

The Luffman family and their lives at Kingsbury Mill, Lower Kingsbury, Milborne Port



John Luffman, born in Charlton Horethorne in 1815, was recorded in the 1851 census as living in Poyntington. By 1861, John, his wife Sarah, his widowed aunt and several children had moved to Kingsbury Mill, Milborne Port. John's occupation is shown as miller and baker. These Luffmans and their descendants were at the mill for the next eighty years.

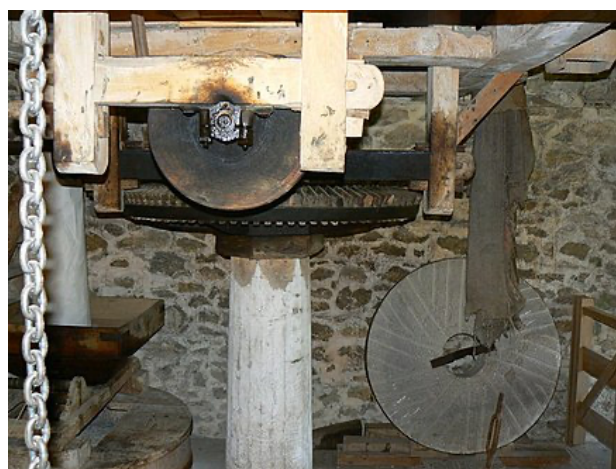
In 1881, John and also his sons Henry and Arthur are again recorded as millers and bread bakers.

In 1883, John is reported in the newspapers as having fallen foul of the law, his defence apparently that he wasn't the only one to have done so!

teetotal principles.

BREACH OF THE FACTORY ACTS. — On Wednesday, at Wincanton, before Mr. T. E. Rogers (Chairman) and Mr. C. Barton, Major Beadon, Inspector under the Factory Act, appeared to prosecute John Luffman, of Kingsbury Mill, Milborne Port—first, for neglecting to fence the crown wheel at his mill; second, for not fencing the water wheel; third, for not affixing the abstract of the Act on the premises.—Major Beadon asked the bench to take first the neglecting to fence the crown wheel. This being allowed, he showed that the wheel was dangerous, and that, in fact, an accident had taken place therefrom, a man having lost his arm by it. He had written two letters to defendant, and had had no reply to either.—Henry Luffman, on the part of his father, said that although the charge was correct, the wheel was now protected. He did not think the matter was of so much importance, and there were others in the neighbourhood equally as negligent as himself.—The Bench fined the defendant 40s and costs 10s.—Major Beadon thereupon asked to be allowed to withdraw the two other summonses, the defendant promising to conform to the law; but the defendant expressed his opinion that it was “very hard lines” to be so heavily fined. It would appear that there are others who might as well take warning, lest they also get summoned for similar breaches of the law.

John was clearly reluctant to take full responsibility for not making this machinery safe! The crown wheel mentioned in the article was the driving wheel located at the top of the upright shaft; you can see from the picture (left) of a similar mechanism that it would have been dangerous to those working nearby unless ‘fenced’ by some sort of protective barrier.



John, aged 71, miller of Kingsbury Mill, died on 20th August 1885 and is buried in the churchyard of St John the Evangelist, Milborne Port together with his wife Sarah, who had died in 1874. According to his will proved later that year, he left the sum of £906 15s 3d¹. His executors were Walter Frederick Meaden, accountant, and his son Henry Luffman, miller, both of Milborne Port.

Henry and Arthur carried on the milling and baking business at Kingsbury Mill; according to 1889 Kelly's Directory for Milborne Port, they were trading as *Luffman Bros, Millers (water) Kingsbury*. By 1911, Henry's twenty-one-year-old son, Cecil Roland Thomas Luffman (the youngest of nine children) was also a baker 'assisting in the business', now described as a grist mill².



US born impressionist William Samuel Horton (1865-1936) travelled to Europe, probably in early 1914; he probably sought refuge from the fighting on the continent by coming to England, spending some time in Milborne Port. He painted this colourful beauty of Kingsbury Mill.

Like most young men of his era, Cecil was caught up in the Great War. He served with the Somerset Light Infantry from 1914-1920 as a private, regimental number 203918 and recorded as receiving awards and decorations of honour. He married Annie Ebbitt in 1915.

