KINGSBURY MILL,

ST. ALBANS,

HERTFORDSHIRE.

J Kenneth Major.

June 1982.

KINGSBURY MILL, ST. ALBANS

National Grid Reference: TL 138 075

The purpose of this report is to advise on the amplification of the existing mill and museum arrangements in Kinsbury Mill in order to give a more attractive package to visitors.

Kinsbury Mill stands in a bend of St. Michael's Street which leads from St. Alban's town centre to St. Michael's Church and the museum of Roman Verulamium. It is easily identifiable as one goes towards St. Michael's and its lawn and frontage are seen by people going into St. Alban's town.

The frontage to the road, behind the lawn and the remarkable boulder of pudding stone, is a two-storeyed range of brick surmounted by white-painted weatherboarded gables. The frontage consists of the miller's house surmounted by two gables, and the mill surmounted by a much larger gable. The mill is entered by the mill yard which has been opened out to form a car park for the mill. The mill extends behind the miller's house up to the former bakery chimney. This elevation and the rear of the miller's house have a single storey of brick surmounted by a first floor faced in white weatherboard. The mill stream passes between the yard and the miller's house. There is a two-storeyed stable block with an upper granary floor. The upper floor of this stable block is connected to the mill by an escape stair and link put in when the mill ceased to work and was first made into a mill museum.

The mill is powered by a breast-shot waterwheel which is driven by water from a mill pond which is fed by the river Ver. The water-wheel drives the mill by means of a cast-iron pit wheel on the main shaft, and through a cast-iron wallower on the upright shaft. The three pairs of millstones were driven from below by means of stone nuts which engaged with the great spur wheel. The upright shaft carries a crown wheel above the millstones from which ancillary machinery was driven.

The mill has already been altered from a working corn mill to a building which is open to the public. The machinery, which is rotated by the waterwheel, is protected by perspex screens and there are substantial hand rails around the waterwheel and the hatches. The 'means of escape' rules are complied with by the introduction of a protected escape stair by the doors on the St. Michael's Street frontage, by a protected stair in the link between the stables and the mill, and by easy-going open stairs which have replaced the steep original stairs of the mill.

The visitor comes in past a pay counter, goes round the wheel space and hatches and enters the mill proper beside the machinery in the hurst frame. The permanent machinery is all in place and there are several objects on display in the remaining space on this floor. The mill office is still in place but it does not form part of the display. The visitor then goes upstairs to the first floor where the millstones are on display with the original ancillary nachinery in place in the space around the millstones. In the space over the miller's office there is a display of farm machinery and tools, some of which have no relationship to corn or milling. In the space over the entrance counter there is an empty room through which one reaches the upper storey of the stable block. One bay of this upper storey is devoted to a display of harness.

At present the mill lacks impact because the machinery is unconnected, and although it rotates, it does not work and there is none of the atmosphere of a corn mill.

The use of the mill as an object of display falls into two portions: the corn mill and the ancillary space.

The display of the corn mill is not a difficult problem. Much of what has been done already is perfectly proper and satisfactory. What is lacking is the passage of grain through the millstones and its conversion to meal. This would create interest and atmosphere

and remove the sterility of the present arrangement. The westernmost pair of millstones could be brought back into service. Grain, probably barley or wheat, could be prepared for a farmer to use for his animals. This could be given as a free service to the farmer: in effect for borrowing his grain. The grain could be stored in a hopper above the millstones and could be fed through the millstones to be collected in sacks at the foot of the chute. There are small elements of that unit missing: the cotton chute above the millstones, the fittings of the millstones, crook string, willow etc. The stones would need to be dressed and the millwork checked by a millwright. As the millstones would need to be dressed, the stone-dressing tools could be part of the display on the third pair of stones, with one or two harps of the dressing freshly cut in the bedstone.

The millwork, as the machinery is called, is at present rotated without any millstones turning or any other milling equipment being used. The machine spaces are protected by sheets of perspex screwed to the frames. This gives some protection within the meaning of the 'Health and Safety at Work Act'. This will beed to be re-considered as children could pass under it and gain access to moving parts. It is not enough, in the terms of the Act, to place machines to fill the gaps. If the millstones are brought into work then the whole question of safety protection should be re-examined. In placing screens to protect the machinery some consideration must be given to the need to gain speedy access to the gear space in an emergency.

The ancillary machinery, of which there is a lot, needs to be displayed in its original positions so that its functions may be more readily understood. Even if machines are not in use, drawings showing their purpose and method of working should be part of the captions.

The corn-grinding watermill should form the primary display of the museum and this would still leave space for further display of

associated subjects. The mill office, by the St. Michael's Street door, could be furnished to look like a miller's office. There could be displays of corn chandlers' catalogues, calendars, machine advertisments and, on the desk, the day books, account books and bag tickets would add to the interest and validity of the display. This could well be a surface display with cupboards and drawers available for storage.

On the first floor the space now occupied by general tools could have a display, backed by photographs, of the work of the millwright, millstone dressing, and the tools associated with these crafts. The long space over the stables could be developed as a display of general farm tools and examples of country crafts. The use of these spaces should not seem to be haphazard.

The room beyond the millstones - between them and the central staircase - should be held as an exhibition space so that the area could be used as a gallery for pictures or could receive a travelling exhibition such as that produced by the S.P.A.B. of 50 years of the Wind and Watermill Section. Here the walls, which are weatherboarded, should have panels affixed on which pictures can be mounted. The panels should be capable of adjustment in number and size, and they should also be designed so that the walling system is not obscured.

