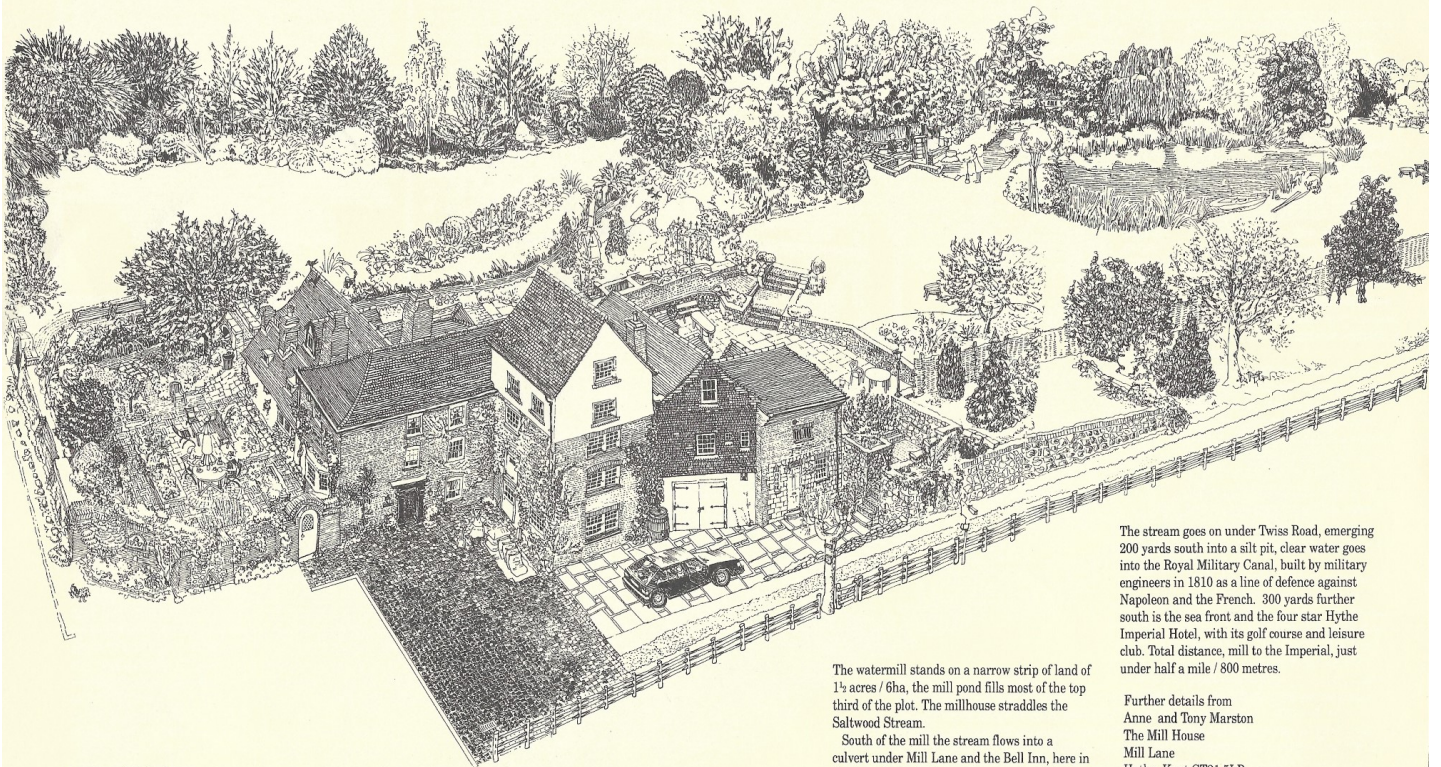


Remember the Watermill at Hythe



Drawn and devised
by Rufus Segar
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at The MacSegar Press
Sandacre, Sandling Road, Hythe

The watermill stands on a narrow strip of land of 1½ acres / 6ha, the mill pond fills most of the top third of the plot. The millhouse straddles the Saltwood Stream.

South of the mill the stream flows into a culvert under Mill Lane and the Bell Inn, here in the tunnel is a shelf, used for contraband in the 17th and 18th century. If the officers of the Preventive Service were about, the dam on the millpond would be opened, flooding the culvert.

The stream goes under Twiss Road, emerging 200 yards south into a silt pit, clear water goes into the Royal Military Canal, built by military engineers in 1810 as a line of defence against Napoleon and the French. 300 yards further south is the sea front and the four star Hythe Imperial Hotel, with its golf course and leisure club. Total distance, mill to the Imperial, just under half a mile / 800 metres.