¹ Almost £100,000 in today's money, so he had done well!

² A gristmill grinds cereal grain into flour and middlings (a by-product of the wheat milling process).

Henry continued at the mill until his death in 1919. His estate was valued at £1197 7s 8d and his executors were Henry Edwin Luffman grocer and Charles Luffman bank clerk.



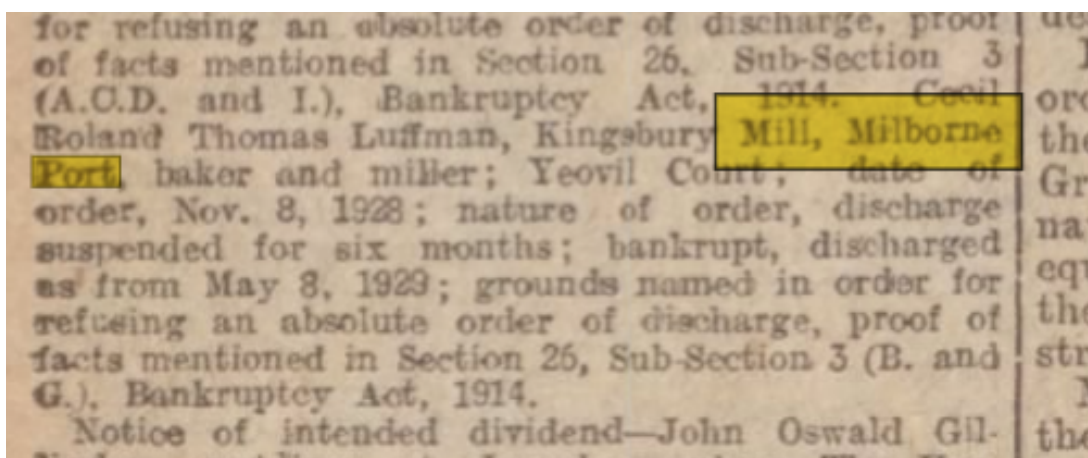
10161] Solicitors for the Executor.
RE HENRY LUFFMAN, DECEASED.
CREDITORS and other Persons having any CLAIM or DEMAND against the Estate of the above-named Deceased, late of Kingsbury Mill, Milborne Port Somerset, who died on the 20th FEBRUARY, 1919, are requested to SEND PARTICULARS to us forthwith.
FFOOKS & GRIMLEY,
Greenhill, Sherborne,
Solicitors to the Executors.
64804] GEORGE HANN, DECEASED.

Cecil took over the business but by 1927 the business was no longer profitable and unable to pay its way. It was bad news for the family in The Western Gazette 9th November 1928:-

BANKRUPT'S APPLICATION FOR DISCHARGE.
MILBORNE PORT MAN'S MISFORTUNES.
OFFICIAL RECEIVER AND A "LAUDABLE AMBITION."

An application for discharge from bankruptcy was made before his Honour Judge Higgins at Yeovil Court by Cecil Roland Thomas Luffman of Kingsbury Mill, Milborne Port baker and miller. The Official Receiver (Mr Tilney Barton) reported that the receiving order was made on September 19th 1927, on the debtor's own petition. According to the bankrupt's statement of affairs (submitted on 27th September 1927), the liabilities to rank for dividend were estimated to be at £659 13s 3d, but the proofs actually admitted at this date (£290 1s 4d) and the probable claims not lodged (£59 5s 2d) amounted to £349 19s 6d. This marked difference, between the estimated and the actual and probable liabilities, was due mainly to claims by relatives amounting to £246 11s 5d being withdrawn, and to a claim of the bankrupt's wife for £100 being postponed pursuant to Section 36 of the Act. The assets, so far as they were not assigned to creditors wholly or partly secured, were estimated to produce £207 8s 6d, but they realised £229 8s 8d. The balance available for costs and for distribution among unsecured creditors was £218 19s 8d instead of £201 8s 6d, as estimated by the bankrupt. A first and final dividend of 10s 1 1/2d was paid on proofs for £290 14s 4d.