The mill as a whole is an exhibit and there should be a standard form of caption and 'legend' on the exhibits, fixed equipment and machinery.

The entrance office and counter could be developed into a shop area related to the mill. In this area books, postcards and souvenirs could be sold. Flour, for baking and human consumption, would not be produced in the mill easily because of the 'Clean Food Acts', but supplies could be bought in and bagged up for sale in distinctive 'Kingsbury Mill' bags. If the proposal for a cafe were to be carried out then the baking for that should be demonstrably using the same

kind of flour as that sold in the shop.

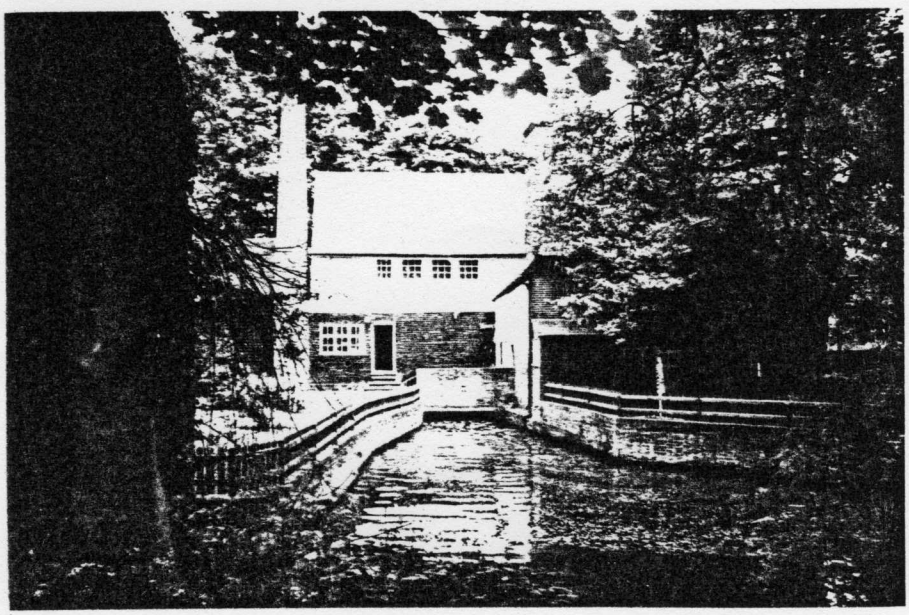
The various suggestions made in this report could do a great deal to amplify the present arrangements and to bring in more visitors. The mill is in a good tourist area and should do well by being advertised by its own visitors, i.e. by word of mouth. At present it is not quite exciting enough to be a draw.

J. Kenneth Major, B.Arch., R.I.B.A., F.S.A.
2 Eldon Road,
READING,
RG1 4DH.

June 1982

FRONT TO ST MICHAEL'S STREET.

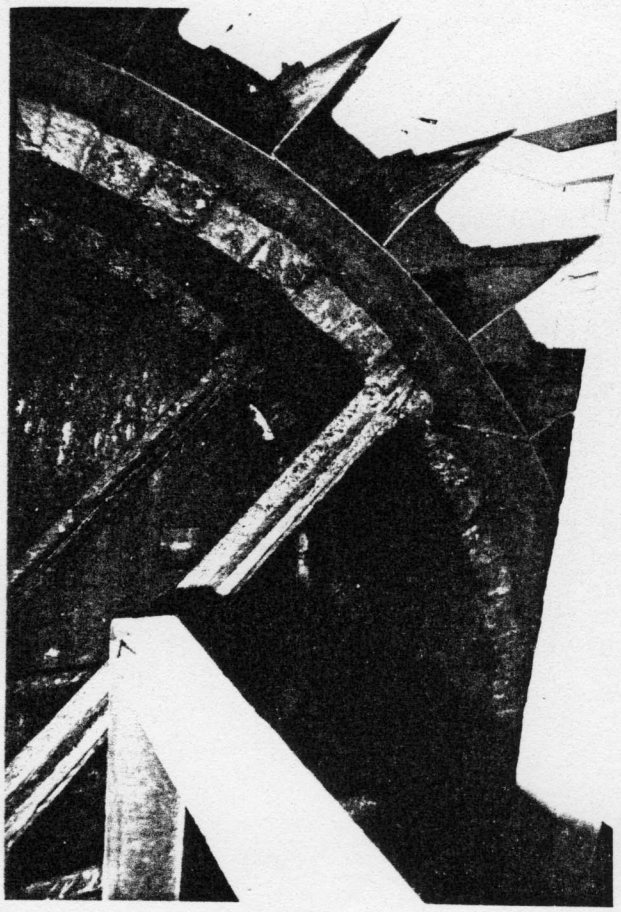
FRONT WITH PUDDINGSTONE.

