

Note on **Forge Mill, Sandwell** (Also known as West Bromwich Old Forge Mill)(West Midlands, formerly Staffordshire)

Grid Ref SP 0283 9274
Trent.

River Tame, tributary of R.

1. I visited this mill in the course of cycling from Birmingham to Wolverhampton to see my mother on Mothering Sunday 1973, and evidently made a visit (of which I have no recollection) again in the autumn of 1981. On one of these occasions I made a jotted note, which untangles as follows:
2. "Forge Mill, Sandwell. Brick with slate roof. 2 floors and attic apparently. Waterwheel carefully estimated [from remains of wheelpit] as 7ft 6 in wide x 16ft dm. 5ft 0in head of water below sluice."
3. I did not see inside on either visit, but think it very unlikely there was machinery left in there.
4. A chapter of D.Dilworth's masterly study "The Tame Mills of Staffordshire" (Phillimore) is devoted to this mill (therein called Old Forge Mill, West Bromwich Forge, or West Bromwich Old Forge Mill) or its predecessors on the site. It contains a photograph of the waterwheel, not in a workable state (stated to be from 1906, but I suspect later). The construction is unusual in having floats and starts, but a continuous sole. He gives the date of conversion of the site from ironworking to corn milling as between 1823 and 1836, but it strikes me the present building may post-date the change of use.
5. It appears the mill is now part of Forge Mill Farm visitor centre, part of Sandwell Valley Country Park.
6. Staffordshire record office appear from their online catalogue to have a least one relevant document.

John Bedington, 2020

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My photos with this note:

B/W photos: Taken 1st April 1973 – ST88a, mill seen from farmyard; ST88b, mill seen from opposite side from farmyard; ST88c, Site of waterwheel pit (opposite side from farmyard)

Colour slides: Taken 1st April 1973 - ST bi 1, mill seen from opposite side from yard. Taken Autumn 1981 – ST bi 2, gable end and yard; ST bi 3, half back view of mill; ST bi 4, the wheelpit.