The bankrupt was born at Kingsbury Mill, Milborne Port, where he was trading at the date of the receiving order, and, except for the period during which he was engaged on war service, he had lived there all his life. The business was previously carried on by bankrupt's father who died in 1918 at a time when the bankrupt was serving in Constantinople, so that, until his return, Mrs Luffman had to fill the gap caused by her husband's absence. There was no evidence as to what the financial position actually was when Luffman senior died, and no accounts of any value were kept in connection with the business, but from the fact that after two years' trading, 1920-1922, the bankrupt was able to find



£200 out of £500 necessary to purchase the mill, it seemed evident that his profits during the period in question were very satisfactory, although he admitted that these arose to a great extent out of fattening pigs, a trading venture which, strictly speaking, formed no part of his business as a miller and baker.

A Series of Misfortunes

From 1922 onwards, however, the report continued, the bankrupt's history, both trading and domestic, was very disappointing. Competition by a Co-operative Society seriously diminished his takings. He lost both horses and pigs through sickness, and the crowning misfortune was probably the long and grave illness of his wife, who had always given him the greatest help and assistance in carrying on his business. The climax came when a seizure was made by the Sheriff, and no alternative remained but to seek the protection of the Court.

The Official Receiver submitted, having regard to Section 26 Sub-Section 3 of the Bankruptcy Act 1914, that the bankrupt omitted to keep such books of account as were usual and proper in the business carried on by him and as sufficiently disclosed his business transactions within the three years immediately preceding his bankruptcy; and that the bankrupt continued trading after knowing himself to be insolvent. The bankrupt's conduct during the proceedings in bankruptcy was satisfactory.

In reply to the Official Receiver, Mr Luffman said if he was discharged, through the mill being sold, he had a chance of pulling up and paying 20s in the £.

The Official Receiver: That is your ambition? A very laudable one.

In reply to his Honour, Luffman said that proper books of account were now being kept. The business was being carried on by his wife and his brother.

The Official Receiver did not object to discharge, and his Honour granted the discharge suspended for three months.

Arthur died in 1933. At the time of his death, he was living at Ash House, Kingsbury (pictured below) and he left £753 10s. His executors were Edward James Beaumont gentleman and Henry Edwin Luffman, grocer.



Meanwhile, far away from Milborne Port, Cecil and the business at Kingsbury Mill weren't the only ones in difficulty. International events, later dubbed 'The Great Depression' (1929-1939) were taking their toll. It began with a ten-week period in 1929; stocks on the New York Stock Exchange lost 50% of their value and they continued to fall into the 1930s. Businesses failed and unemployment rose dramatically. It was the greatest economic crisis in modern history and affected many countries around the world. Workers lost their jobs and families went hungry. With all this going on around them, the Luffman family had an additional, personal tragedy to contend with.

MILBORNE PORT MAN'S DEATH.

FOUND UNCONSCIOUS BESIDE OVERTURNED CART DISCOVERY AT PURSE CAUNDLE

Cecil Roland Thomas Luffman, Kingsbury Mill, Milborne Port, died at the Yeatman Hospital, Sherborne on Wednesday, following an accident the previous day. Mr Luffman, who was married and aged 45, was a master baker, and as usual, on Tuesday had been making his round with a two-wheel horse-drawn cart.³ It appears that he made his call at Haydon at about six o'clock that evening. It is thought his trap struck the bank, and it was not until three hours later that he was found, a short distance away, unconscious in the road, near Tripps Farm, Purse Caundle. The trap was overturned, but the horse was still attached to it.

A cyclist made the discovery. The Sherborne Ambulance was summoned and the injured man was taken to the Yeatman Hospital where he died at nine o'clock the next morning without regaining consciousness. The facts were reported to the Coroner and an inquest was arranged to be held last (Thursday) evening.

FLOOD EXPERIENCE

Mr Luffman was a well-known tradesman and had carried on for some years the old established business of millers and bakers founded by his grandfather. Much sympathy is felt with the widow and four children in their bereavement.

³ <https://www.gail-thornton.co.uk/trade-vehicles/baker.php>

Mr Luffman is also survived by his mother, six brothers and five sisters. The tragedy follows immediately upon severe trouble caused by floods during the weekend, when the mill stream overflowed and flooded the house, driving the family to the upstairs apartment. The bakehouse was also flooded, and it was impossible to carry on the baking business on Monday, bread having to be purchased to supply customers.