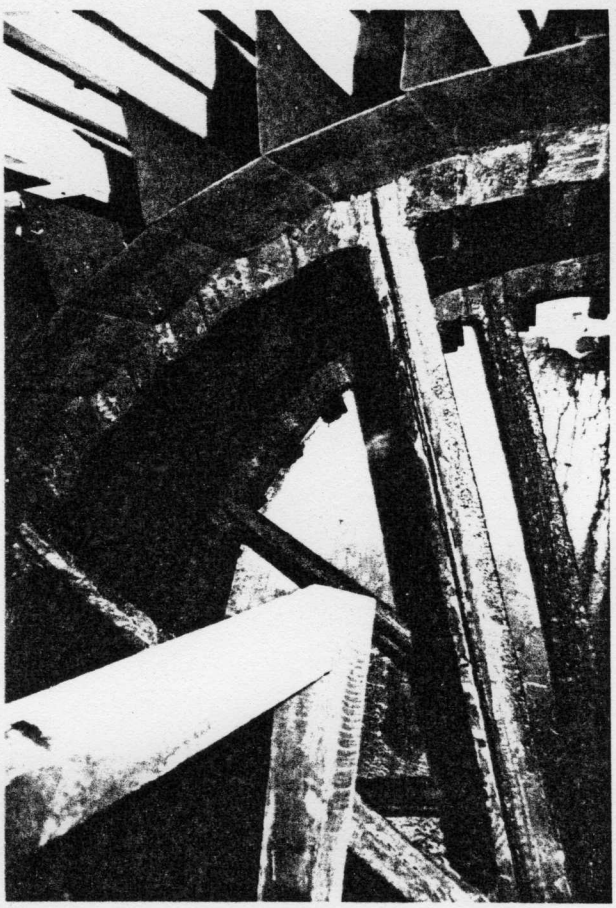


TAIL RACE FROM ACCESS ROAD

KINGSBURY MILL, ST ALBANS.

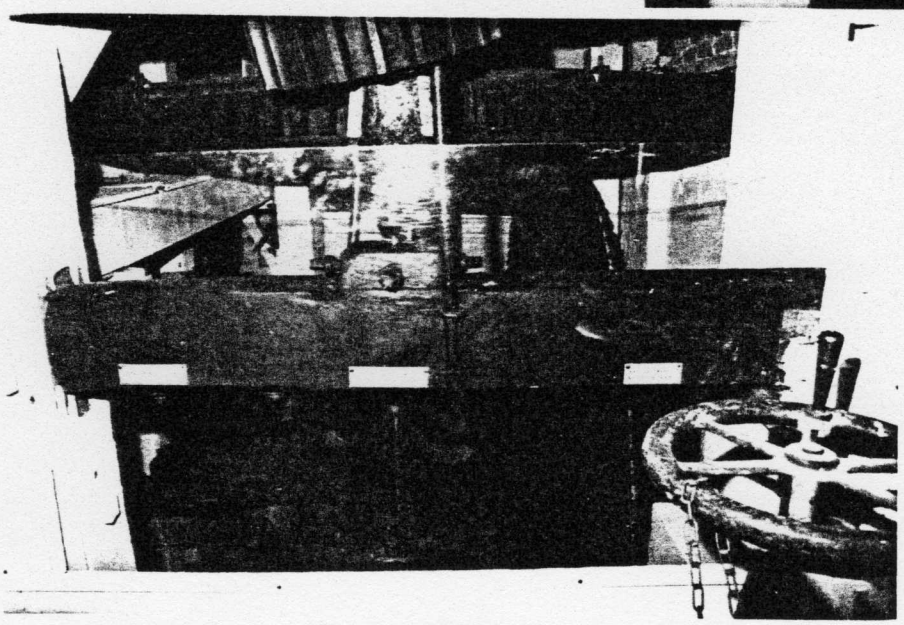
STABLEYARD AND MILL.





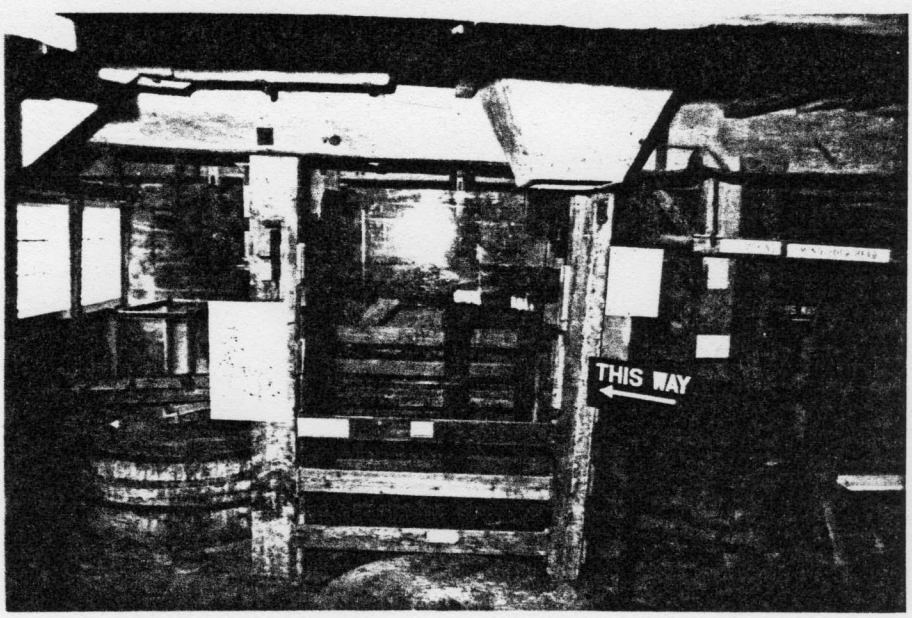
WATERWHEEL FROM SHAFT DOOR.

