

Thomas French

Born 1796 Wixoe, Suffolk

Died 29.04.1868 Oakington, Cambs.

Married Sarah Tokley Long Melford 02.03.1820

It seems likely that Thomas' father Prentis John French and his grandfather Prentes French were both Millers in the Suffolk/Cambridgeshire area. His place of birth suggests that his father was working at the Wixoe watermill at that time.

His first two children sons **William** born 1822 and **Josiah** 1826 were baptised at Long Melford, baptism records shows Thomas as 'Miller'.

Baptism records for his other children show that Thomas moved around presumably to find work at different mills. In 1831 he was at Haverhill, Suffolk; by 1837 at Hauxton, Cambs where son **George** was born and in 1839 at Harston , Cambs where his eighth child **Alfred** was born in 1841. The 1841 census shows Thomas, Sarah and seven children living at Windmill House, Harston with his occupation and that of his eldest son both given as 'Miller'. The family had moved on again by 1851, he is shown as Miller (Journeyman) in that census and in 1861 Thomas, Sarah and one daughter were living in Oakington, Cambs.

William, Josiah, George and **Alfred** are all shown in later records to have become millers.

William French

Born 1822 at Long Melford (Alpheton) Suffolk
Died 23.03.1901 Buried at Histon Road Cemetery, Cambridge
Married Rebecca Pratt 1847

The 1841 census shows William living with his parents at Windmill House, Harston, Cambs. His occupation is given as Miller.

In 1847 William acquired a lease on a 'mill and other buildings lately erected' at Chesterton, Cambridge. The 1851 census shows William, aged 27, his wife and two children **Arthur Pratt** b.1849 and **Frederick** b. 1851 living at Bermuda Row, Chesterton a short distance from the Mill. William's brother **George** was also living at that address and is shown as Miller presumably working with his brother.

In 1853 William bought the freehold of the ½ acre containing the Mill and buildings for £440 at public auction. This is recorded as 'land with windmill, granary, stable and outhouses and a newly built cottage comprising a parlour, back kitchen, two bedrooms over, a wash house and other conveniences approached by a 20 foot road from Victoria Road and by a 12 foot road from Histon Road'. To this he added a number of plots of adjoining land .

William must then have moved into the cottage. The 1861 census shows him to be living with his wife and seven children at Windmill Field. His occupation is given as Miller employing three men.

The 1871 census shows the family still at Windmill Field. William was then employing six men. His eldest son **Arthur Pratt** was also living there and is shown as Miller presumably working with his father.

William retired around 1880 and his third son **Edmund** took over the running of Chesterton Mill. The 1881 census lists him as corn miller employing five men and two boys . His younger brother **George H French** was living with them and is also shown as Corn Miller.

In 1881 William bought the watermill/roller mill at Hildersham and **Arthur Pratt** moved from Pampisford Mill where he was by then working to Hildersham to run that mill for his father.

In the early 1890s and **Arthur Pratt** returned to live at and run Chesterton Mill.

Four of William's five sons worked, at least for some time, in milling and related trades. **Arthur Pratt** was the only one to work only as a miller. **Edmund** spent most of his life as a miller but also had a business as a corn and flour dealer. **Frederick** became a Baker and Corn Dealer and **G H French** worked as a miller then set up business as a Corn and Flour Merchant.

Arthur Pratt French

Born 1849 Chesterton, Cambridge

Died 23.04.1923 Chesterton Mill, Cambridge. Buried Histon Road Cemetery

Married Sophia Graves around 1875

Arthur Pratt grew up with the thriving business his father ran at Chesterton Mill. The 1871 census shows him as a Miller living with his parents at Windmill Field. He married around 1875 and moved to the Pampisford Mill, probably living in one of the adjacent Mill Cottages. He is shown as living there with his wife and first three children in 1881. Later that year he moved to Hildersham Watermill which his father had just bought. The 1891 census shows Arthur Pratt, his wife and seven children living at the Mill. The eldest son Arthur William would later often talk to his daughter Nancy about their childhood at Hildersham and she recorded her recollections of this (1)

A little after this Arthur Pratt returned to Chesterton Mill to take over that business on the retirement of his father. The business was then operating both Chesterton and Hildersham Mills. Consideration was given to the installation of a Roller Mill at Hildersham in 1894 but this work does not seem to have gone ahead and the Mill was sold in 1904. (2)

Arthur Pratt's fourth son **Edwin** worked with his father at Chesterton Mill and took over the business on his retirement.

(1) A copy of Nancy French's notes on her father's recollections of growing up at Hildersham Mill in the 1880s are in the box file.

(2) Some correspondence relating to the proposed Roller Mill and some papers relating to the sale are in the box file

Edwin French

Born 27.05.1883 Hildersham Mill, Cambs.

Died 26.10.1956 Chesterton Mill, Cambridge

Married Edith Maud Wallis 26.09.1912

Edwin took over the business from his father around 1910. He was joined by his son Roger in 1934 and they then ran it until the early 1950s when his son **Roger** took over for the last few years until the business closed in 1955.

By the 1950s the business employed only two men Vic Rowse and **Bill Mead**. Mr Mead began work at Hauxton Mill at the age of 14 and then spent 38 years working for the French family 19 at Chesterton Mill and after the closure of that business a further 19 years for **Alfred French & Sons**

Roger French

Born 10.07.1918 Chesterton Mill, Cambridge

Died 13.10.1992 Chesterton Mill, Cambridge

Married MMC Norton 1945

Roger French joined the family business from school in 1934 and worked with his father until the early 1950s when he took over for the last few years until the business closed in 1955.

Alfred French

Born 26.12.1841 Windmill House, Harston, Cambs.

Died 1921 buried Histon Road Cemetery, Cambridge

Alfred set up business as Gusto Mills, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge. This business was carried on by his son Albert and other family members. It is still (2006) trading under the name of Alfred French & Sons as a corn and animal feed merchant although no longer connected to the French family.

Mr Bill Mead

Born 1911

Mr Mead began work at Hauxton Mill, Cambs at the age of 14 and then spent 38 years working for the French family, 19 at Chesterton Mill, Cambridge and after the closure of that business a further 19 years for **Alfred French & Sons**, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge. An appreciation of his contribution to Cambridge milling was published, in the Cambridge Evening News, on his retirement in 1976.