

**Tileyard Research**  
**Wakefield Historical Society**

There are three main components to the Tileyard site which is adjacent to The Hepworth garden and The Hepworth on Wakefield Bridge. Rutland Mills is a Grade II listed woollen mill complex around an enclosed courtyard; what is known as the four storey Caddies Wainwright Mill is locally listed and the stone built Phoenix or Gradient Mill, the earliest of these properties, is Grade II listed and dates back to the early 19th century.<sup>1</sup>

Long before the Rutland Mills complex became familiar as an urban industrial landscape, the land was arable, pasture and meadowland.



The enclosure map of c1805<sup>2</sup> shows only a few buildings visible, the majority of the plot is undeveloped. On the headland of the river on plot 643 there was a cloth mill owned by Sir Thomas Pilkington which was most probably Upper Mill, still standing next to The Hepworth; this was possibly a mill site going back to the 13th century and has had various incarnations as the following map images will show. Sir Thomas had bought the mill in 1753 along with the Chevet Estate. He also owned the soke mill at the opposite end of Wakefield Bridge and these mills would have been sited because of the power supply derived from their proximity to the river and wheels powered by the water. Plot 642 belongs to the Wakefield Governors of Bromley's New Gift and is described as a croft; this was left to the Wakefield Charities by John Bromley in his will of 1772, according to the Bradford Daily Telegraph of 22 Aug 1884. In September 1884 the Wakefield Free Press informs us that the annual income from the gift is £736 'after deducting £20 bequeathed to the grammar school and £40 to decayed housekeepers' the balance should be applied to the apprenticeship and clothing

of the sons of the poor and needy inhabitants of Wakefield.

Between this and the 18th century Calder and Hebble Navigation Warehouse on plot 640 is plot 641 which contains the only other building on the map.<sup>3</sup> This is the Phoenix Mill, erected in 1794 on land bought one or two years earlier by Richard Gill, a corn miller.

Gill would have wanted to take advantage of the opening of the Fall Ings cut at Wakefield in the 1760s which was becoming a catalyst for development on the waterfront. The extension of the navigation had opened up trade with the upper Calder towns and from there over the Pennines.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tileyard North Wakefield Waterfront Archaeological Assessment Nov 2017

<sup>2</sup> West Yorkshire Archive Service Wakefield, **Document QD5/3/Vol4/28/2**

<sup>3</sup> West Yorkshire Archive Service Wakefield, **B23/B30 Wakefield Enclosure Awards 1805**

<sup>4</sup> Wakefield Historical Society website - Wakefield Waterfront Research and information from Lesley Taylor

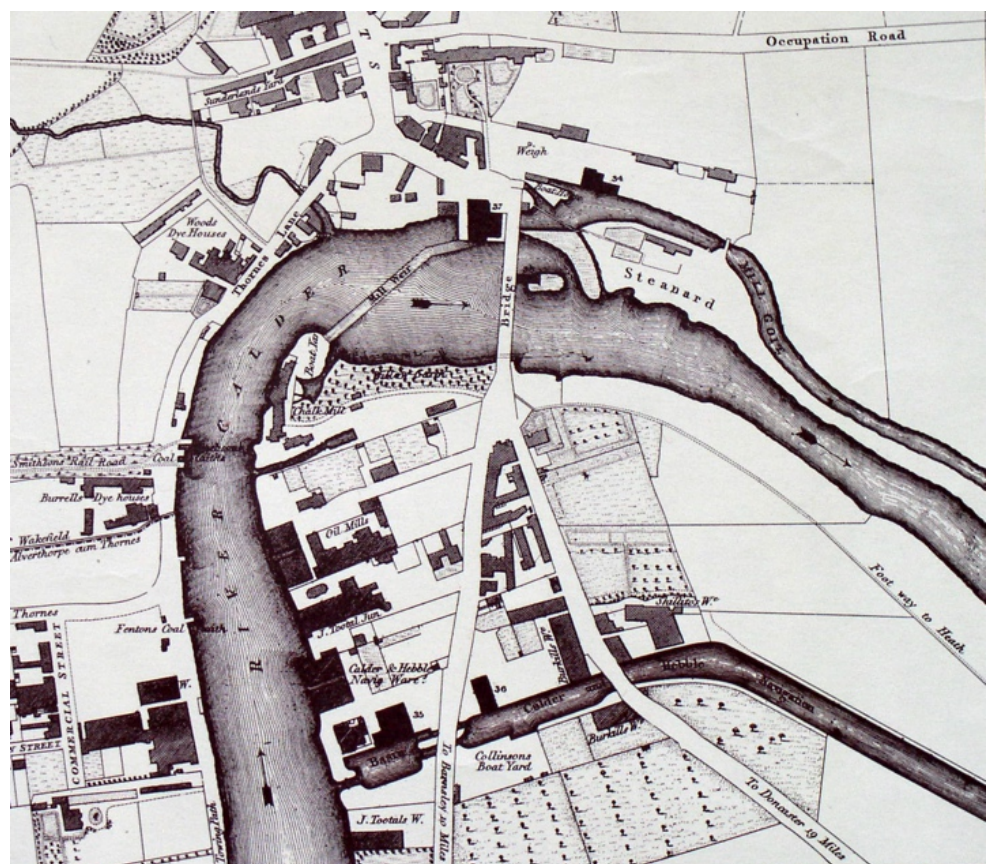




Interestingly in 1811, as the map<sup>5</sup> to the left shows, plots 641 and 642 are shown as one; the City Corn Mills fronting onto the river have been built and the Upper Mill is now described as a 'fulling and frizzing mill', processes concerned with woollen cloth making, the former concerned with the cleansing of woollen cloth and the latter involved finishing the cloth with little knots.