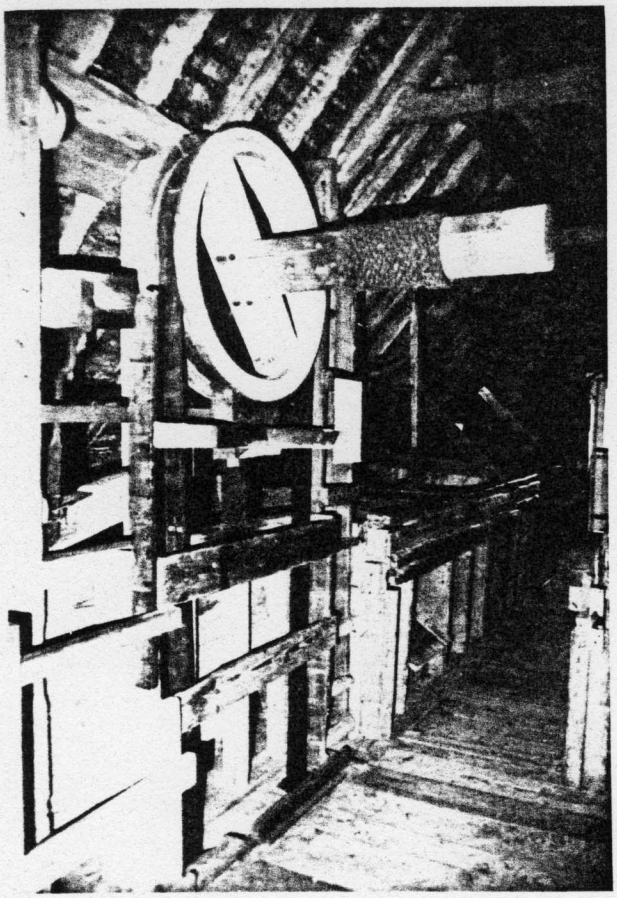
GEAR SPACE AT GROUND FLOOR LEVEL.

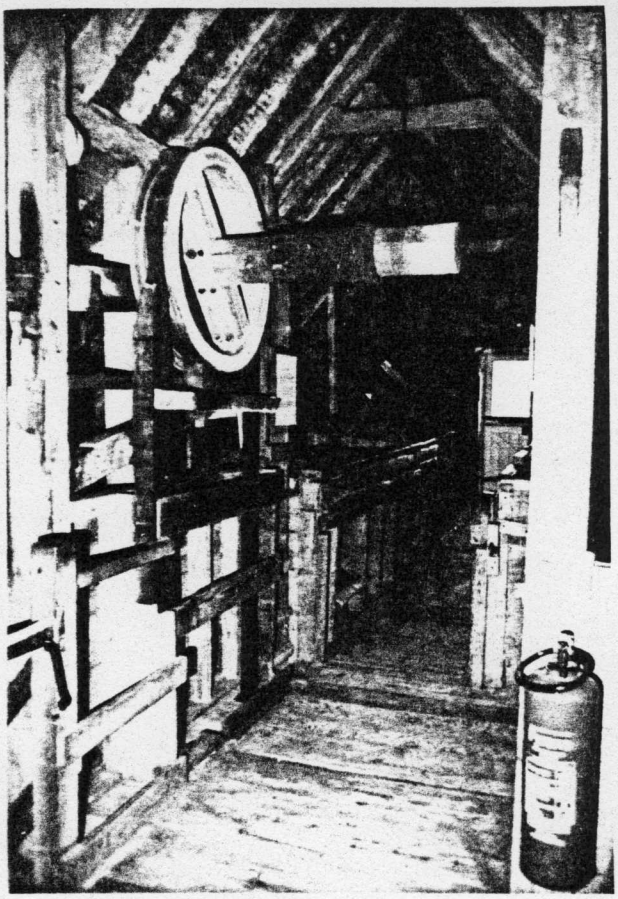


GREAT SPUR AND PIT WHEELS.

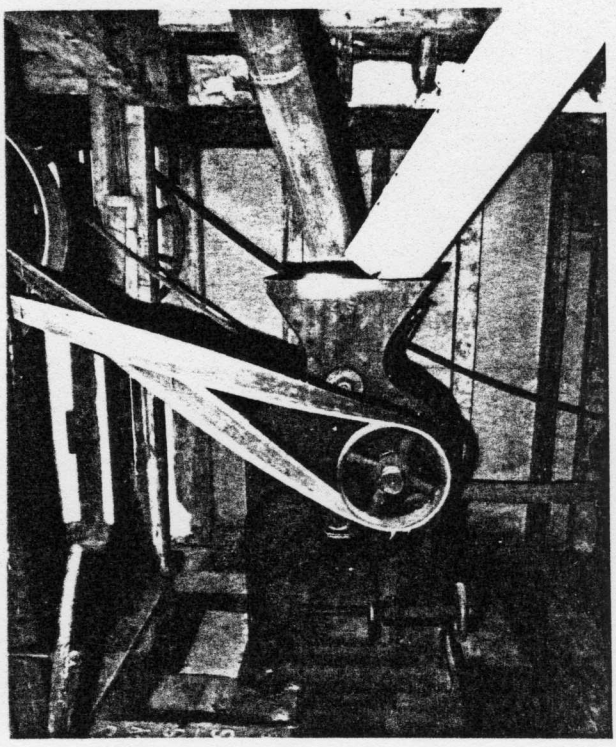
MILLSTONES AND GEARS - FIRST FLOOR.

