Milling around the World at the Mills Archive - British Empire Mills

Milling journals of the past at The Mills Archive

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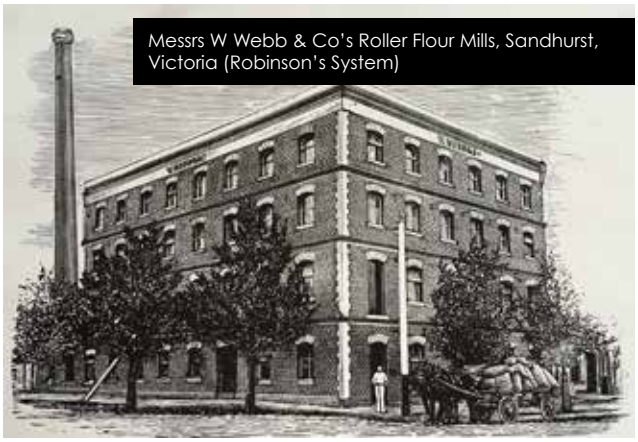
On looking through our journals at the Mills Archive I feel none seem to cover the story of roller flour milling as well as the two most popular in the UK and one from the USA. They reflect the story with articles and illustrations of their time. I refer to The Miller, Milling and The Northwestern Miller.

In June 1902, eleven years after it first appeared, Milling published an article entitled "British Empire Mills". In those days the magazine described itself as "A Leading Weekly Organ of British and Irish Millers"; nowadays its successor, Milling and Grain has a worldwide reach, in print and electronically, that would have been unthinkable at the start of the 20th century. It is, nevertheless, enlightening to see how the infant magazine addressed its international relevance.

The Milling article is well illustrated with exterior photographs of typical British mills in various countries, some of which are reproduced here. The mills selected were fitted out by one of three, well-known firms, Simon, Robinson and Turner. The setting and architecture of the buildings housing these roller mill plants were all very different, depending on the country in which they were located. The mills covered varied from the large port mills to the smaller country mill, with many recording the use of horses and wagons for the carting of the grain and flour. The following paragraphs illustrate the breadth and depth of the article. Some of the mills were described in great detail, while for others there is just a brief paragraph giving the date of the mill, its name and location with a note of the milling plant and number of bags per hour that could be achieved.

The Antipodes were represented by four mills, two using the Robinson system and two that from Simon. Messrs. W Webb & Co's mill in Victoria was erected early in 1888 and contained a complete Robinson grain cleaning and flour milling plant of 12 bags (200lbs) capacity per hour. Similarly equipped was the mill in Hobart owned by J Murdoch and Son, whose six-bag plant, driven by a Robinson compound tandem condensing engine, was erected in 1892.

In New Zealand, the mill at Ngapara, owned at the time by Messrs Milligan & Bond, had been refitted with the Simon system to produce 4 sacks per hour of flour, which sold under the trade name "Peerless". Among the first to install the Simon system in New South Wales, Messrs G Fielder & Son of the Phoenix Mills, Tamworth had a long association



Messrs W Webb & Co's Roller Flour Mills, Sandhurst, Victoria (Robinson's System)

Messrs J Murdoch and Son's Victoria Flour Mills, Hobart (Robinson's System)

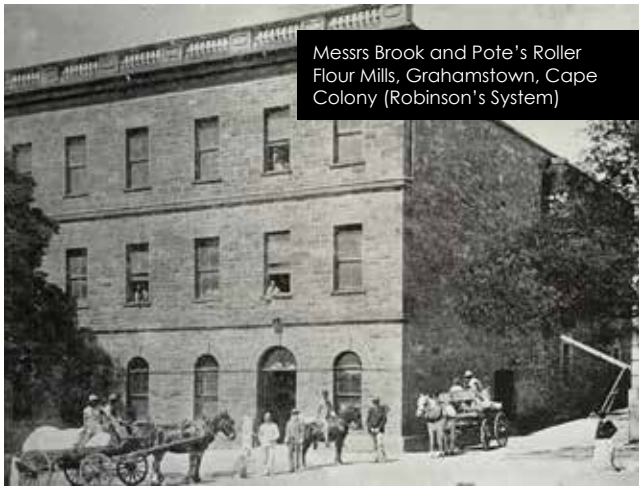
with milling in the northern regions of the State. The original system, installed in 1890, was re-equipped with an up to date ten-sack plant in 1902. The mill itself was at one end of the building, whilst at the other were arranged the storage bins for the wheat. In front of the building was a large balcony which was used to store the sacks of flour.

South Africa was another important location for British exports of milling technology. WF Hornby & Company's roller flour mill at Bloemfontein was a typical "Simon" mill. Similarly, the South African Milling Co Ltd in Cape Town had the Simon system in place and could produce fourteen sacks of flour per hour. The same company also has a large mill and silo granary in Port Elizabeth and a smaller one at Artois in Cape Colony, all fitted out with up to date Simon systems.

Messrs Brook & Pote, in Grahamstown, Cape Colony sported Robinson equipment. In 1895 their fine new building was

Messrs Milligan and Bond's Roller Flour Mills, Ngapara, NZ (Simon's System)

Messrs WF Hornby & Co's Roller Four Mills, Bloemfontein (Simon's System)


Messrs Brook and Pote's Roller Flour Mills, Grahamstown, Cape Colony (Robinson's System)


The Diamond Jubilee Flour Mills, Delhi (Turner's System)

fitted with a Robinson three bag plant, complete with cleaning and preparation machinery. The following year, a "Boer meal" plant, with a capacity of six bags per hour, on Robinson's roller system was added. The mill was kept up to date and driven by one of Robinson's horizontal engines. It was also noted that the premises throughout were lit by electricity!

In India, the Diamond Jubilee Flour Mills in Delhi were built around 1902 and fitted out with the Turner system to produce 12 sacks per hour. On the extreme right of the building was the wheat store and wheat cleaning department. Next to this was a cast iron water tank, which also furnished the washing and conditioning plant, comprising a "Concentrio" washer and stoner, a vertical whizzer and a Turner patent conditioner with hot and cold blasts. In the mill itself, the breaks were performed on four of 'Turner's roller mills with 9-inch diameter rolls, 30 inches long. Three patent "Vibromotors" with double sieves were responsible for the scalping, five "Turner Dustless" purifiers and one gravity handled the purifying, and sundry inter-elevator reels and centrifugals were used for dressing. The right hand side of the photograph shows various out-buildings, the most prominent of which contained the steam engine with a work room above it. The engine was a coupled compound condensing engine, fitted with the "Turner-Pegg" patent positive "Corliss" gear. The Lancashire type boiler was in an outhouse and was 28ft long and 7ft diameter.

Other countries, including Canada, Scotland and Ireland, also featuring typical British mills were described and will be covered in the next article in this series. These articles only give a brief glimpse of the several million records held by the Mills Archive Trust. If you would like to know more please email me at mills@millsarchive.org .