Extract from Walker's 1823 Map of the Town of Wakefield

Walker's 1823 map shows considerable development; Upper Mill is now described as a Chalk Mill and what was plot 642 now contains the line of Tootal Street with buildings to the north of this (where The Hepworth Garden is now) and to the south the City Corn Mills can be seen fronting onto the river with oil mills to the east. Tootal Street was named after Thomas Tootal and his brother John who were described by contemporaries as the 'first and original corn factors in Wakefield'. John's name can be seen on this map. In Wakefield Worthies, Kate Taylor informs us that they built corn warehouses at Thornes Wharf, beginning business around 1790 in Wakefield, the business being carried on by Thomas' son and Joshua Swallow who was the company's clerk for many years. Joshua Swallow was described as an oil merchant when he was elected as overseer for Wakefield in 1839. Born in 1778, resident in Wakefield since the late 1790s, he started as an apprentice corn factor, worked in the oil trade for 25 years, then master in the firm of Tootal and Swallow, a partnership which lasted 10 years.



<sup>5</sup> West Yorkshire Archive Service Wakefield Document C299/4/6/1

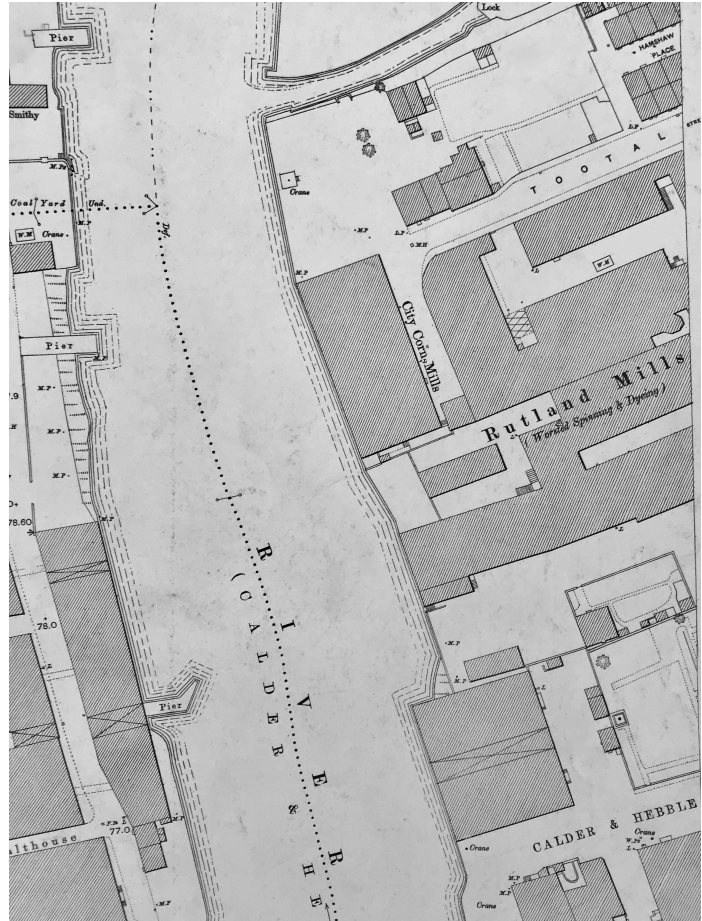


The 1851 map shows that Phoenix Mill has been extended to the east and is now a corn mill 'flour and shilling'; and the Wakefield Oil Mill and Phoenix Mill are clearly identified. The group of buildings which screen the Phoenix Mill from Bridge Street are starting to appear; the Cutter Inn dated from at least 1849.

The lighting commissioner's book of 1852<sup>6</sup> gives us a picture of how illuminated the area around the Bridge was then. There was a light by the old ash tree at the foot of Kirkgate Bridge, lights on the south side and west wall of the Chantry Chapel and on the east of the wall near the foot road to Heath. Barnsley Road has lights by the oil mill croft wall, opposite the Ship Inn, by Buckley's wharf gates, by the new warehouse yard gates, on the east and west walls of the canal bridge and by the road to Mr Ash's warehouse, possibly the seven storey warehouse fronting on to the Calder.

Extract from 1851 Wakefield Map Book Ref D 3.2  
Image courtesy of Wakefield Libraries

The 1890 map shows considerable development, with the Phoenix Mill now subsumed into Isaac Briggs' worsted, spinning and dyeing' Rutland Mills Complex.