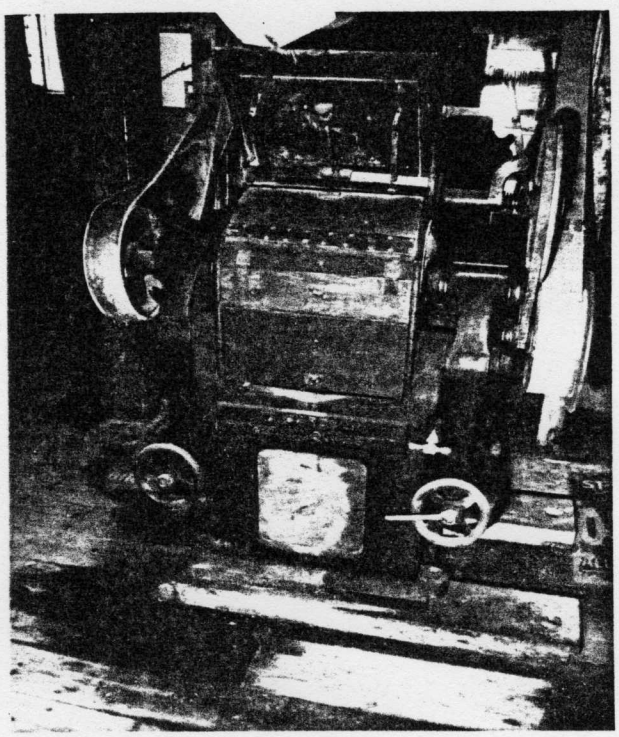




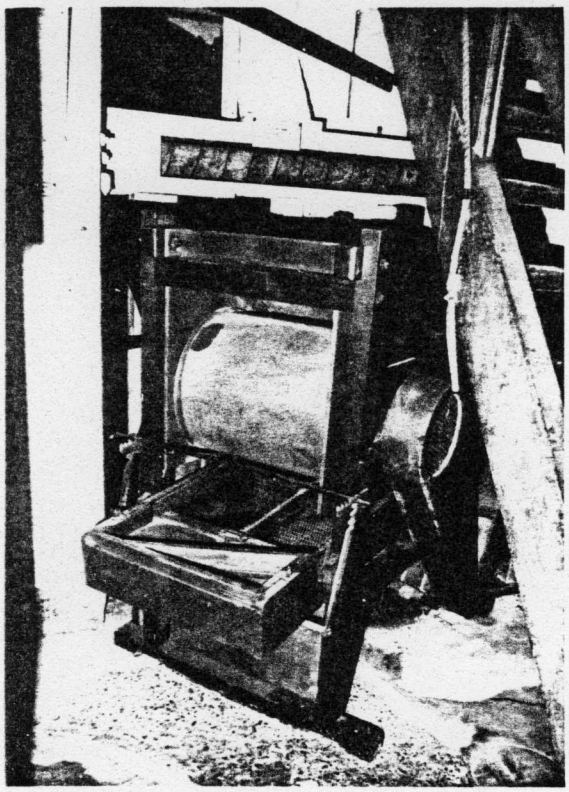


GALLERIED BIN FLOOR & SACK HOISTS.

