



History of the Mill at Rode

The 1700 Poor Rates for Rode show Henry Batten as owner of the mill and that John Ball occupied part of it. Often the Poor Rates, Church Rates and Land Tax Assessment records just show a Batten/Pool as the owner and the occupier of the Rode mills but obviously there were tenants and workers there too.

By 1808, as well as the grist mill (grain milling) and fulling mill (wool cloth processing) at the western end of the bridge, there was a factory (now The Mill at Rode) and this factory must have been built on the site of a former mill if reference is made to the 1773 Andrews and Dury map. In 1808 the buildings were insured through the Sun Insurance Company for £340. The stocks, wheel and gearing were insured for £100. At this time the fulling mill and factory was let to Thomas Whitaker Ledyard, the prominent clothier, and the buildings were largely used in connection with the operations at Scutts Bride Factory until about 1835. A stone and tiled house adjoining the grist mill was occupied by Joseph Wilton at about the same time, with a thatched brew house, straw house and stable close by.

Possibly the greatest single moment in the milling industry of Rode was during the 18th century when a consortium of Rode mills won a competition to make Queen Charlotte's dress. In winning the prize it is said that the village invented the dye Royal Blue.

By the middle to the end of the 19th century the wool mills of Rode were struggling, like many in the South West region, as a result of both the industrial revolution and the invention of steam power.

Eventually The Mill sunk into a state of disrepair and by the second half of the 20th Century it was derelict. Local man Norman Parfitt took on the challenge of restoring the Mill building, its Mill wheel and the grounds during the latter years of the 20th Century, turning it into a public house and restaurant. The Mill was sold as a restaurant several times before the business was bought in 2003 by brothers Chris & Paul Clark who added it to their company Triple Rock Ltd. At the start of 2011 it was still managed for Triple Rock by John Foreman, Graham Mehta, Kate Hooper and Head Chef Mark Bailey.

Kate Summerscale's award-winning book *The Suspicions of Mr Whicher*, brought the village of Rode once more to national attention. The book relates to the Grisly murder 150 years ago of a three-year-old boy, Saville Kent, at Langham House, then called Road Hill House. Perhaps it is because many feel the case was never truly solved, or maybe it is because the brutal slaying of poor Saville was the first real Victorian whodunnit, capturing the imaginations of authors such as Charles Dickens and Arthur Conan Doyle. In late summer 2010 ITV commissioned a two hour drama based on the book.

People are fascinated by the Mill wheel and you can see it in all its glory through the viewing window in the downstairs bar. We can get it to turn with a little bit of work although it has a habit of shaking itself out of alignment on its axle. The power when it really flies is something to watch!

In recent years the Mill has flooded about once every two years however so far it has not stopped us from opening. The basement loos and bar will typically flood to a depth of three feet as the water pours out of the mill stream, we simply get the furniture above this height and let the water come in. Our cellars would also fill up and cause us far more of a problem were it not for a series of high output pumps that we can set up to keep the level down. Usually the water rises for 6 hours or so and then quickly drops, we open the doors and sweep most of the water and silt out as it drops. No problem!