

Newbury
Bucks
Tuesday 24th Jan., 2006

Dear People,

When I opened your Autumn Hill News, I found myself looking at a Hollander beater. As somebody once said, that took me back a bit.

In the early '60s I worked at Colthrop Mills in Thatcham. Though at the time it was just a job, I realize now I saw quite a span of history.

I worked on what, as far as I know, was the newest and biggest board mill on the planet. There was a model of it in the Science Museum.

In the same period I worked on what was possibly one of the oldest paper machines around. There were two paper machines, the younger one having 1899 in some of its castings. It made rag felt which would become roofing felt or very cheap floor covering. The rag mountain was home to dozens if not hundreds of feral, tailless tabby cats.

The old machine made a kind of jute paper that became the middle corrugation in corrugated cardboard boxes. It was driven by one big electric motor and an upright twin cylinder steam engine. The changing of reels involved death defying tricks on the part of three or four lads every

half hour.

Both these machines were fed from Hollander or Bedrans beaters. No hydropulpors; but one cone refiner.

The whole site was run by three steam turbines instead of being on the National Grid so there was plenty of "second hand" steam to heat drying cylinders as well as running the little steam engine, for Number two paper machine.

The turbines were run on coaldust. Bearing in mind the Kennet & Avon Canal and the railway ran through the site, I suppose it was quite logical that the coal dust came in by road.

Since there is now no trace of paper or board making for the first time in probably about six hundred years, just vast areas of warehousing and haphazard storage, a book has been brought out: "Colthrop Mills Remembered."

It was written and published by Robin Doe in 2003.

Its ISBN is 0-9538106-1-5.

I have a copy but I don't know if there are any more about. Somebody at SPAB who is interested might well have a copy.

If this lot is of any interest please get in touch

Yours Sincerely

Don Carter.

DON CARTER