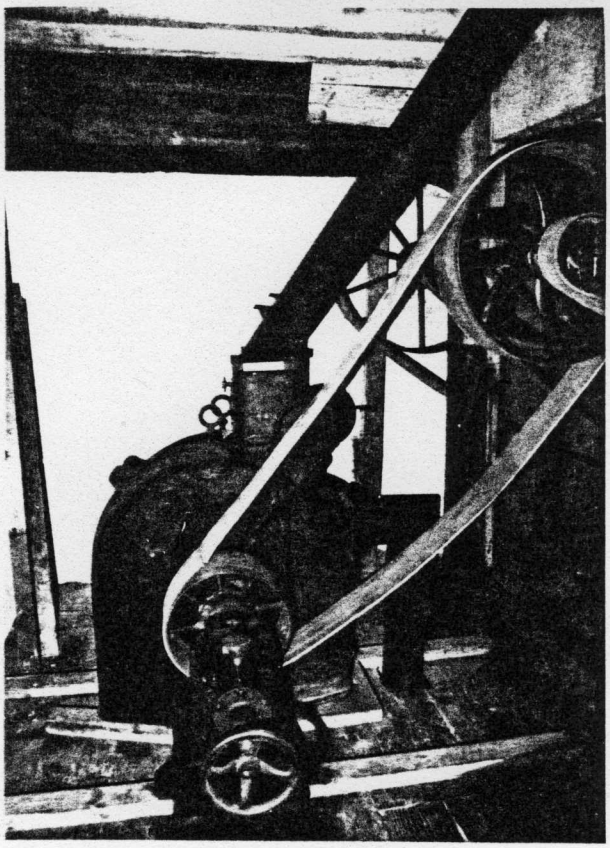




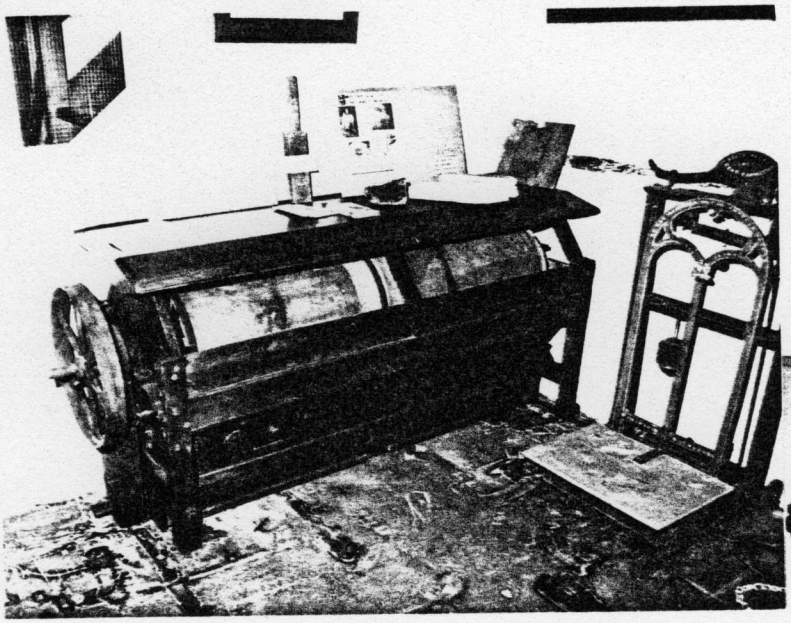
CRUSHING PLANT.



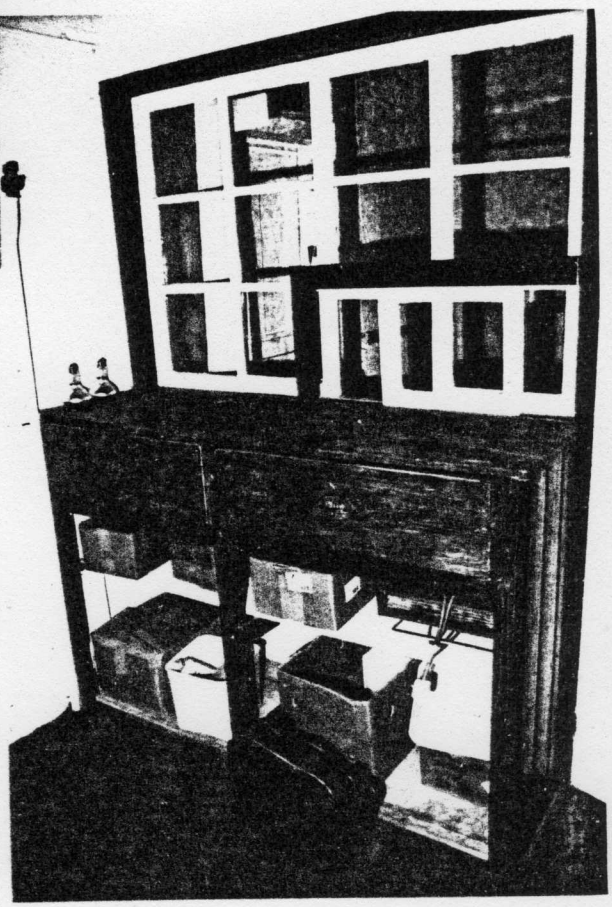
CLEANER



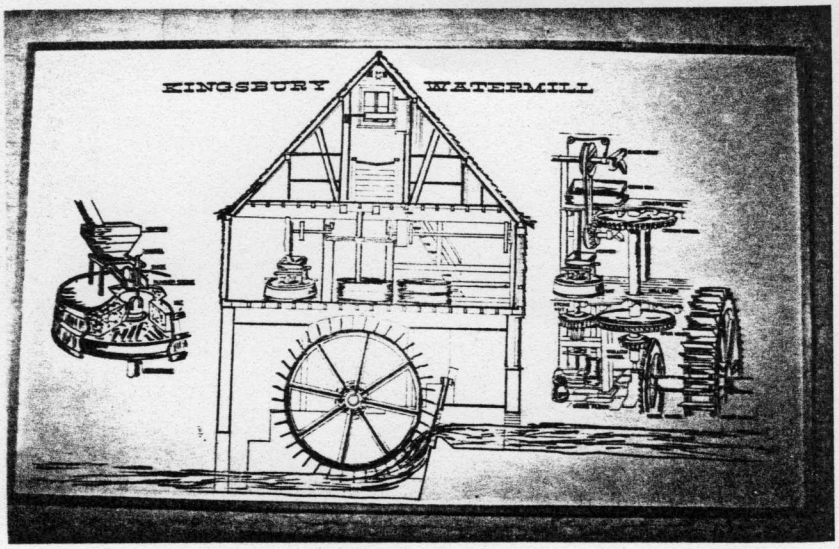
KIBBLER.