Extract from 1890 Wakefield Map CCXLVIII.7.14.23  
Image courtesy of Wakefield Libraries

<sup>6</sup> West Yorkshire Archive Service Wakefield **WMT1/1/5** Lighting Committee Report Book 1851-1853





Henry Clarke's drawing of The Calder from Thornes Wharf, showing the Calder and Hebble Navigation warehouses centre, with the Phoenix Mill to the left adjacent to the seven storey City Corn Mills  
Image courtesy of Wakefield Libraries



Aerial photograph showing the Rutland Mills Complex in the 1930s to the left of centre with the corn warehouse fronting onto the river behind and the Phoenix Mill to the left  
Image courtesy of Wakefield Museums and Castles, Wakefield Council



## Phoenix Mill

Phoenix Mill was erected in 1794 by Richard Gill, a corn miller. Due to the long and narrow nature of the enclosure plot it sat on, the building is long and narrow, with its gable end fronting on to the river. His 'great steam powered stone built mill' opened in 1796 and although Gill and his associates were subject to a number of actions from the owner of the soke mill at the other end of Kirkgate Bridge, it was most probably difficulties with trade which caused his business to fail.<sup>7</sup> In 1797 Gill is selling to Joseph Scott and William Bayldon

*'all that newly erected warehouse and steam engine, newly erected granaries and malt kilns; also a close of arable, pasture and meadow land, commonly known by the name of Thomas Briggs Close.'*

Gill was declared bankrupt in 1806.

References are made in an 1843 indenture to a corn and shelling mill erected on this site<sup>8</sup> by Joseph Horner the elder who, along with Joseph Horner the younger and John Jubb Horner, all corn millers, were carrying on business under the name of Joseph Horner and Sons. Horner himself lived at Bridge House on Doncaster Road which would have been visible from the mill.

Joseph Horner was involved in a libel case in 1850 brought against him by Miss Mary Luis Fernandes, daughter of J L Fernandes, which was reported as far afield as Maidstone and Derbyshire. Joseph had not started the slanderous reports and did not reveal the source, but he had repeated them and Miss Fernandes, or her family, decided they were damaging to her reputation. When Joseph heard that the Fernandes were about to take action against him, he called on the family offering an apology and was willing to donate £330 to any charitable institution in the town as atonement for his part in the affair. This was not accepted; the case was tried in the Ecclesiastical Court and it was decided that Joseph should perform a suitable penance in the parish church straight after the morning service. It is unclear whether there was any previous bad feeling between the two families. Jose Luis Fernandes was born in Oporto in 1790 but left Portugal after meeting with Jeremiah Naylor of Messrs John and Jeremiah Naylor, cloth merchants, and Jose Luis returned to Wakefield with him. Fernandes was a corn factor, corn miller and wine merchant and, like Joseph Horner, was in business with his sons. His marriage in 1822 to Martha, daughter of Richard Nowell of Warrengate and owner of the Wakefield soke mills was fortuitous, a considerable business Fernandes eventually inherited. He was naturalised in 1820 and by the 1830s he was Commissioner of Streets, Governor of Charities, tax commissioner and cavalry captain. He was described as a keen Tory and a freemason. He had been raised a Roman Catholic but was a supporter of the Church of England. In the 1840s, most of Jose Luis' business had declined and collapsed with debts of £42,000 and he kept a low profile, moving to Horbury. In later years he began to appear in local political life but in 1861 after refusing to give evidence in the Wakefield Parliamentary bribery case, he served a sentence of 6 months. He died in Horbury in 1868, aged 78 years. He certainly seemed to have been his own man.<sup>9</sup> For whatever reason, Horner appeared more popular than the Fernandes family, illustrated by an article which appeared in the Derbyshire Courier on the 31 August. On the Sunday afternoon, Mr Horner and a crowd of one thousand sympathisers assembled in the Corn Exchange a little before 12 o'clock. His son, Joseph Horner, climbed on to the platform of the lamppost in front of the building and told the crowd it would give his father a great deal of pleasure to see so many sympathisers present to support him through the trying occasion. He says that the people would agree that his father was the last man to have perpetrated anything calculated to injure the person of anybody, and especially a young lady. 'My father has lived among you all his life and is now 71.' As Joseph Horner the elder descended the steps of the Corn Exchange, he was given a great cheer which continued through the street as he passed the south front of the church, with people waving handkerchiefs from the windows of houses and

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<sup>7</sup> Aspects of Medieval Wakefield and its Legacy by John Goodchild

<sup>8</sup> West Yorkshire Archive Service Wakefield Abstract of mortgage of mill: **OK/706/666** 3 June 1843 Joseph Horner to Messrs Tew and Leatham

<sup>9</sup> Brewery History Society

balconies. When Joseph ascended the eastern steps, a general hurrah from the densely filled yard arose, followed by three groans for his persecutors, which was repeated upon exiting after he had performed his penance in the vestry.<sup>10</sup>

By 1859, Joseph Horner the elder had died. Nine hundred and ninety nine Wakefield people had contributed to the erecting of a monument to him in the Unitarian Burial Ground. Sale lots following his death showed the extent of what he now owned.

