework. Some for work in kilns could earn 5s.6d up, Summer and Winter. The cement was made with clay and chalk, and was supplied to the Asbestos works via the canal.

Successful the Company certainly was, and well paid its employees, but there was a long series of accidents over ten years causing disablement and death, sometimes involving boys of 15 and 16. One Coroner reported the factory to the County Council.

Cooper's Limeworks employed 10 labourers in 1851. This was also dangerous work and several men were hit by falling chalk and flints

Brickmaking had been carried on from the

1860s, and continued until after 1918. One Harefield worker could make 800 bricks in an hour. They worked from 6am to 6pm, making bricks by hand from slurry and clay with ashes brought by barge from London. They were sold locally or sent by canal boat to London. In 1889 a rise in pay of 4d per thousand bricks was obtained at Yiewsley. A meeting on Harefield Green attended by 600 men heard that bricks sold at 38s. to 42s. per thou: but cost only 17s. 2d to make. About 60 men joined the General Labourers Union, but a meeting the following year showed that Harefield's branch was not growing. Brick-making was apparently only done in Summer. 4s 4d. per thou: was the rate offered in 1891.

Harefield's Brewery in Park Lane, with its Malthouse beside the Green kept the beerhouses supplied for many years. George Webster who took over The Grove about 1880, developed a substantial market gardening industry. He employed a manager and 45 hands, growing exotic fruit and flowers. He also tried to

involve himself in the Water industry, but this failed, and for a time his wells were used for a small mineral water factory.

There were several families in the building industry, notably the Browns of Park Place who employed nearly 70 men and boys. Mr. Brown Jr. in 1896 was in charge of tuition in Carpentry of 48 pupils under the new Technical Education plan.

These industries were certainly of benefit to Harefield, as they provided an alternative to agriculture, and possibly helped to keep farm wages up. The Mills were sold in 1929 and were gradually closed down, to be followed shortly by the Cement Works.

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