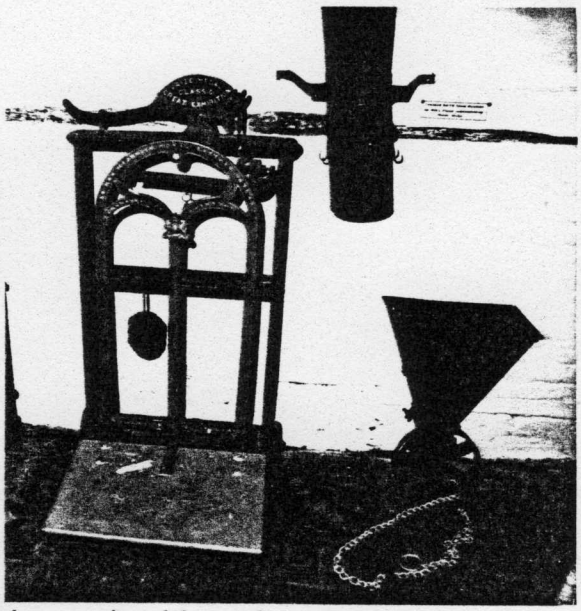
CLEANER & WEIGHING MACHINE



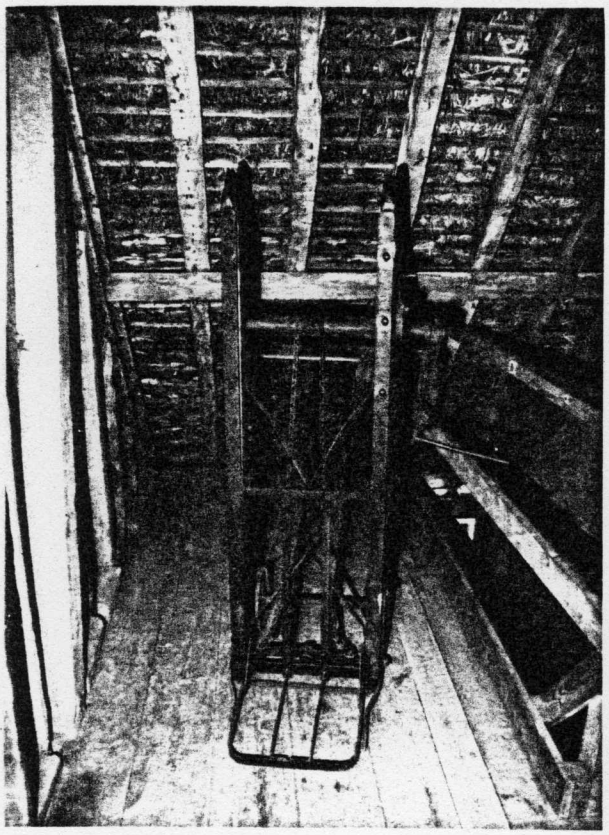
INSIDE THE OFFICE



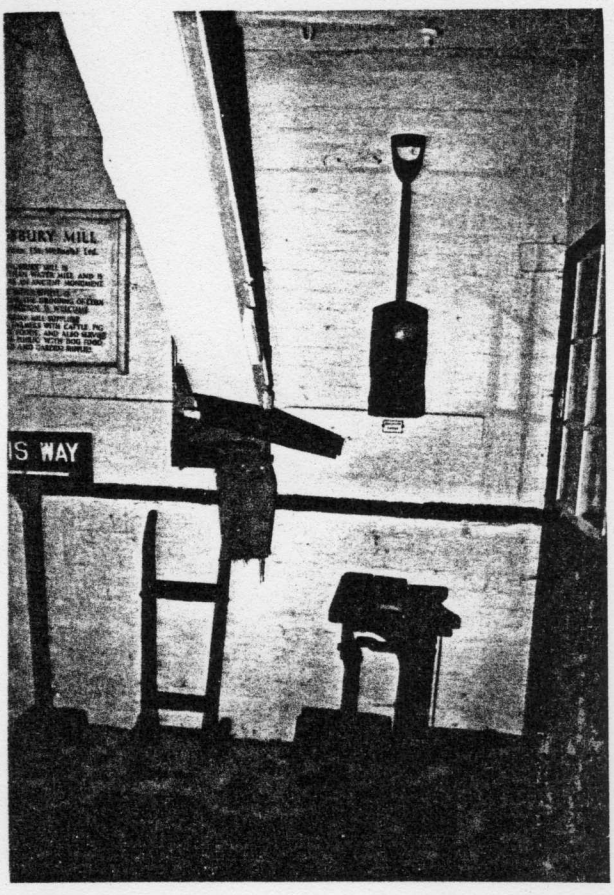
DISPLAY DRAWINGS.



