CHAUNTRY MILLS – EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

The Exhibition

The business known as Chauntry Mills is located at the very heart of Haverhill. It has provided employment for the people of the town and surrounding villages since the first factory was opened in 1856 to produce drabbet. For many years during Queen Victoria's reign it was the principal employer and by 1900 approximately 2,500 of the town's population of 4,800 were working there. The business has been owned and run by the same family, passing from father to son(s) in an unbroken line since its establishment. It still operates today.



Photographs of employees have been the starting point for our research.



The photograph left was taken around 1886. It shows a group of male workers who did a range of different jobs.

Back row left to right: Billy Spicer (Cutter), Chas Claydon (Warper), Harry Backler (Shearer),L Clark (Cutter) William Goodman (Cutter). 2nd row: William Ashplant (Foreman/Manager), William Skilton (Starcher), William Basham (Finisher), Unknown, C W Purvis (Clerk), Stephen Scott (Dyer), Wellington Whiffin (Finisher), D Page (Gardener, Hamlet Croft), F Farrant (Branner?), William Dykes (Engineer). 3rd row: John Smith, John Mizon, Bob Farrant, Robert Poole, Jimmy Rowlingson, Robert Wiseman (Shearer), Conn Basham, Alec Webb. Front row: William Starnes (Fitter), Tom Farrant (Stoker), Henry Pople (Fitter), John Whiting (Gardener, The Duddery), Chris Willis (Fitter), Tommy Shipp (Gardener, Hamlet garden)

Families relied on the Mills for their income and for many of the employees, D Gurteen & Sons provided a job for life. The stories told in the posters show how, for many households, everyone of working age was employed at the Mills. Indeed for many families, three generations may have worked alongside each other.



Back row, left to right: W Rowlingson, Miss E Basham, James Sizer, Mrs E Coates, David Scott, William Poole, Walter Page, Mrs E Humphrey. Middle row: Harry Whiting, Miss J Free, Jonas Whiting, Miss F Skilton, Brank Backler, Mrs S Thake, William Wash, Mrs E Poole. Front row: Alfred Burton, Miss E Rawlingson, Walter Rash, Jabez Gurteen, Miss S Farrant, Walter Basham, Mrs E Jobson.



The photo above was taken in 1920. It shows a group of long serving employees who had all worked in the Mills for more than 50 years.

The photo on the left shows a group of mat makers, many of whom came from Long Melford in 1885. Only J D Unwin is identified. A departmental manager, he is standing far left wearing the suit and hat.

Family History HAVERHILL GROUP (Member of the Suffolk Family History Society)

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