Lot 1 is described as a newly erected steam corn mill and shelling mill called the Phoenix Mill (quite possibly additions to Gill's original mill) on the east bank of the Calder along with the drying kiln, sack house, stabling for fifteen horses, shed and vacant land. Lot 2 consisted of a substantially erected corn warehouse adjoining on the west to the mill, along with wharves, counting house, cottage and workshop. Lot 3 was a plot of land to the south side of a street leading from the turnpike road to the Calder; possibly referring to Main Street, which ran parallel to Tootal Street. This plot was opposite to the mill, and had a cottage and workshop erected on it.

**WAKEFIELD.**

**TO BE SOLD, BY AUCTION,** by Mr. BECKET, at the **ANTE-ROOM** in the **CORN EXCHANGE BUILDINGS**, in Wakefield, in the County of York, on **FRIDAY, 22nd July, 1859,** at Two o'clock in the Afternoon,

**LOT 1.**—All that extensive and newly erected **STEAM CORN and SHELLING MILL**, called the **PHOENIX MILL**, situate on the east bank of the river Calder, at Wakefield aforesaid, with the Drying Kiln, Sack House, Stabling for Fifteen Horses, Shed and Vacant Land thereto adjoining and occupied therewith. The Mill contains **Twin Engines** (by Whitham's, of Leeds), of thirty horses power each, three working cylindrical boilers of forty horses power each, and one spare boiler, twenty-two pairs of French stones, two pairs of grey stones, and two shellers, with all the requisite going gear and machinery, is fitted up with all the modern improvements, is conveniently accessible both to railway and water carriage, and is well adapted for carrying out an extensive business.

**LOT 2.**—All that large and substantially erected **STONE CORN WAREHOUSE**, adjoining on the west to the said Mill, with the Wharves, Counting House with Cottage under the same, and Workshop thereto belonging.

**LOT 3.**—All that Plot or Parcel of **LAND**, containing 1633 square yards, or thereabouts, situate on the south side of a street leading from the Wakefield and Barnsley Turnpike Road to the river Calder, and opposite to the said Mill, with the Cottage and Workshop erected thereon. This Lot has a frontage of forty-eight feet in length to the said Turnpike Road, and is well adapted for building purposes.

All the above Premises are Freehold, and are in the occupation of Mr. Catwright, as tenant from year to year.

The Estate is offered for sale by the Trustees under the will of the late Mr. Joseph Horner, the owner, and will in the first instance be put up in one Lot, and if not thus disposed of will then be offered in three Lots, as above described.

For further Particulars, apply to Mr. **RICHARD HORNER**, Corn Dealer, Wakefield, or to **JAS. WHITHAM**, Solicitor, Wakefield.

*Also out the same to be sold by Auction at the same time and place in the Wakefield Corn Exchange Buildings Jas. Whitham Solicitor*

West Yorkshire Archive Service Wakefield **JG000639** sale lots Jul 12 1859

On November 30 1863 the Leeds Mercury reports a fatal boiler explosion at the Phoenix Corn Mill and the inquest at the Cutter Inn on Bridge Street, following the deaths of two young men, a father of seven and a twelve year old boy. There was found to be no neglect on the part of the engineer but the jury were of the opinion that all boilers ought to be examined periodically by a competent person and not left to the private judgment of the engine worker.

In 1865, Richard Horner, Joseph Horner's son, formed a company for purchasing and carrying on, as a joint stock enterprise, the extensive corn mills known as Phoenix Mills of Messrs Joseph Horner and Sons and which had been held by the present proprietors for upwards of half a century. The Wakefield Free Press on 5 August reports that the mills

*'possess peculiar advantages for carrying on an extensive trade. Standing on the banks of the River Calder the facilities for water communication with the English and Foreign Ports are all that can be desired. The Great Northern and Midland Railways place the south of England corn growing districts within easy access and the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway offers a direct means of supplying the best markets with flour, whilst Wakefield being in the centre of the Yorkshire coal fields, fuel will always be obtainable at a cheap rate. The mills are of the most*

<sup>10</sup> Derbyshire Courier 31 August 1850



*extensive character, capable of crushing 12000 bushels of grain weekly and are classed amongst the largest in England. The town of Wakefield is largely increasing in population and in consequence of the rapid extension of ironworks and manufactories, its prosperity is advancing at an unprecedented rate. During the last ten years the value of property has been enhanced more than 50 percent and the probabilities are that the prospective increase will be still greater.'*

Four years later, as reported in the Leeds Times on 26 June, it seems that this company was encountering problems when a winding up order had been made. The prospectus for the company had stated that the property had been valued at £35,000, over five million pounds today. The purchase of the Phoenix Mills had been carried out in March 1866 and the said company had been in occupation of the mills up to June 1869. After the winding up order was made a suit was instituted by the liquidator in the name of the company on the grounds that the company had been induced to enter into it by fraud. Horner instituted a counter suit but on 4 December, Richard Horner was declared bankrupt. By this time, describing himself as a corn dealer and farmer of 60 acres and employing 2 men he was living at Altofts Lodge at Normanton with his wife and family. His fortunes appeared to decline; he was living in Park Street with his family in 1871, still describing himself as a corn dealer and twenty years later, aged 66, he was the steward of an estate at Hollingthorpe, near Crigglestone.



