

## UPPER MILL OR "STERRY'S MILL" IN AMPNEY CRUCIS

A mill has stood on this site since before the Domesday Book and until its closure in the early 1970's was worked by the Sterry family for nearly 110 years.

It was driven by an old under-shot type water wheel which utilised the water of Ampney Brook. The wheel which was 7 feet in diameter revolved 8 to 9 times a minute depending on the flow of the river and produced power equivalent to 10 horsepower. Up to the time of Cromwell, the mill was used primarily for grinding corn for monks who lived in a monastery in Ampney Park. This monastery was thought to have been destroyed during the Reformation.

When the Sterry family first took over the mill, (see picture below taken in early days) and until just after the Second World War, the mill was only used for grinding but after that date, cattle and sheep feed was crushed, but in the later years the mill was



AMPNEY CRUCIS (COTSWOLD SERIES)

mostly used for milling barley plus a small amount of oats. This was brought in at ground level with the bags of grain hoisted to the top floor where it was stored in huge bins. From the storage bin (which held up

to 10 tons) the grain was then fed into a chute leading to the main grinding stones. These were connected to the water wheel by an intricate system of cogs. The stones could be regulated to produce either fine or coarse meal. (Robert Sterry himself fitted a mill wheel to the mill in the early 1950's).

The ground meal then passed down to the ground floor where it was collected in sacks and stored awaiting delivery. (See photographs on next page of mill when it was actually working). The mill also had a small set of grinding stones which were driven by a petrol engine and were for reserve use during times of low water. When the water turned the water wheel, this also worked a belt which drove a dynamo which in turn charged many very large heavy duty batteries. These batteries were used to turn an electric motor - this motor turned the water wheel when the river ran low.

When Robert Sterry (or "Bob" as he was known in the village) died, the mill also died with him. At first, it was thought that the mill could be turned into a museum as it was

one of the last working mills in the area but this was thought to be impractical so it was converted into a house. Since Mr & Mrs Brake have taken over the ownership of "Sterry's Mill", they have landscaped the whole area surrounding the house and this has enhanced the whole look to the entrance to the village. Many visitors looking west from Ampney Bridge stop to take photographs of this enchanting view. (See photographs of "Before and After Conversion of Mill").



The picture here would appear to have been taken at an earlier date.

Bob Sterry receives a presentation. Date unknown.





Sterry's Mill as it is today (1985)

## **AMPNEY CRUCIS OLD MILL WHEEL STILL TURNS**

With the growth of large milling concerns; the picturesque old mills which once dotted the Cirencester area are rapidly becoming extinct.

**Many of the smaller and less prosperous mills have already closed, and for those that have remained open work is often slack during the summer period.**

One mill falling into this last

Category is Upper Mill at Ampney Crucis, which is still worked by its owner, Mr. J. R. Sterry.

A mill standing on this site was recorded even as far back as the Domesday Book, and the present building, which has been in the possession of the Sterry family for more than 100 years, is extremely old.

It is driven by an old under-shot-type water wheel which utilises the water of Ampney Brook. The wheel, which is seven feet in diameter and revolves eight to nine times a minute, produces power equivalent to 10 h.p.

The mill at the moment is concerned with the milling of barley, although a certain amount of oats are still taken. No flour is now milled. The barley is brought from farms in the Ampney Crucis area and is milled into meal which is used for cattle and sheep feeding.

Brought into the mill at ground level, the bags of grain are hoisted to the top floor of the three-storey building, where it is stored in huge bins. From the storage bins, which may hold up to ten tons, the grain is fed into a chute leading to the main grinding stones.

These are connected to the water wheel by an intricate system of cogs, and the stones can be regulated to produce either fine or coarse meal.

The ground meal then passes down to the ground floor, where it is collected in sacks and stored awaiting collection,

The mill also has a small set of grinding stones which are driven by a petrol engine and these are used in reserve, especially during times of low water.

It seems likely that this mill at Ampney Crucis, like many others in the area, is doomed to be closed. For when Mr. Sterry retires the family business will come to an end.

Small mills were at one time a valuable part of the rural community, but the importance of a small miller is dying under the "steamroller" advance of large milling firms.