

## **PORTALS PAPER MILLS, 1718-1995: PAPERMAKERS TO THE BANK OF ENGLAND**

### **Introduction**

Portals paper mills have had a profound economic and social effect on Overton parish. In the south of England, it is most unusual to find a single dominant industrial employer over such a long period. Until 1922, when the Overton Mill was built, the centre of production was at Laverstoke Mill, just 1 km beyond the western boundary of the parish.

Henry Portal was awarded the contract to make hard-wearing banknote paper for the Bank of England in 1724. The company grew steadily, outgrowing the limited space at Laverstoke, and a new factory was built at Overton Station in 1924. Portals became the largest security paper company in the world, employing about 1,550 people in the 1960s.

### **The 18th century**

Henry Portal (circa 1690-1747) was a young aristocratic French Huguenot who fled persecution after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, arriving at Southampton in about 1706. He found an influential community of Huguenot émigrés including the White Paper Makers' Company of England, with whom he became involved, working in a paper mill at South Stoneham, near Southampton, in about 1710. In 1712 Portal set up a small paper mill at Bere, Whitchurch, Hampshire. In 1715, he married Dorothy Hasker of Northington Farm, Overton and in 1718 he bought the lease of Laverstoke Mill.<sup>1</sup> The chalk stream of the River Test provided the pure water required for papermaking and the water wheel supplied the motive power. In 1724 he was awarded the contract to make paper for the Bank of England<sup>2</sup>.

When Henry died in 1747 he was succeeded by his son Joseph who was establishing himself in the county. Neither he nor his father had forgotten the position their family had occupied in France and, as their fortunes gained ground in England, it was their aim to re-establish it in their adoptive land. In those days, the road to social and political influence lay in buying land. Joseph bought the Laverstoke estate in 1759 and, by 1763, he was High Sherriff of Hampshire.<sup>3</sup>

### **The 19th century**

When Joseph died in 1793, his son John Portal inherited the business and the family estates. From 1818 to 1919 the Bank of England imposed restrictions on Portal's production of security paper for third parties, such as private and foreign banks. Portal could only enter into contracts with the Bank's express consent. This restriction continued even when orders were scarce or ceased entirely and must have limited the expansion of the mill and investment in new plant.<sup>4</sup> Despite this, the business must have been very profitable since John Portal invested heavily in land. By 1843 he held the leases from the bishopric of Winchester of 84 per cent of all the agricultural land in Overton parish.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Portal, Sir Francis, *The Church, the State and the People, leading to 250 years of papermaking*, (1962), 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

<sup>4</sup> Franklin, G., *Laverstoke Mill, Whitchurch, Hampshire; Historic Buildings Report*. Research Department Report Series no. 13-2010, (2010), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Overton Tithe Apportionment, 1847 HRO, 21M65/F7/181/1.

At the 1841 census, two Overton residents were described as paper-makers.<sup>6</sup> In 1844, the total number of mill 'servants' was 37.<sup>7</sup> The process of papermaking at this time was that rags were cut into strips and beaten to pulp with hammers powered by the water wheel. The resulting 'stuff' was then screened through strainers and pumped into vats. The vatman dipped a mould into the pulp, shaking it to distribute the fibres evenly, before placing it on the side of the vat to drain. The mould consisted of a rectangular wooden frame covered with a laid or woven wire screen containing the watermark.

After some minutes, the 'coucher' turned the mould face down onto a drying felt. Another felt was placed on top and this process repeated to form a 'post' of alternating sheets and felts. The 'layman' then removed the post to a pressing room, where the post was placed in a hydraulic press to remove the excess water and compress the fibres. The paper was then air dried in a loft, sized with gelatine and glycerine and glazed to a smooth surface by passing it through rollers (callenders). Finally, in the 'salle', the sheets were trimmed, counted and weighed.<sup>8</sup> In the 1850s, Portals gained control over the production of the moulds from the Bank of England and Wyndham Portal began to install machinery for paper production. In 1860, the company started to make banknote paper for India which resulted in a major expansion and recruitment of more workers.<sup>9</sup> As more contracts ensued the numbers of employees rose steadily. By the time of the 1911 census, there were more Overton people employed in the paper industry than in agriculture.<sup>10</sup>

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911
Overton residents	3	3	21	37	41	81	100	156
working at Portals mills.								

Table 1. Overton residents working at Portals Paper Mills, 1841- 1911.