The Phoenix Mill on the right and the four storey City Corn Mills on the left 2023

The Phoenix Mill was eventually acquired by Isaac Briggs in 1876 as part of his Rutland Mills expansion. He bought it from George Hutchinson and the mill by this time was a paper and flock mill. Isaac Briggs would go on to rename it Gradient Mills.<sup>11</sup>

The steam corn mill built by Richard Gill remained in use for that purpose until the late 1860s; when it was purchased by Isaac Briggs in 1876 it had started its transition towards textiles and was being used as a paper and flock mill. Flock was a waste product of the woollen industry and could be used for mattresses and upholstery but also, in powdered form, added to an adhesive coated cloth to imitate expensive cut velvet - flock wallpaper. Thereafter Phoenix Mill was absorbed into Isaac Briggs Rutland Mills complex.

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<sup>11</sup> Local Studies Cuttings File Vol 88 725.4 A Brief History of Rutland Mills by John Goodchild

## City Corn Mills/Caddies Wainwright



Henry Clarke's drawing of City Mills and the Calder, Wakefield showing the seven storey City Corn Mills and the Calder and Hebble Navigation warehouse with the Phoenix Mill between  
Image courtesy of Wakefield Libraries

By 1823, Plot 642, undeveloped at the time of enclosure, included the City Corn Mills. In October 1848 Thomas Tootal is leasing the corn warehouse fronting onto the river to Jairus Joel Cartwright but by January of the following year, Cartwright is in financial difficulties and is asking for a meeting of his creditors. Details around his bankruptcy state that his liabilities were heavy and his assets small. It was felt that his transactions were in the normal way of business but some objection could be made to the bankrupt's household expenses. Jairus lived at Woodlands in Sandal around this time, he was married with a wife and four children and he felt it was absolutely necessary to keep up a respectable appearance, *'the corn trade being notoriously a very speculative one and a great deal of business was done on credit.'*<sup>12</sup>

In 1869, when the estate of John Tootal was put up for sale, the seven storey corn mills were in the occupation of Isaac Burkhill and William Ash. Isaac Burkhill was a maltster and man of considerable property who lived at Fall Ings House (where the cemetery is now). He also co occupied the oil mill with Daniel Wilson at the time of the sale. Lot 1 included 'six dwelling houses and shop called Calder Row with a blacksmith's shop and yard adjoining, having frontage to Bridge Street and an 'intended street called Tootal Street'. Lot 2 contained a stable, coach house and shoeing shed; lots 3 and 4 were 'valuable plots of building land'. Lot 5 contained eight dwelling houses with gardens. The plan shows intended streets and what was paid for the various properties and who bought them; the Aire and Calder Navigation bought lots 6,7,8 and 9 for a total of £1141. Lots 10 to 14 were plots of building land and on lot 15, a soap manufactory fronted onto the south side of Tootal Street. Lot 16 contained a large three storey oil mill and lot 17 is described as a 'plot of land with the substantially built and spacious corn warehouse, seven stories high, capable of housing 10,000 quarters of grain and a frontage to the navigable River Calder of 147 feet.' Joseph Horner and Sons Phoenix Mill is shown to the south of the Tootal property.

It is unclear when the seven storey corn warehouse was rebuilt as a four storey building. Henry Clarke's notes on his 1890s drawing of the City Corn Mills above informs us that the mills had been recently built by Speight and Tunnicliffe and according to the memories of Henry Clarkson