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THE WATERMILL

The mill is on the site of Damer's Mill shown on Thomas Hill's hospital map of 1685, the main mill building is dated 1773 and most of the machinery is Victorian foundry work replacing earlier wooden versions.

Richard Piety was the owner in 1823, William Pay was his tenant in 1847. George Burch took over in the early 1850s.

Water & Wind vs Steam

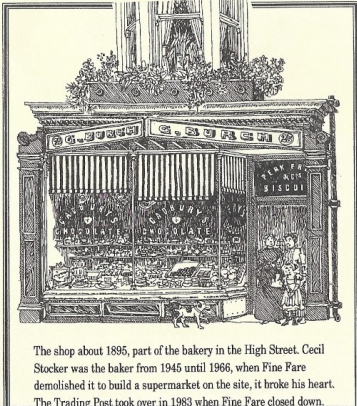
At the start of the 19th century Hythe had four windmills as well as the watermill. Three more windmills were built between 1813 and 1834. The last one was Hythe's largest, in Windmill Yard, Windmill Street, built by the Horton family. This windmill was taken down and changed to a steam powered mill in 1850 with a 20hp beam engine by Hall & Gifford. This competition saw off the smaller windmills, two had been demolished by the Hortons in 1834, a year after Windmill Yard Mill opened, three other windmills were taken down and carted off, variously to Lympe, Ramsgate and Cheriton. The Hortons closed the steam mill in 1887, selling the engine back to the makers and buying Horn Street Mill on the Seabrook Stream in Cheriton.

The start of the 20th century saw Hythe with only two mills, Burch's watermill and the Stade Mill, a smock windmill in Park Road, this was demolished in 1902/3.

Burch's Mill

Born in Mersham in 1817, George Burch was a miller in Wittersham before coming to Hythe, his brother Job, 1814-76 was the miller at Swanton Mill on the East Stour.

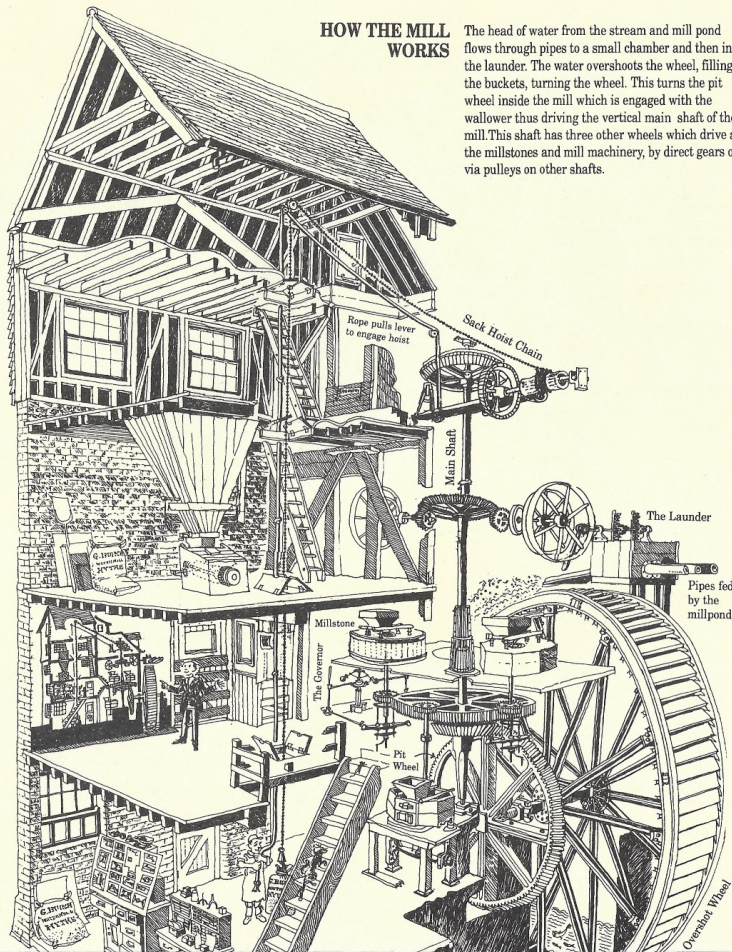
George married Elizabeth Swaffer in 1841, they had seven daughters and one son between 1842 and 1860. The eldest daughter Emily, schoolmistress and spinster lived at the mill until her death in 1925.



