

## Local History: Alton Paper Mill

There seems to have been a corn mill in Alton since, at least, the time of Domesday. By the mid-1700s, it does not appear that there was enough trade for this and Anstey Mill - which was owned by the same family. In 1759, Kendrick Peck, a stationer of Wood Street in London, insured his stock of paper in his paper mill, upper drying shed, lower drying shed and loft in Alton for £380. The buildings were insured by the Lamports, a local family who had been milling in the Alton area since the 1400s, which suggests that they had built the paper mill alongside their corn mill.

The first known paper maker in Alton was Benjamin Godwin who was followed in 1768 by William Barrett - who went bankrupt. Robert Myears took over and, when he died in 1780, the mill was a *'two-vat paper-mill and a corn mill under one roof'*. William King was the next person to make paper in Alton and it was he who appears to have formed Kings Pond to give a head of water.

1796 saw the arrival of John Edward Spicer from Buckinghamshire and his family ran the paper mill, except for a short time in the late 1840s and early 1850s, until 1909.

The mill produced hand-made paper for most of its history and, in 1869, they insured *'their Dwellinghouse Rag Store Houses, Rag Engine House, Steeping House two Solls with all the Lofts, Steam Engine House, Vat House, Boiler House Parting Soll, Sizing Machine House all communicating and forming their Paper Mill, situate at Alton in the County of Hants Known as Kings Mills'* for over £300. Their stock in trade was insured for £3000, the *'Steam Engine & Going Gear, Boilers, two Rag Engines, Pumps, pipes and Cisterns'* for £66 and *'the fixed Machinery consisting of Rag Dusting Machine, Lathes, Water Wheels, Pumps, Rag Engines, Pipes, Cisterns, Steeping Cisterns, Presses, Sizing Machines, Steam Pipes, Glazing Rollers, Chests, Knotters, Hogs, Vats, large & small tackle, Machinery and all the Going Gear in the same'* for £133. By the end of the century there were seven vats in the mill.



On 27 March 1909, the *Alton Gazette* reported that *'Most of the men at the Paper Mill received notice on Saturday*

*last that their engagement at Alton would terminate in a fortnight. Many of the men have not yet been informed whether they will be employed at the new mill in Kent, so that the notice has caused a good deal of anxiety among the men and their families.'* Early in 1913, the papermaking machinery in



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the mill was put up for auction but the buildings were not sold until 1919. A small display of related items can be seen in the Curtis Museum.