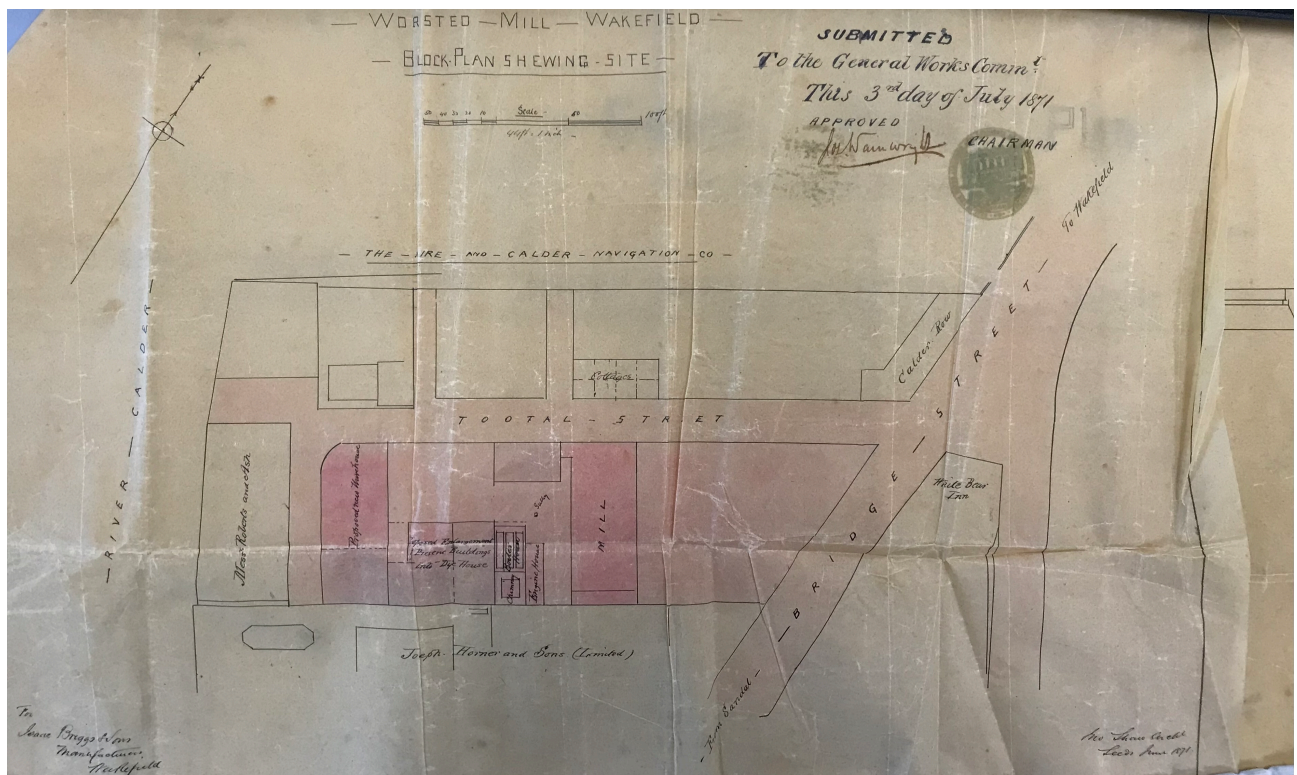
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<sup>12</sup> West Yorkshire Archive Service Wakefield **Box JG000476** Jairus Joel Cartwright Bankruptcy Papers



'the only buildings on that side of the river were the old fulling mills at the extreme end of the weir, the oil mills, Tootal's large corn warehouse and Mr Holdsworth's Belle Isle Dyeworks'. A 1913 building plan shows a proposed rebuilding of the corn warehouse facing the river by JJ Baldwin and Partners, although an insurance valuation of the Rutland Mills site dated 1911 describe the building as a 'new 4 storey mill'. Reading the notes attached to the building plan, one gets the impression that new regulations had come into force since the City Corn Mills were built and the walls now were of insufficient thickness for a warehouse. Questions were asked about ventilation and the means of escape in case of fire - did these meet with the Factory and Workshop Act of 1901?<sup>13</sup>

## Rutland Mills



Isaac Briggs plan for building Rutland Mills

Image courtesy of West Yorkshire Archive Service, Wakefield **Document WWD9/Box14/0802**

When Isaac Briggs decided to erect his Rutland Mills to the design by John Shaw on what was enclosure plot 642, to the south of Tootal Street and opposite what is now the Hepworth garden, the Tootal sale of 1869 gives us an idea of what the site contained. The three storey Wakefield oil mills built around a courtyard are shown on the 1823 map and by 1848 they had acquired their rounded corner. As well as the above, Daniel Wilson also occupied the three storey soap manufactory to the east of the oil mill, counting house, drying kiln, joiners shop, soap boiling warehouse, stabling, coach house and yard, along with five plots of building land between the soap manufactory and Bridge Street.

Isaac Briggs built Rutland Mills c1872 intending to transfer his spinning business to the site. According to John Goodchild's Brief History of Rutland Mills, this had been situated on Westgate but was compulsorily purchased to make way for the new Westgate Station. At this point Isaac Briggs was a JP and the Chairman of Clayton Hospital, superintending the new build. The plan for his worsted mills above show it was erected on the site of the oil mill, at that time in the

<sup>13</sup> West Yorkshire Archive Service Wakefield **WWD9/3/Plan 5794** J&J Baldwin and Partners 1913

occupation of Christopher Todd, seed crusher, and it was likely that these older buildings were cleared rather than adapted according to the archaeological assessment; the heritage statement informs us that the distinctive curved shape was incorporated into the Rutland Mills design. Todd's occupation is significant; an oil mill was a grinding mill designed to crush or bruise oil bearing seeds such as linseed, which were then pressed to extract oil.