The shop about 1895, part of the bakery in the High Street. Cecil Stocker was the baker from 1945 until 1966, when Fine Fare demolished it to build a supermarket on the site, it broke his heart. The Tradine Past took over in 1983 when Fine Fare closed down.

HOW THE MILL WORKS

The head of water from the stream and mill pond flows through pipes to a small chamber and then into the launder. The water overshoots the wheel, filling the buckets, turning the wheel. This turns the pit wheel inside the mill which is engaged with the wallower thus driving the vertical main shaft of the mill. This shaft has three other wheels which drive all the millstones and mill machinery, by direct gears or via pulleys on other shafts.



TECHNICAL

The overshot waterwheel is 21 x 5ft / 6.7 x 1.5m wide with 72 buckets 8' / 20cm deep: at the top 58' x 6' / 147 x 15cm tapering to 58' x 3' / 147 x 7.5cm at the base, each taking about 70lbs / 32kg / 32 litres of water.

The wheel will deliver 6 to 8 horsepower / 4.5 to 6 kw. To increase production and run an extra millstone a Wentworth steam beam engine was installed in 1880 as an auxiliary engine, adding power to the pit wheel, the drive shaft and gear wheel is still in place, sadly the engine was sold off before the war for £12.

The pit wheel with 128 teeth drives the wallower with 38 teeth, on the main shaft. Above is the great spur wheel of 168 teeth, this wheel spins the nuts with 21 teeth that drive the millstones.

Next is a bevelled wheel of 94 teeth that can drive two shafts, each with an assortment of pulley wheels on them. Finally, at the top, is a friction wheel rolling the drum that winds the chain of the sack hoist up and down five floors.

Ratios

At the rate of 4.5 revolutions a minute of the waterwheel, the main shaft revolves 15 times a minute, the millstones go at 121 revolutions a minute.

The Governor

This limits the top speed of the millstones, the range of lower speeds was managed by the skill of the miller. The mill ground a wide variety of crops, wheat, oats, barley, maize and beans, animal and poultry foods were compounded, mixed and blended with fashionable additives.

Fuller & Spain

A detailed mechanical survey can be found in *Watermills (Kent and Borders of Sussex)* by M.J.Fuller and R.J.Spain, Kent Archaeological Society, Maidstone, 1986.

George Burch prospered in the 1880s, taking on a bakery in the High Street in 1888 and another in Folkestone in 1892. The third daughter Alice married late at 30 in 1875 but was widowed in the 1880s, she then managed the shop and bakery at Hythe, with the help of the family she ran the mill after George died in 1909 at the age of 92.

The death of Alice in 1932 precipitated the sale of the mill and the land, the milling stopped on Saturday August 27th 1932. Stuart Brown bought the mill at auction in 1932, he died in his 100th year in 1982.

The Artist at the Mill

Arthur Baker-Clack, born in Australia at Adelaide in 1877, had been working in France, he came to Hythe in 1935 and had a studio at the mill until his death in 1955. Pictures by him can be seen at Oaklands and in local and national collections.

Near to Destruction

During the war a German bomb went through the roof of Philbeach Nursing Home (a convalescent home in 1941) and on to Station Road, it bounced off the pavement across the mill pond and landed on the east side of the mill, exploding and wrecking the three houses there. The mill windows were blown in and the top floor of the old piggeries was destroyed. The pigs had long gone so the war damage repairs turned the buildings into garages.

Near to Dereliction

Decay set into the mill buildings, the stationary mill machinery was surveyed by Fuller and Spain in 1975, the two sides of the waterwheel were nearly apart, the buckets rotted away. The floors of the mill were full of bric-a-brac from many

auctions, garden tools, old leather luggage, records and bibles, lesser mill hardware, sacks and stencils.

This fifty year patch of benign neglect came to an end when Anne and Tony Marston bought the mill in 1982 and resolved to rescue and restore it.

Marston's Mill

The long haul of reconstruction and renewal of the mill, Mill House, the garden and Uppermill was done over ten years, assisted by the hurricane of October 1987 which holed the mill roof and took off most of the sagging roof of the granary. The triumph was to get the machinery going again. The wheel renewed with phosphor bronze bearings, green oak planks for the buckets, hurstings and sack hoist repaired.

