

THE OLD ROYAL FAVERSHAM POWDER MILLS AND ITS STOREKEEPER.

BY W. P. D. STEBBING, F.S.A.

THERE has recently come into the possession of the writer of these notes a water colour sketch of the storekeeper's house (Plate I), a sale plan of the Mill lands in 1825 (Plate II) and the parchment deed of the appointment to the office of storekeeper. The Mills after being a private enterprise from the 16th C., and in the management of the Waterman family, came under public control, about 1760.

Edward Jacob in his *History of Faversham*, 1774, pp. 94-97, says that in his time there were eleven sets of mill-stones driven by the stream, and five sets worked by horses; while there were other stones for finer grinding the ingredients and granulating the powder. He also describes how the horses were protected from the danger of an explosion by a leather-covered frame which hung between them and the stones.

Hasted's *History of Kent* (8vo. edition, Vol. VI, 1798, p. 318) speaking of the site of the Mills points out their situation with part in the parish of Faversham and part in Ospringe (v. Plate II), and that in the detached portion of the latter are the Storekeeper's house, "and part of the offices and gardens belonging to it, and some of the mills themselves". On pp. 353-5 appears a more detailed account of the Mills. These are "under the direction of a storekeeper, clerk of the survey, master fire worker and others; the three first of whom have handsome houses for their constant residence here". These must have been built after the disastrous explosion of 1781 which Hasted records.

The sketch is inscribed on the back:—"A South-East View of the Residence of R. V. Minty Esq^{re} at Ospringe near Faversham, Kent as taken upon the spot by the Rev. H. S. Mortimer." The site of the house is shown in Lot 2 on the plan as "Late Storekeepers". In 1810 Mr. Minty became Storekeeper. His authority is a printed parchment document filled in as necessary, sealed with Lord Mulgrave's arms, and stamped with the duty of £20 paid on the grant. The wording is as follows:—Henry Lord Mulgrave One of His Majesty's most Honourable Privy Council, Lord Lieutenant Custos Rotulorum and Vice Admiral of the East Riding of York, General of His Majesty's Forces, Colonel of the 31st Regiment of Foot, Governor of Scarborough Castle & Master General of the Ordnance. [As holder of this last post his emoluments were £3,160 per annum. Ed.]

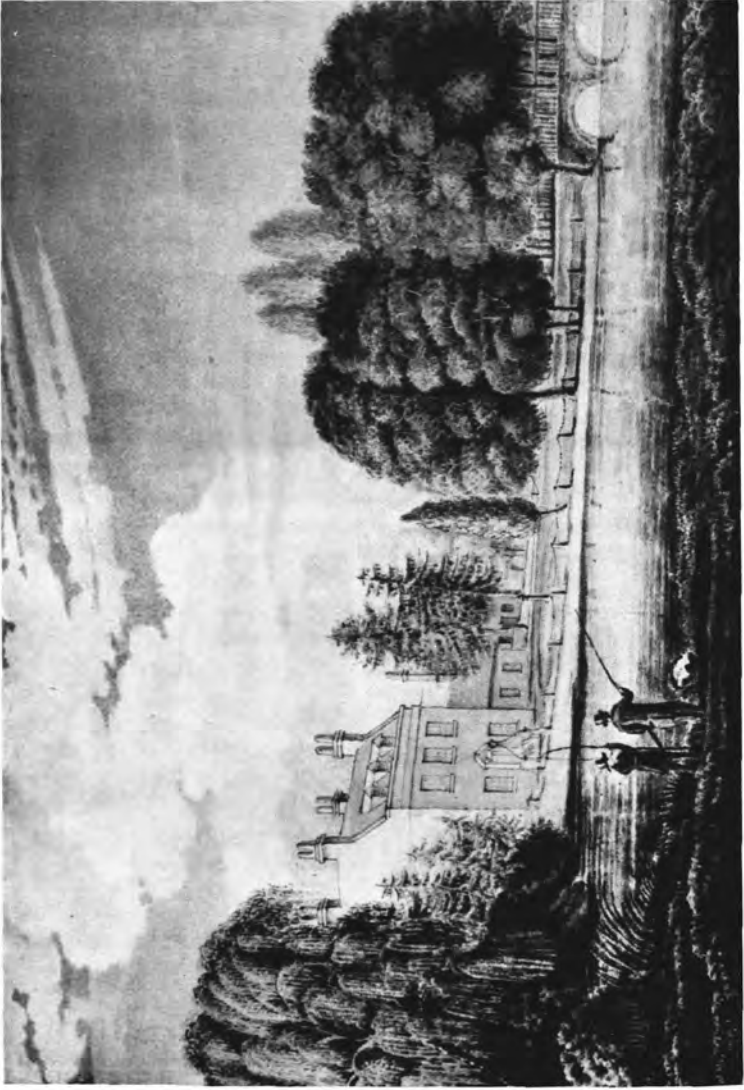


PLATE I. THE STOREKEEPER'S HOUSE, FAVERSHAM POWDER MILLS.

To Richard V. Minty Esq.