At the time Isaac was preparing to purchase the Phoenix Mill estate, a dispute between himself and the Calder and Hebble Navigation arose regarding the ownership of a boundary wall between the two estates and this would continue for several years.<sup>14</sup> Communications between solicitors went back and forth, visits were paid to the site to look at the wall and try to come to a decision; and even Richard Horner was contacted who stated that the wall had been built in 1851. Eventually Isaac Briggs issued a writ against the proprietors of the Calder and Hebble Navigation for them wrongfully entering upon Briggs' land and against a greenhouse the Navigation had erected which leaned against the wall, consequently weakening it. The Navigation company did not deliver a statement of defence and suggested referring the matter to some independent land surveyor and referred to Mr Bartholemew of the Navigation company, who always contended that the wall was their property. It was finally judged that the wall did belong to Briggs and that the greenhouse was an encroachment; he agreed to forego damages but the Navigation company paid costs of £12.10.0. It also seems that Briggs had agreed to relinquish to the Navigation company some land to the south of the boundary wall.

On the 1891 map above, Rutland Mills is identified as being a worsted spinning and dyeing factory, Rutland Mills had been extended and there was evidence of more buildings between the seven storey City Corn Mills and Phoenix Mill. The latter was screened from Bridge Street by the Cutter Inn amongst other buildings according to the heritage statement. This is the first time the inn was identified on a map but it had been there since at least 1849 when it was used for auctions of vessels on the wharf and also inquests, such as the boiler explosion at the Phoenix Corn Mill in 1863 as reported in the Leeds Mercury on November 30. In 1875 Henry Mark Carter, wine and spirit merchant owned this, along with some other dwelling houses on Bridge Street; this was around the same time that George Hutchinson built three dwelling houses on the same street, south of Phoenix Mill. These men together owned the land where the buildings were and came to an agreement when George Hutchinson wanted to alter the formation of some of the streets and build over them.<sup>15</sup>

In 1896 a conveyance between Isaac Briggs and Sons and the Earl and Countess of Yarborough, Hon Bernard Maxwell and Hon Ailwyn Fellowes shows he was selling the Phoenix Mill estate.<sup>16</sup> Isaac continued business at Rutland Mills and an advert in The Queen in December 1889 informs us that Wakefield drapers IG Wallis and Son supply the knitting wools manufactured by Isaac Briggs and Sons and on 30 December ten years later in the same magazine a letter from 'A Britisher' informed the reader of some admirable golf stockings made by Briggs and Sons called the Gradient. They have thin feet and ankles increasing in thickness to the calf, are very good wear with the colourings chosen well. Those made in super khaki fingering are '*most suitable gifts for our soldiers in South Africa.*' They could be had from John Barker of the High Street, Kensington.

Isaac had also retained the right to retain some wharfage payment in 1904 made by a boatman in respect of the use of a wharf within 30ft of the mill; this was likely the rowing boat ferry service, a penny a trip, which was used by workers to save them having to walk along the river to use the bridge.

Isaac Briggs died in 1910 aged 96. He lived at Sandal Cliff and was described as one of the pioneer engineers engaged in railway construction in England and also in the making of many

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<sup>14</sup> West Yorkshire Archive Service Wakefield **JG/M1/Box2/2** Papers relating to ownership of a wall at Phoenix Mill Estate

<sup>15</sup> West Yorkshire Archive Service Wakefield **JG000639 M1** Memorandum of Agreement Carter and Hutchinson Sep 1875

<sup>16</sup> West Yorkshire Archive Service Wakefield **Deed Ref 43/293/146** Conveyance re Thomas Briggs Close - Baroness Conyers, Earl of Yarborough, Maxwell Fellowes to Briggs 1896



canals including the Rochdale and Manchester and Kendal and Lancaster. He had an extensive private collection relating to the early days of English railways reflecting the fact that he and his brothers were involved on the civil side of railway work from 1830 onwards; the collection included evidence of personal dealings with Stephenson, Brunel and other men of the period who are now famous.<sup>17</sup> It was his son Isaac who oversaw the exhibition of the collection at Doncaster in 1924 and described curating it as a labour of love.<sup>18</sup> There was a further exhibition of the collection in Leeds the following year. His brother John Shaw Briggs, described as a worsted spinner and hosiery manufacturer of St Johns North died the year following his father in 1911. Isaac along with his brother William carried on the fingering, knitting and hosiery yarn business; he lived at Beechfield, across the road from where his father had lived and was remembered as a man who would walk to Wakefield every morning wearing a bowler hat and carrying a walking stick. To the young boy who watched him he always appeared miserable. He died in 1926 aged 77 years. Apart from his continued collection of railway memorabilia and prints, which had been exhibited at the South Kensington Museum, he organised and conducted music festivals in Wakefield and was responsible for the founding of two bands at Rutland Mills.<sup>19</sup> He left over £16,000 in his will. William Briggs, the only surviving partner devoted much time to public work in Wakefield, particularly in education and in the work of Clayton Hospital of which he was President.

After Isaac Briggs the elder's death Rutland Mills was sold to JJ Baldwin and Partners<sup>20</sup> but the company did retain Phoenix Mill until 1930 for hosiery manufacturing when Gradient Mills and the whole of the spinning and knitting machinery and plant was put up for sale by public auction in September of that year, according to the Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer of July 29.

