

The Millers / Mill Close

By Henny Shotter

On the site where there are two quaint closes today, stood once a windmill. It was the 'Town Mill'.¹ There were other windmills in the parish, in Lenham Heat for example, but this one had pride of place just off the High Street.



We assume that it was once owned by the Lord of the Manor of Lenham who might have lived somewhere else but conducted his business affairs from Lenham Court. Windmills came into the country from Holland in the 12th century. The Lenham Manor had, at the time of the Domesday Book two mills but they were either watermills or driven by animals. The mill which we see on the photograph is a smock mill.² The base would have been of wood and the top, which could be rotated towards the wind was also made of timber.³The story⁴ goes that the

¹ Thank you to Mike Cockett for the photo

² See: <https://www.windmillworld.com/windmills/history.htm>

³ The windmill on Charing Hill is a smock mill too

⁴ The information is taken from 'Lenham and Boughton Malherbe' in Old Photographs by Jean Cockett and Amy Myers. The book is available in the village.

mill, who had debts, set out to burn the mill down. That's what he did. However, he was so drunk that he fell asleep in his carriage. It was snowing, but the horse took him home. The investigating officers of the law had only to follow the tracks of the carriage to find the arsonist. What became of him, we don't know.

We know however of a Job Spicer who lived around that time in Lenham and who was a Miller and maybe we will find out more one day.

The mill was rebuilt with a stone base as a 'Tower Mill'. It was bought and operated by Thomas Clark who has other mills in Fairbourne, Hollingbourne and Maidstone. The mill was later run by his sons under the name of L.J.Clark & Co. Windpower was replaced first by a gas driven engine and later a diesel engine. It was still operating in 1965 when it was sold to Knowles a coal merchant.