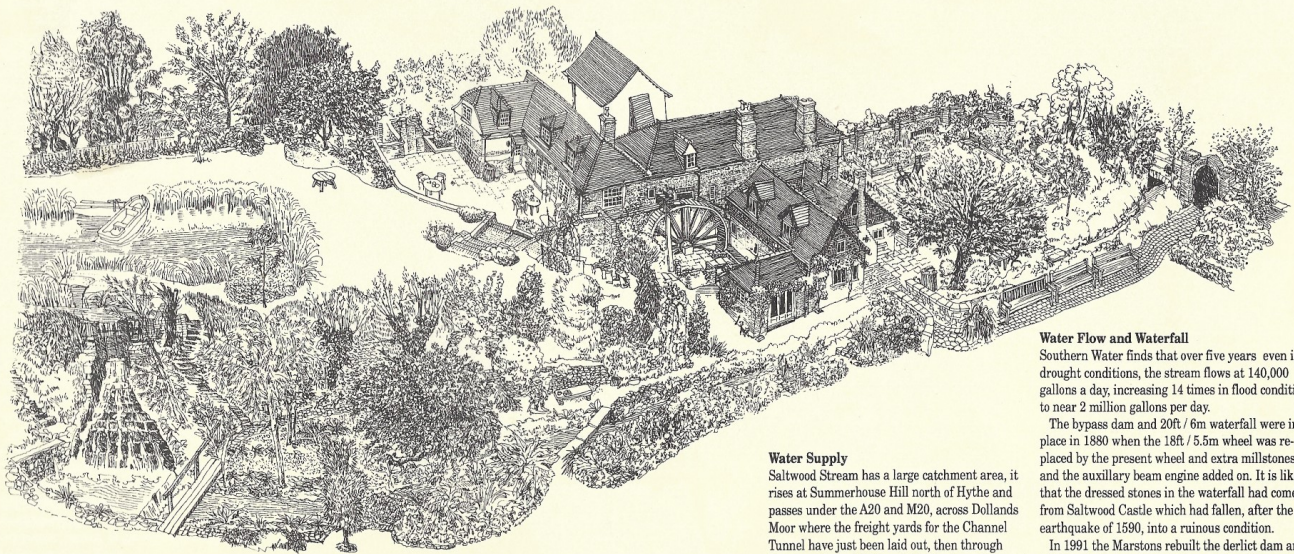
The launder, sluice and millstone furniture repaired and replaced.

In Working Order

All up and running by May 1992 after a 60 year halt, more work on the millstones and flour was milled again in December 1993. Acknowledgements and thanks to Anthony Hole, millwright of West Sussex and to Paul Jarvis, chairman of the East Kent Mills Group.

Rewarded with Awards

Hythe Civic Society gave the Marstons the award for the best contribution in the year to the town in 1991 and Lord Rodgers presented them with Shepway's Building Design Award for restoration in 1992.



Water Flow and Waterfall

Southern Water finds that over five years even in drought conditions, the stream flows at 140,000 gallons a day, increasing 14 times in flood conditions to near 2 million gallons per day.

The bypass dam and 20ft / 6m waterfall were in place in 1880 when the 18ft / 5.5m wheel was replaced by the present wheel and extra millstones and the auxiliary beam engine added on. It is likely that the dressed stones in the waterfall had come from Saltwood Castle which had fallen, after the earthquake of 1590, into a ruinous condition.

In 1991 the Marstons rebuilt the derelict dam and sluice and the launder with new oak timber, using the original cast iron winding gears.

Water Supply

Saltwood Stream has a large catchment area, it rises at Summerhouse Hill north of Hythe and passes under the A20 and M20, across Dollands Moor where the freight yards for the Channel Tunnel have just been laid out, then through Bargewood, past Saltwood Castle, down Saltwood Valley to the millpond.

Roundabout Hythe from the Mill

BY FOOT

North The footpath by the side of the mill is a public footpath, it crosses Station Road and follows the dismantled railway line to Sandling Station, skirting Saltwood Castle then through Saltwood Churchyard and by the American Garden.

The footpath crosses the Saxon Shore Way which can be followed east to Etchinghill or west to Lympe and Romney Marsh.

South from the mill is the seafront, Marine Parade and The Stade.

East through Seabrook is the Edwardian resort of Sandgate now pandering to those on the antiques hunting trail.