By Virtue of the Authority to me by the King's most excellent Majesty in this behalf given upon the good Testimony and Assistance which I have received of your Loyalty and Ability, I do hereby nominate, constitute and appoint you the said Richard V. Minty to be Storekeeper on the Establishment of the Ordnance at Faversham vice Long deceased ————— and to continue in the said office as long as I or the Master General for the time being shall think proper. You are therefore carefully and diligently to discharge the duty of Storekeeper ————— by doing and performing all manner of Things thereunto belonging, likewise to observe and follow such Orders and directions as you shall from time to time receive from me or the Master General of the Ordnance for the time being the Lieutenant General and Principal Officers of the same or any other your superior Officer in pursuance of the Trust hereby reposed in you. And for your Care and Diligence to be taken herein you are to have and receive the Allowance of Three hundred and Fifty Pounds a year to be paid you quarterly out of the Treasury of this Office the said Allowance to commence on the First Day of January 1811 and to be received by you as long as you shall continue to hold and execute the said Office. Given at the Office of Ordnance under my Hand and Seal this Eighth ——— Day of November 1810 in the Fifty first Year of His Majesty's Reign.

By command of Lord Mulgrave

[Signed] Mulgrave

Master General of the Ordnance

[Signed] Ch: Neville

Entered in the Office of Ordnance
8 November 1810

[Signed] C. A. Cooper

Clerk of the Ordnance

Words underlined are added in ink.—ED.

The Mills as a Government property were sold in 1825 as on Friday November 25th the "Royal Powder Mills Ordnance Lands and Premises at Faversham" came under the hammer at the Ship Hotel. The plan, unfortunately with no scale, shows the property divided up into 15 lots with its houses, ponds, sluices and mills following the course of the stream and its springs down the valley. Our member Mr. S. Wilson, Town Clerk of Faversham, tells me that the purchasers were Messrs. John Hall and Son who carried on the works for about 80 years. They were then absorbed by Messrs. Curtis and Harvey Ltd. who gave way to Nobels. In 1935 owing to their vulnerability the manufacture of explosives was transferred to Ardeer near Glasgow.

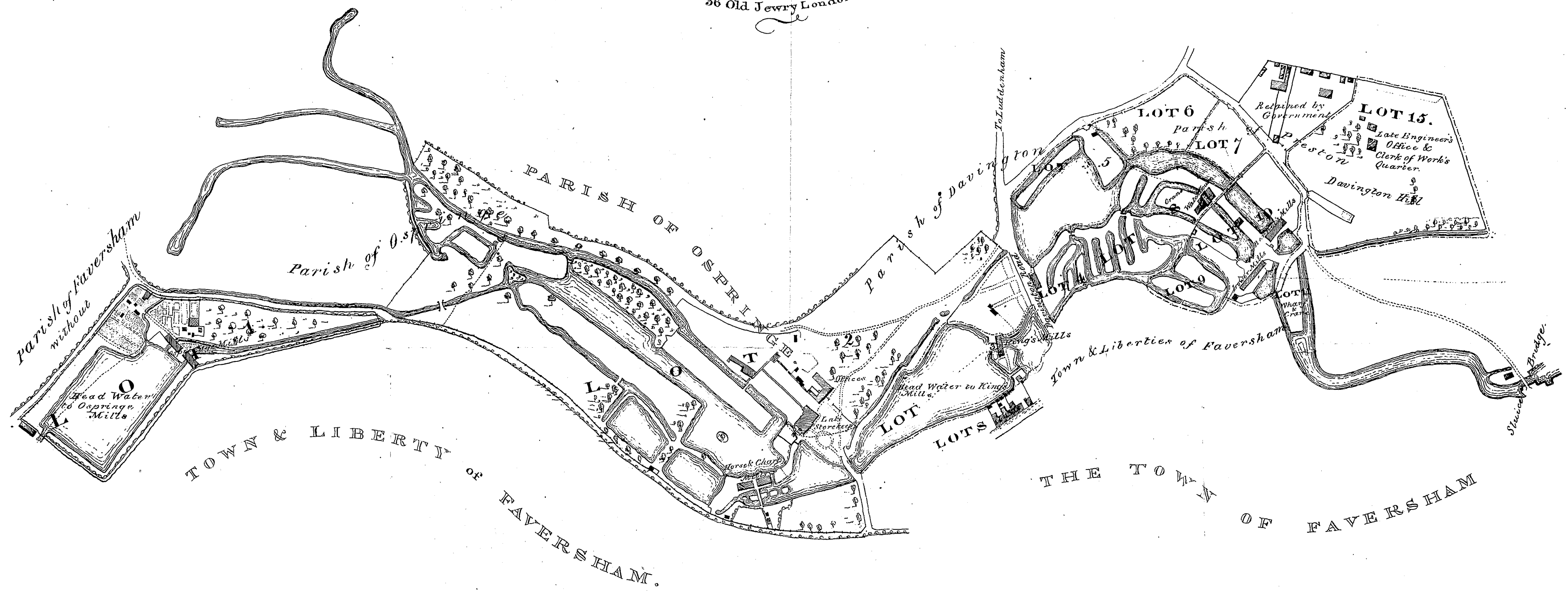
PLAN
of the
ROYAL POWDER MILLS ORDNANCE LANDS

AND
PREMISES

~ at ~
FAVERSHAM

*For Sale by Auction at the Ship Inn Faversham
On Friday Nov. 25th 1825.*

by
MESS^{RS} STEVENS & BRENCHELY,
36 Old Jewry London.



Mr. Wilson also informs me that at one time Major Findlay, father of the Historian, was manager and that in the Napoleonic Wars the works had their own Company of Volunteers who were independent of the Town Companies.