

Bathford Papermill: A Photo Essay from 1935

In 1935 the owners of the long established paper making mill at Bathford – the Tabb family- had a short film made showing the workings of the mill and its workforce. At the same time a series of high quality photographs were made of the workers and the interiors and exteriors of the historic mill.

Paper has been made at Bathford since 1809 when the water powered mill – which had been operating as a flour mill since at least the 16th century- was converted. In 1873 it was bought by Albert Reed – the famous papermaker- with financial backing by Messrs Evans and Owens who ran a department store in Bath. Despite a flood in 1882, a boiler explosion in 1884 and a fire in 1910 which virtually destroyed the works, the papermill was successfully producing fine quality papers in entirely new premises by 1913. The mill specialized in making thin papers used in bibles, technical publications and magazines, when these pictures were taken.

The firm changed hands in 1972 and the present owners produce speciality papers for a global market. These images were presented to the Museum of Bath at Work, along with extensive and detailed archives by Michael Tabb.

Readers may know the faces of some of these workers as many of them lived locally in Bathford, Batheaston and Bathampton. If there are readers who are interested in copies of these images if they contact the Museum of Bath at Work we can arrange this. Contact Stuart Burroughs at the Museum on 01225 318348 or mobaw@hotmail.com



1. A view of the Bathford papermill at the entrance, taken after the rebuilding in 1912-13. The buildings appear new and the two men in foreground are most probably members of the Tabb family.



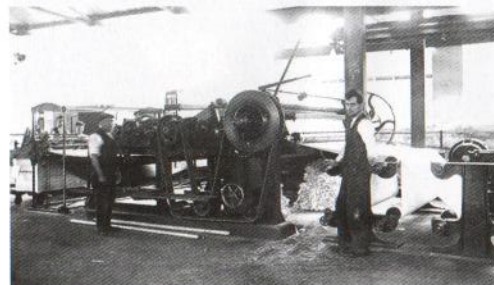
2. In 1935, when the majority of these images were made, paper was made from wood paper pulp bought in in packages – as seen here. The dried pulp was soaked in water tanks to form a thick paste which was progressively dried by passing it through heated rollers. The image shows the first stage in the papermaking process.



3. The dried pulp was pulverized in water tanks with powered beaters to create the paste which was then processed.



4. A papermaking machine – almost 100 feet long- was used to progressively dry and roll the wood pulp. The process began with the paste laid onto a mesh, rolled and then passed through the 100 feet of rollers to the point where it could be taken off as dried paper.



5. Finally the paper was rolled off the main machinery before being finally rolled heavily and cut to size.



6. The paper once cut had to be checked for imperfections and faults and the paper sorted. Here the largely female workforce pose for the camera.



7. Finally before dispatch to customers the paper was packed and in folded paper and card to protect it during transit.



8. The workforce of the papermill sit for a formal portrait outside the works.