A week later, Western Gazette reported on the inquest (29th November 1935):-

*FOUND INJURED BESIDE OVERTURNED TRAP
INQUEST EVIDENCE AT SHERBORNE*

The inquest on Cecil Roland Thomas Luffman, Kingsbury Mill, Milborne Port, who was found fatally injured beside his over-turned pony-trap in a lonely road at Purse Caundle on Thursday evening at the Yeatman Hospital, where he died the previous morning.

Mr Luffman who was married and aged 45, was a master baker, and had been making his round on the Tuesday evening with a two wheeled trap. It appears that he made his last call at Haydon at about six o'clock. Three hours later, only a short distance away, his son and a friend found him lying in the road near Tripps Farm, Purse Caundle.

Mr W H Creech (Sturminster Newton), Coroner for North Dorset, conducted the inquest, sitting with a jury of which Mr W F Ozzard was foreman.

DISCOVERY OF THE TRAGEDY

Philip Ernest Starks⁴, of Charlton Horethorne, farm labourer, gave evidence of identification, and said the deceased was used to driving horses. On November 19th, witness called at Kingsbury Mill between 6 and 6.30 pm. Mr Luffman had not come home, and Mrs Luffman was getting rather worried. Just after 8 o'clock, his son Roland, and witness went to look for him. They went through Purse Caundle, and about a mile further on, at about 9.5 pm, in a by-road they

⁴ A year later he married Cecil's daughter, Edith Luffman.

found him with his pony and trap. The pony was facing them and Mr Luffman was partly on the bank on his off side. He was gasping for breath, and had a bad cut on the temple, and there was blood in the road.

The Coroner: Did it look as though he had been dragged along?

Witness: No.

Where were the reins? He had hold of the left rein.

Witness added that the pony was lying in the road and was still attached to the trap.

Answering the Coroner, witness said the pony was not a 'kicker.'

Witness took Mr Luffman back away from the pony, placed him on the seat of the trap which was in the road and then sent for help.

INJURIES CAUSED BY PONY KICKING?

Dr Arthur George Jeaffreson Harris said that when admitted to the Hospital, deceased was unconscious and suffering from shock, cuts and bruises. He recovered from the shock but died the following morning. A post-mortem examination was carried made. There were bruises on the chest, forearms, hands and right elbow, and there were several cuts on his head and face. The skull-bone was slightly cracked, and there was severe contusion of the frontal part of the brain. Death was due to haemorrhage caused by contusion of the brain. Answering the Coroner, Dr Harris said he thought the injuries were consistent with deceased having fallen from a trap, though some of the injuries might have been caused by the pony kicking. It did not appear he was dragged, otherwise there would have been more abrasions.

PC Charles Taylor: Do you think the bruising of the chest might have been caused by the man being squeezed between the back of the pony and the trap?

Dr Harris: That is likely.

A QUIET ROAD

Mrs Annie Maud Luffman, the widow, said her husband left home that evening about five o'clock. The candle lamps of the trap were then alight.

The Coroner: Knowing the neighbourhood would it surprise you that he might have remained in the road for three hours without being found?