## The 20th century

In 1900, Portals converted Overton Town Mill to a rag house so some of the jobs were in Overton.<sup>11</sup> This was reportedly to free up space at Laverstoke and for *'the convenience of large numbers of women and girls who have to trudge daily to Laverstoke.'*<sup>12</sup>

On the eve of the First World War, Portals was employing 359 people, almost half of them women.<sup>13</sup> In 1914, William Portal positively encouraged his workers to enlist<sup>14</sup> but by 1916, this was causing problems because of the loss of skilled craftsmen.<sup>15</sup> However, the mill records show that the

<sup>6</sup> Census, 1841.

<sup>7</sup> HRO, 132M98/P3/21.

<sup>8</sup> Franklin, G., *Laverstoke Mill, Whitchurch, Hampshire; Historic Buildings Report*. Research Department Report Series no. 13-2010, (2010), 62.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>10</sup> Census, 1911.

<sup>11</sup> A plaque on the wall reads, 'Overton Town Mill, rebuilt by Messrs Portal, 1900.'

<sup>12</sup> *Hants & Berks Gazette*, 18 Jun. 1901.

<sup>13</sup> HRO, 132M98/P3/21.

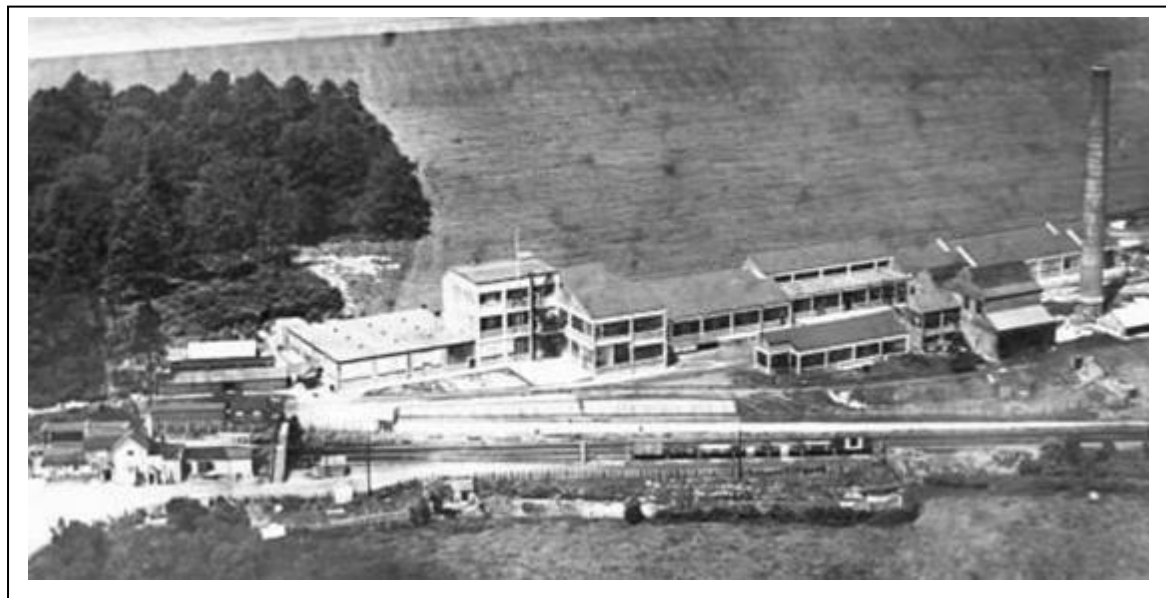
<sup>14</sup> *Hants & Berks Gazette*, 9 Sep. 1914.

<sup>15</sup> HRO, 132M98/E5/5 and 132M98/E5/6.

numbers employed actually rose to 399 but, as in other industries at this time, nearly all of the new recruits were women.<sup>16</sup>

During the First World War, the advent of paper money in place of gold coinage enormously increased the demand for high-quality banknote paper. In 1919, Portals introduced the cylinder-mould process for the manufacture of the £1 and 10s. notes. In 1920, the Bank of England gave permission for the firm to manufacture banknote paper for other countries.<sup>17</sup>

The level of expansion required could not be accommodated on the Laverstoke site and, with the advent of steam power and then electricity, the company was no longer tied to the riverside. A new mill was built alongside Overton Station.<sup>18</sup>



Portals paper mill, 1924.