A 1917 bill head for Rutland Mills includes Thornes Mills as part of the complex. Other names involved besides Isaac Briggs and JJ Baldwin and Partners were Foster and Clay and RH Barker and Company. Major Barker was remembered as a real old gentleman; he lived at Holme Field House and built almshouses in Holmefield Avenue, Thornes in 1887. He was in the habit of going to the mill in riding pink to collect his mail along with his housekeeper, also in riding habit, and then they would go hunting. He left considerable bequests to charities and organisations on his death.<sup>21</sup>

In 1920, JJ Baldwin of Halifax and John Paton of Alloa, Scotland, had amalgamated to form Patons and Baldwins during the purchase of Rutland Mills. Initially both companies had produced hosiery yarns for machine knitters but in the mid 19th century they diversified to make hand knitting yarns and patterns.<sup>22</sup> During the 20s and 30s, Patons and Baldwins made additions to Rutland Mills, including additions to the wool store, a conditioning room and a time office and oil store on Tootal Street. Workers from the mills are remembered as sitting on both sides of the bridge during their lunch break.

Patons and Baldwins continued to expand. On 30 July 1934, the Halifax Evening Courier reports that five employees and their families will join employees from Halifax on the SS Diomed to travel to Shanghai, where a mill had been erected to cope with the ever growing demand for the firm's wools in China. There was some concern about these employees three years later according to the Yorkshire Post of 19 August but on 24 August 1945 the Halifax Courier reports that 'members of Patons and Baldwins staff who were interned by the Japanese when that city was overrun were safe and well'. These included Wakefield employees RT Oates, GA Rowles and EL Ackroyd.

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<sup>17</sup> West Yorkshire Archive Service Wakefield **JG/M1/Box3/3 Z130/1 and Z130/2** Isaac Briggs Diary and Accounts 1844-1845

<sup>18</sup> Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer October 24 1924

<sup>19</sup> Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer 9 December 1926

<sup>20</sup> West Yorkshire Archive Service, Wakefield Deed **46/829/277** 27 April 1920 Briggs to Baldwin and Partners

<sup>21</sup> West Yorkshire Archive Service Wakefield **JG 001054** RH Barker and Co papers 1855-1907

<sup>22</sup> Wakefield Museums textile heritage collection - Paton and Baldwins information

On 29 September 1945, despite being described as one of the largest firms of hand knitting yarn manufacturers in the world, Patons and Baldwins announced, through the Dundee Courier, that they were disposing of mills in four Yorkshire towns in order to concentrate production at new premises to be built in Darlington. These included Clark Bridge and Haley Hill Mills in Halifax, Rutland Mills in Wakefield, West Bridge Mills in Leicester and Wyvern Mills in Melton Mowbray. The firm were formulating a compensation scheme for those who would become unemployed but thought the closing of the mills would provide workers for other industries and that no difficulty should be found in absorbing displaced employees. Patons and Baldwins also had other mills at Thornes, Wakefield, Holmfirth, Alloa, Clackmannan, Toronto, Launceston and Shanghai. However, a newspaper article in 1956<sup>23</sup> heralded the reopening of a new canteen at Rutland Mills and the directors of Patons and Baldwins said they intended that Rutland should be a permanent mill in the company's organisation. New systems were being installed which would 'transform old fashioned working conditions and amenities in the Victorian style mill into a modern unit'. The business finally closed in 1970.

John Goodchild, in his Brief History of Rutland Mills, tells us that since the 1950s, Rutland Mills housed a variety of commercial activities including a dancing school, an upholstery and reproduction furniture business, clothes manufacturing and fancy goods until the complex became the ArtsMill. Gerald Wilkes had bought the site after the war when Patons and Baldwins had moved to Star Mill on Denby Dale Road. The Wilkes family had a number of businesses there; Cann and Wilkes Bakery, Wilkes Catering, Wilkes Properties and Wilkes Cleaning.<sup>24</sup> In 1991 a group of staff and students from Wakefield College took over the top floor, setting up a small number of artists' studios known as Rutland Studios. In 1996 the lower two floors became vacant and the group of artists under David Wright, Tony Mosley and Vince Chapman set up a company designed to provide low cost studio space including room for exhibitions. The Wakefield ArtsMill was established in 1997, building a gallery and more studios as they descended from the third to the second to the first floors.

This research is by no means exhaustive and there were many other names connected with the site; others may find more information and draw their own conclusions, but this article may add a little more information to what we know about a part of Wakefield with so much history.

Lorraine Simpson  
August 2023

#### Further references

*Wakefield Its History and People* by JW Walker

*Sandal Magna: Poverty and Prosperity in the 19th Century* by Brenda Andrassy and Mary Ingham

<https://www.catalogue.wyjs.org.uk>

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<sup>23</sup> Wakefield Express 1 Dec 1956 - cuttings Local Studies Library

<sup>24</sup> Wakefield Historical Society Wakefield Waterfront Project oral histories