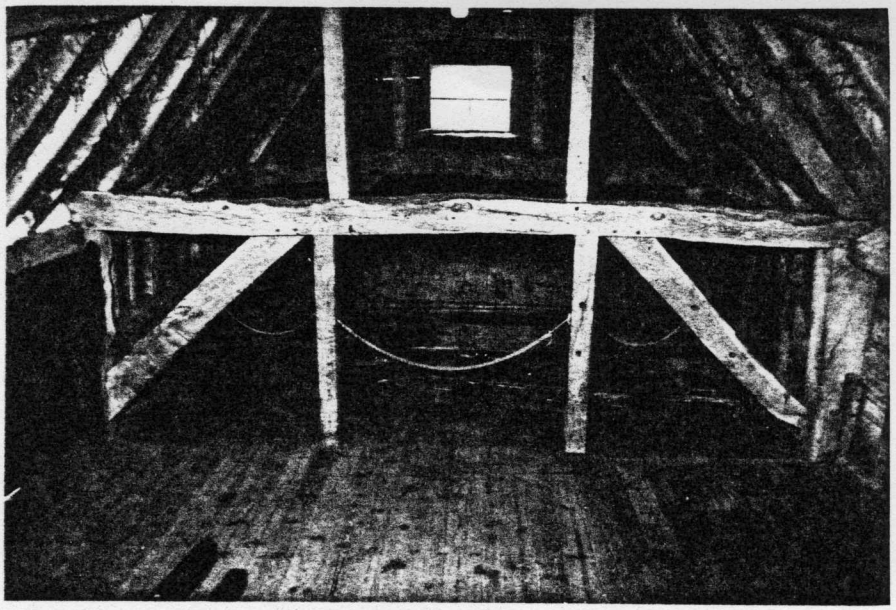
WEIGHING MACHINE



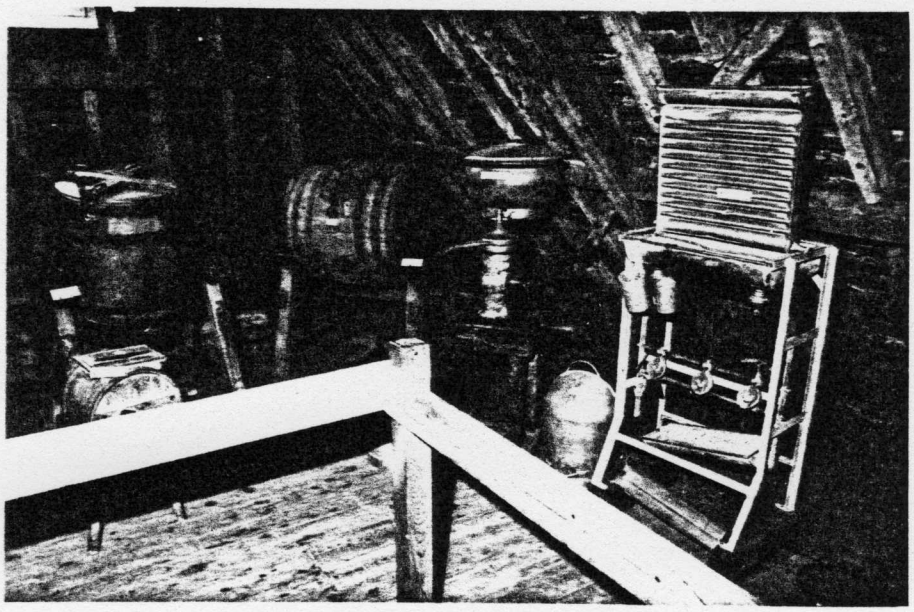
SACK LIFT.



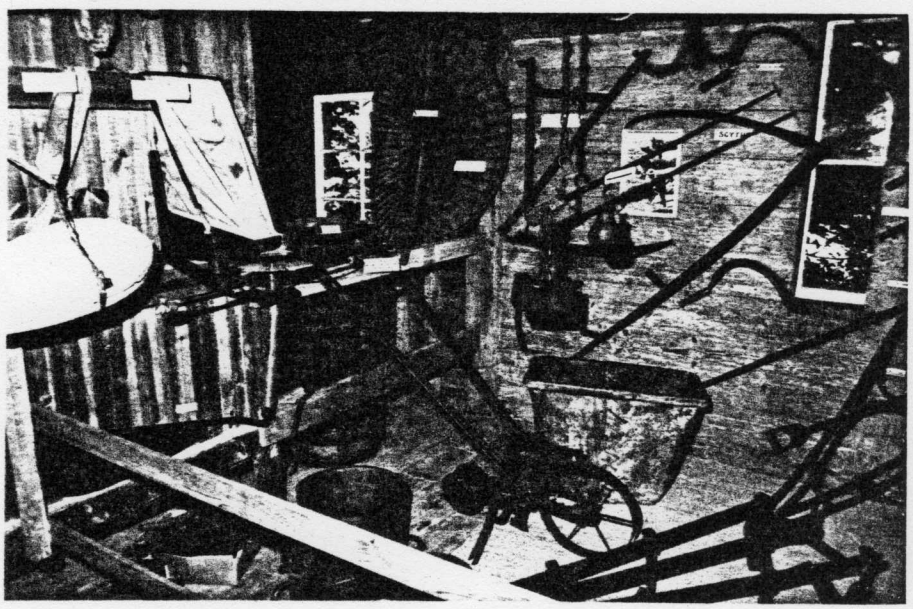
TOOLS.



LOFT OVER STABLES.

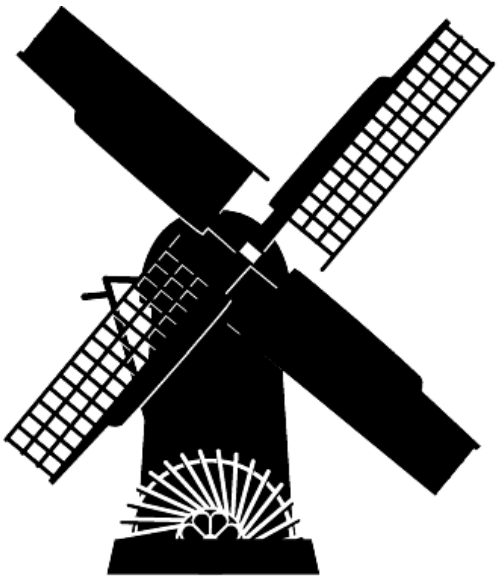


MILK MACHINERY IN MILL.



FARM TOOLS IN MILL.

© Mills Archive Trust



Mills Archive Trust

Catalogue Reference: J Kenneth Major Collection