The first paper was made there on 16 June, 1922.<sup>19</sup> A siding can be seen for the delivery of coal and to transport paper to the Bank of England by train. The daily goods train arrived at 2pm and, because of limited shunting facilities, the operation of placing incoming waggons in the right place and collecting paper shipments could easily last two hours.<sup>20</sup>

Security paper being transported by train in the chained and padlocked wagons.

<sup>16</sup> Walters, R., *'The Story of Portals'*, 1975, 15.

<sup>17</sup> Portal, Sir Francis, *The Church, the State and the People, leading to 250 years of papermaking*, (1962), 92.

<sup>18</sup> Portals paper mill, 1924. Britain from Above, EPW011029.

<sup>19</sup> Wood, W.A., *250 years of Papermaking*, (1975), 16.

<sup>20</sup> Portals Newsletter, Christmas 1998, 9.



Pure water was obtained by sinking artesian wells. Twelve bungalows for company workers were built to the south of the railway even before the factory was finished.<sup>21</sup>

King George V and Queen Mary made an official visit to the mill the following year.<sup>22</sup>

Overton High Street, royal visit, 14 April 1923.

In 1920, Portals became a private limited company with £500,000 capital.<sup>23</sup> By 1929, the company was making paper for 41 countries.<sup>24</sup> In 1935, the board decided that an extension to the mill was necessary and plans were put in hand for two more cylinder-mould machines to be installed alongside the original two.<sup>25</sup>

As early as 1934, experiments were made which eventually culminated in a security device of far-reaching importance. This was a narrow thread of special composition incorporated into the paper during manufacture. It first appeared in 1940 in a new issue of £1 and 10s. notes.<sup>26</sup>

On 16 April 1936, there was a fatal accident at the mill. Arthur Plester, a greaser, became entangled on a rotating shaft and died later in hospital.<sup>27</sup> The company was taken to court by the factories inspector who had warned during March that the shaft was not fenced in. Nothing had been done about it, except to warn Mr Plester not to grease the shaft bearing whilst it was in motion. The company was found guilty of negligence but a nominal fine of only £5 was imposed.<sup>28</sup>

In 1938, King George VI and Queen Mary made another royal visit.<sup>29</sup> Plans were being laid to move the Bank of England printing presses and staff from London to Overton in the event of war. New buildings were erected for the presses and chalets were built south of the railway to accommodate the staff. The move came on 3 September 1939, including the billeting of 1,200 staff. Rose Tutin lived in a dormitory for 24 girls. All they had for the next five years was a curtained area for a bed and a chest of drawers.<sup>30</sup> Staff were also billeted on families in the village. The Hobbs family received

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<sup>21</sup> HRO, 132M98/B3/1.

<sup>22</sup> *Hants & Berks Gazette*, 14 Apr. 1923; Overton Pictures, 01\_2HS001\_0. [www.overtonpictures.com](http://www.overtonpictures.com) (Accessed 24 Nov. 2017).

<sup>23</sup> Wood, W.A., *250 years of Papermaking*, (1975), 15.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 16

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

<sup>27</sup> *Hants & Berks Gazette*, 24 Apr. 1936.

<sup>28</sup> *Hants & Berks Gazette*, 19 Jun. 1936.

<sup>29</sup> Overton Pictures 09PO025\_1, [www.overtonpictures.com](http://www.overtonpictures.com) (Accessed 18 Mar. 2017).

<sup>30</sup> Tutin, R., Portals Newsletter, Spring 1982, HRO 162A10/3.

8s. 6d. a week for each of five girls who lived with them.<sup>31</sup> The Bank staff quickly started to create their own amusements and, in 1941, five cottages in Winchester Street were demolished to make way for St Luke's Hall, paid for by the Bank of England. It was used by their staff for concerts, whist drives, table tennis and bingo.<sup>32</sup> At the end of the war, the hall was donated to the village. The mill was attacked by solitary bombers on three occasions during the war causing two deaths and a number of injuries but production was hardly affected.<sup>33</sup>

After the end of the war, when the Bank staff returned to London, William Portal bought the chalet site and donated it to the village to help ease a housing shortage.<sup>34</sup> Until 1952, one of the chalets continued to be used as a women's hostel for workers brought from South Wales and Ireland where unemployment was very high.<sup>35</sup> Some of them married locally and a few of their descendants still live in the village.

