

PAST TIMES

THE MUSTARD MILL NORTH END



The Mustard Mill at Seaton Ross operated from the 1840's through to the 1860's. The mill which was steam driven, was part of West Lea Cottages at North End owned by Robert Cook. Robert was well a known and respected farmer being also a yeoman. In 1851 he lived at West View House and at the age of 77 he is described from the census

as a retired miller. Robert owned and ran the Old Mill during the early to mid 19th century following in the footsteps of his father Matthew.

Robert's son, George Cook, was the mustard grinder who lived and worked at the mustard mill – he also the local grocer and worsted manufacturer. Local farmers grew mustard and delivered their crops to George's mill. Mustard has been grown in the fields of England since Roman Times. The seed is sown in March and April, the plant flowers in June and harvesting takes place in September.

Before the days of advanced farm machinery, the mustard crop was largely grown by hand methods. The resulting plants suffered from many deficiencies and was a difficult to crop to harvest. Some types grew to a height of 10 feet or more and could easily be flattened by wind or rain. Harvesting at just the right time was crucial as fully ripe pods would split and spill the seed. The crop was cut with sickles, tied into sheaves to dry, then stacked ready for threshing. Before the advent of roller milling in the late 19th century, the mustard mill at Seaton Ross had stampers powered by steam which used to crumble the hard seed to release and powder the kernel. The resulting powder was then passed through a fine sieve to remove the unwanted husk which was utilised to make medicinal products or animal feeds. Two plants were grown, brown mustard and white mustard.

Sadly with the advent of roller milling the mustard mill ceased to operate in the late 1860's and became part of the local rural history. George Cook retired and his brother, James took over the property at North End continuing to live and trade at the property as a grocer until the late 1880's. He ran the business with his wife Elizabeth. James died in May 1892 aged 77 and Elizabeth died in March 1896 aged 85. They both are buried in the graveyard at St Edmunds Church.

Thank you to Malcolm Young for this article.

THE BLACK HORSE

POP QUIZ every Monday Evening at 9.30 pm

A light hearted quiz – free to enter

December 14th Paul Sullivan will give a Pool demonstration

Speed Pool competition - prize Pool Cue