

THE LARGEST WATERWHEEL

MIGHTY GIANT AT AVENING MILL

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Among the many claims to fame which Avening's acknowledged attribute is one, probably less well-known, but none the less of considerable interest.

Avening Mill, upon the stream below the village, claims to house the largest water-wheel in Gloucestershire, or alternatively, the largest water-wheel in Gloucestershire still discharging its task as efficiently as it did when the mill was erected some 200 years ago.

Through the kindness of the managing director, Mr. G. Rimes, a Journal reporter was enabled to see this mighty giant, reposing owing to low water, but still mighty in its sense of potential energy. In winter the pound above the mill is always full and overflowing but during summer months there is rarely enough water to keep the wheel moving except when the pound is purposely filled, as it is allowed to do every evening. To reach the wheel one has to pass a more modern source of motive power, a harnessed tractor, which in spite of its methodical, pounding rhythm, fed by a strange mixture of paraffin and water, and its twenty horse power, is still regarded as merely a stand-by when the more powerful wheel takes an enforced rest.

I did not have a measure with me (writes our reporter) but measured the wheel by comparing it with my own height. By standing on the hub I could touch the inside of the wheel but the top was four feet above my head while the lower rim was in the gloomy pit ten feet below my feet. Twenty feet in diameter the edge of the wheel is about five feet wide. Recently it was re-toothed with sturdy oak, and 250 teeth were inserted. The workmen, thus employed expressed the opinion that it was the largest working water-wheel in the county.

An interesting relic of a hundred years ago is the plate upon the front of the building, placed there by one of the old insurance companies. In those days the companies worked in harmony with local fire brigades. In case of fire the brigade would give no assistance unless the building was insured with their allied company.

At present the mill is used as a flour and meal depot and it is not known definitely to what use the water-power was put before the grinding of grain. The general belief is that it was an old silk-mill but upon the terraced Rack Hill material was formerly spread to dry which seems to indicate that this was yet another home of the cloth industry.