Meanwhile, at Laverstoke, paper was still being made by hand using the traditional methods described above. Mabel Beattie started work there in 1943 when she was 17.<sup>36</sup> She walked to work from Overton wearing clogs. Mabel described the process of glazing the paper between metal sheets. She was a 'putter-in', a process which continually cut the backs of her hands. The supervisor's chief concern was that no blood should get on to the paper. The men fed the damp paper into rollers using their hands to ensure that it was completely flat. If they left it too late it was dangerous. Four men lost hands, including two from Overton. Archie Smith lost both hands and was fitted with two hooks. Portals continued to employ him as a messenger for many years afterwards.<sup>37</sup> Jack Enright had a long fight to get compensation but was given a job in the sales office where he used a typewriter with one hand.<sup>38</sup>

In July 1947, Portals was converted into a public company.<sup>39</sup> By 1948, 73 per cent of the output was exported.<sup>40</sup> William Portal died in 1949 and Sir Francis Portal was appointed chairman and managing director. He had been actively engaged in the management of the company since 1924 and a director from 1933.<sup>41</sup> The following year he introduced a profit sharing scheme, one of the first in the UK. He also reorganised the company pension scheme, though this did not extend to women because, he said, the girls so often left to get married that it was not worthwhile.<sup>42</sup>

Another benefit was the chance to occupy a company house at a rental considerably lower than council housing levels. In 1948 there were about 105 of these properties available<sup>43</sup> and a high proportion of employees living locally were housed in company property at attractive rents. In the

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<sup>31</sup> Oram, R., *The Changing Face of Overton*, (1998), 65.

<sup>32</sup> Craik, N., 'How the Bank looked after its Evacuee's', Portals Newsletter, Spring, 1982 HRO 162A10/3.

<sup>33</sup> Butler, V., *On a Hill above a Valley*, (2001), 43.

<sup>34</sup> *The Times* 28 Aug. 1946.

<sup>35</sup> Ottway, D.S., *A contribution to the History of Portals*, (2007), 11, unpublished, supplied by J. Seargeant, archive Manager, Bombay Spirits Co.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Mabel Beattie by Jane McKenzie, Jul. 2017.

<sup>37</sup> Stickland, J. Pers. comm.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Derek Davis by Elizabeth Lewis, 14 Nov. 2017.

<sup>39</sup> Wood, W.A., *250 years of Papermaking*, (1975), 19.

<sup>40</sup> *The Times*, 22 Jun. 1948, 8.

<sup>41</sup> Wood, W.A., *250 years of Papermaking*, (1975), 20.

<sup>42</sup> HRO, 132M98/E11.

<sup>43</sup> *The Times*, 22 Jun. 1948, 8.

early 1950s, wage rates were better than most other employers in the Andover-Basingstoke area could offer. There was always a waiting list of applicants and pressure from parents to have their sons granted apprenticeships. Staff turnover was extremely low and a large number of employees at all levels completed 50 years of service. When the order book required it, occasional weekends were worked and early in the fifties this became the norm. For shift workers, holiday entitlement was taken when the factory was closed for maintenance for two weeks in August.<sup>44</sup>

Although Sir Francis had no technical or production experience when he became chairman, he



Sir Francis Portal at the Rag House.

nevertheless made a tour of inspection once a week when he expected to be given the name and background of anyone he did not already know.<sup>45</sup> For some, however, the conditions of work were poor. The Rag House in 1950 presented '*an unbelievable image of Dickensian industrial squalor.*' There were three cutting lines, each with a willower to remove dust from the rags, but no provision for removing the dust from the room. The whole place was swathed in dust and festoons of cobwebs hung on the walls and ceiling. About once a month the place was swept

down but it was bad again in a few days. It was '*quite incredible*' there was never a fire or explosion and that people were prepared to work there.<sup>46</sup>

In 1951, Dennis Ottway was recruited. He had technical qualifications and experience of working in other paper mills. He observed that the members of the board may have been good businessmen but, in his opinion, were '*extremely autocratic*' and knew little about paper production. The senior managers who did were local people who had started as apprentices and had no other technical qualifications and no knowledge of rival companies. The result was an unshakeable belief that Portals was the best security papermaker in the world without any knowledge of technical developments elsewhere.<sup>47</sup>

Nevertheless, Overton Mill had greatly increased in size and equipment. In 1949, a further two-cylinder mould papermaking machines were added and a seventh in 1954. By 1962, Portals was providing paper for the banknotes of no less than 101 separate governments and banks of issue throughout the five continents, making it the largest banknote paper mill in the world.<sup>48</sup>

Workers were recruited from all over north Hampshire. Many arrived by train from Basingstoke and Andover whilst others were brought in by a fleet of buses operated by the company free of charge.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Portals newsletter, Summer, 2000, No 133, 11, referring to working conditions in the 1950's.