West inside half a mile, is the whole of Hythe High Street and another half mile further on will bring you to the smallest public railway in the world:

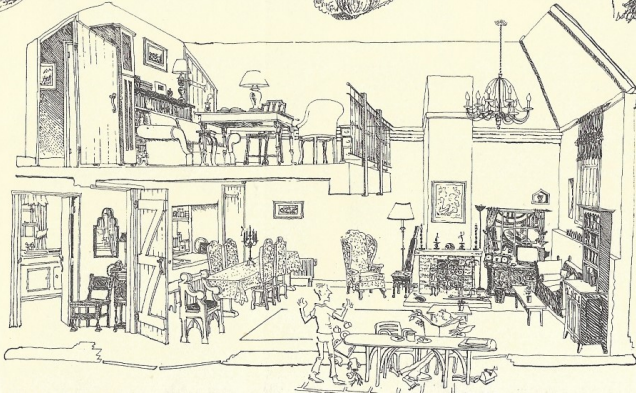
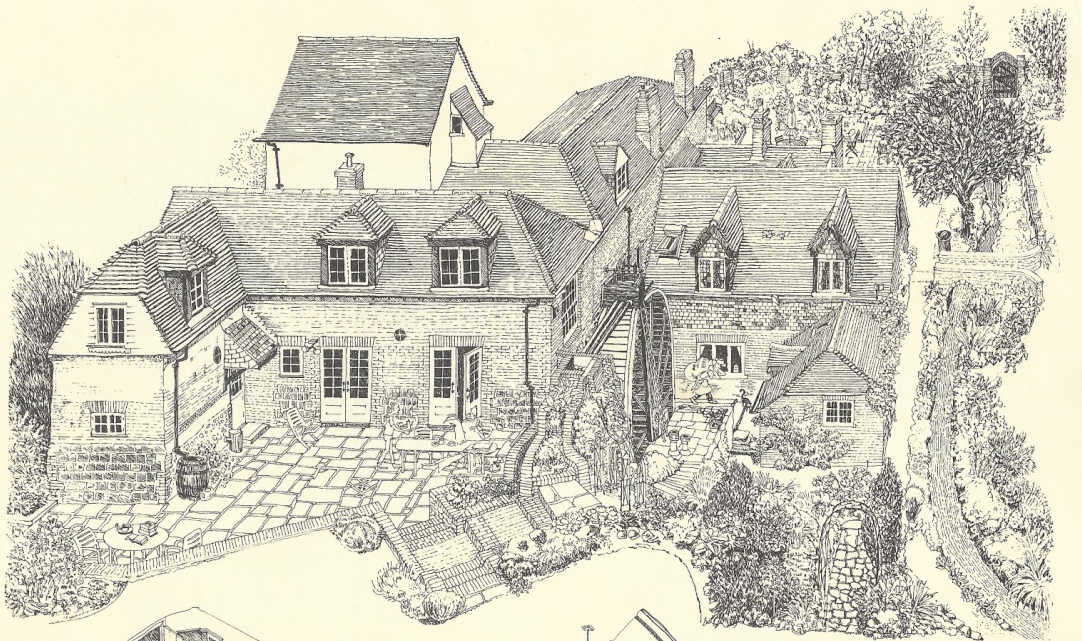
BY RAIL The Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Light Railway. A one day runabout ticket will take you to see:

- Two nuclear power stations and two lighthouses, all built on 100 feet of shingle at Dungeness point.
- New Romney, the railway's museum and engine sheds and workshops housing the third scale locomotives.

BY CAR

- The smaller coast towns of Kent: Walmer, Deal, Sandwich, Broadstairs and Whitstable
- Canterbury, city and cathedral (allow at least two days)
- The Romney Marsh churches
- Rye in Sussex, and then on to Hastings
- Tenterden and the other arms of the Cinque Ports
- The Wild Life Park at Lympe
- The Eurotunnel Exhibition

Hythe has a Tourist Information Office, open in season, with a plentiful supply of maps, guides and leaflets.



The Uppermill and Gallery Room

This revealed view is seen from the terrace of the Uppermill. Made from two floors of the granary store after the storm of 1987. Just behind the television set is a window that looks into the milling platform of the mill.

This is part of the holiday home on three levels joined by a broad spiral staircase. Self-catering, a well equipped kitchen, central heating and a horde of cupboards, there are two double bedrooms, the gallery has a sofa bed, it can sleep four to six comfortably. Booking details are on a separate leaflet.

The couple on the terrace in the main picture above, enjoying their first Sunday morning on holiday are quite shocked at the removal of the whole wall, revealing the two levels inside.