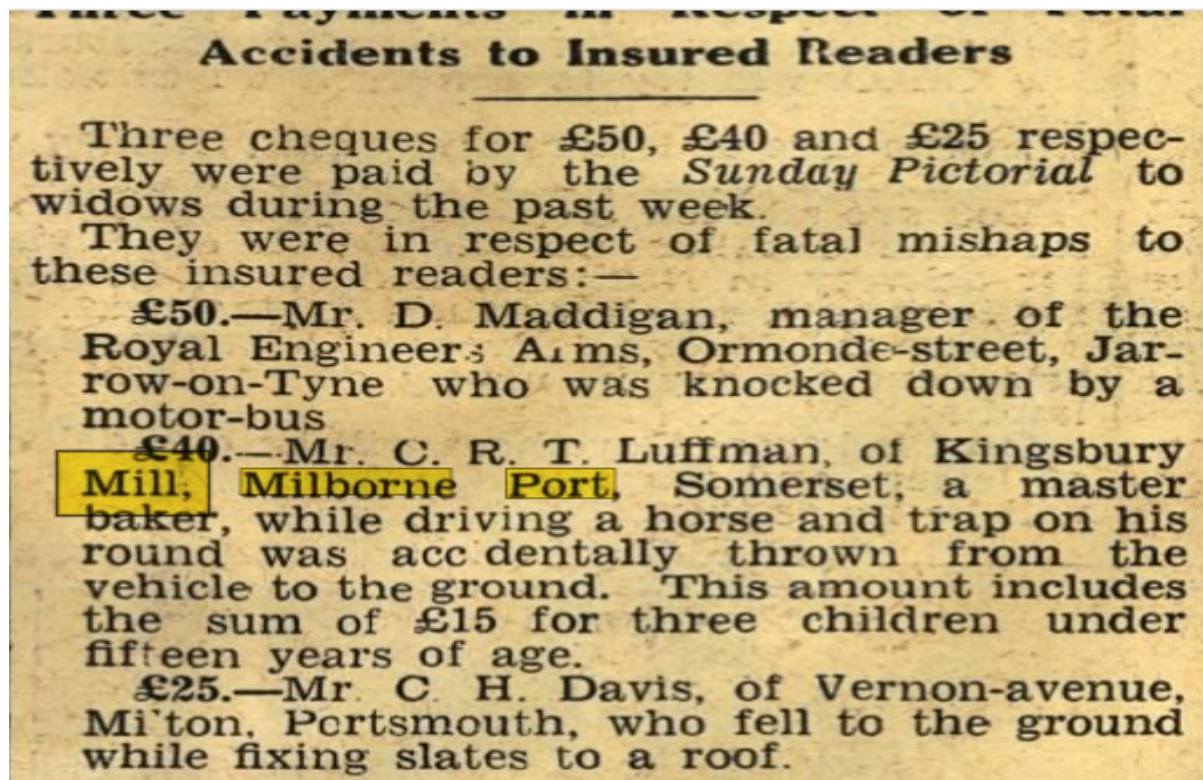
Mrs Luffman replied that it was a very quiet road. PC Taylor explained that apparently the only other people to go along that road that evening were a young man and young lady at 10.15 pm.

WHEEL MARKS ON THE BANK

PC Charles Taylor said on a practically straight piece of road 10ft wide, there were marks where apparently the near-side wheel of the trap had mounted the bank and continued along it for 24ft, reaching a height of 2ft. He concluded that the trap was thrown over to the off-side of the road, causing the pony to fall and throwing the deceased out. There was nothing to suggest there had been a collision with another vehicle. It appeared that the pony or some other body had pressed against the bank on the off-side. The pony lay in the road five yards further on from where the trap wheel left the bank. It seemed that the trap was thrown diagonally across the road. The only damage to the trap was a smashed lamp and there was a graze mark on the rim of the off wheel. The Coroner, addressing the jury, said it seemed clear that no-one else was concerned and that Mr Luffman was driving down the lane along and for some reason the trap upset. It was surprising how soon a two-wheeled trap would go over.

Mr Creech added an expression of deep sympathy with Mrs Luffman and the members of the family.

The jury returned a verdict of 'Accidental death' and associated themselves with the Coroner's expressions of sympathy, with which PC Taylor joined on behalf of the police.



Sadly, Cecil's death ended the Luffmans' 80-year connection with Kingsbury Mill. Cecil was only 45 years old at the time of his death; he had survived the Great War, been commended and served an extra two years; he had struggled to keep the business afloat before, during and after the depression of the late 1920s and 1930s – metaphorically and literally; he had been declared bankrupt but battled on to try to make a living out of the mill; and he had died alone after a prosaic accident on a quiet country road. The reader cannot help but feel for this highly resilient man and his family.

The photographs below are of John Luffman's son/Cecil's father, Henry Luffman (left) and of Herbert (and Alice) Luffman (right), possibly Cecil's brother. Henry Edwin Luffman was a brother of Cecil and was a successful businessman, one of his enterprises being a shop on Gainsborough.



*Valerie Jackson
November 2023*