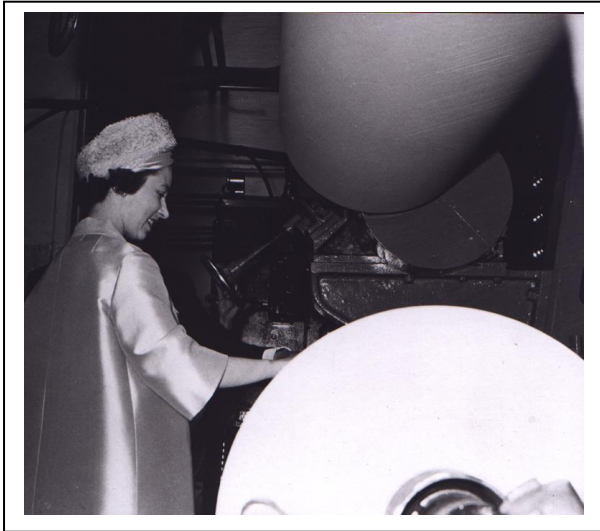
<sup>45</sup> Ottway, D.S., *A contribution to the History of Portals*, (2007), 54, unpublished, supplied by J. Seargeant, Archive Manager, Bombay Spirits Co.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 51.

<sup>48</sup> Portal, Sir Francis, *The Church, the State and the People, leading to 250 years of papermaking*, (1962), 101.

<sup>49</sup> Portals Newsletter, Winter, 2000, No 134, 7. HRO 162A10/8.



Royal visit, 1962.

Recruitment to the mill resulted in a strong demand for housing. The village doubled in size as the number of dwellings rose from 682 in 1951 to 1,346 in 1971, most of these being council houses.<sup>50</sup>

1962 marked the 250th Anniversary of the founding of the company and on 15 June, the Queen visited Laverstoke and Overton Mills.<sup>51</sup> The company commemorated the event by building twelve pensioners' bungalows at Southington.<sup>52</sup>

After some years of full production, there was a temporary restriction in output in 1962 following cancellation of an appreciable tonnage from

abroad, entirely due to foreign exchange difficulties. This led to a decision in 1963 to cease papermaking at Laverstoke Mill and to concentrate all production at Overton. In 1965, the administrative offices and mould making section were transferred there.<sup>53</sup>



Sir Francis Portal welcoming workers during the strike.

The company had a good reputation for working with the print unions as their membership grew but in 1966, the only official strike in the company's history was called by the SOGAT union who were demanding a 'closed shop'.<sup>54</sup> Most companies in the UK paper industry had already succumbed to such demands but Sir Francis staked his reputation and the future of the company by opposing it.<sup>55</sup> He refused to dismiss the eight women who declined to join the union and appealed to the 1,030 SOGAT union members to continue working.

On the first day, Sir Francis and his senior manager, Dennis Ottway, were at the mill gates at 5.30 a.m. to welcome those coming to work. Although the union was offering strike pay above their normal wages, 403 of the 702 day-shift arrived for work.<sup>56</sup> The union then offered strike pay at twice and eventually three times the normal rate but after four weeks the strike was over.<sup>57</sup> The issue

<sup>50</sup>Overton Township Plan, Hampshire County Council Planning Department, (1973).

<sup>51</sup> Wood W.A., *250 years of Papermaking*, (1975), 22.

<sup>52</sup> *The Times*, 3 Jul. 1963.

<sup>53</sup> Wood, W.A., *250 years of Papermaking*, (1975), 22.

<sup>54</sup> Society of Graphical and Allied Trades.

<sup>55</sup> Wood, W.A., *250 years of Papermaking*, (1975), 23.

<sup>56</sup> *Andover Advertiser*, 21 Oct. 1966.

<sup>57</sup> Ottway, D.S., *A contribution to the History of Portals*, (2007), 48, unpublished, supplied by J. Seargeant, Archive Manager, Bombay Spirits Co.





Portals company badge

had divided friends and families and caused much bitterness. No official strike was ever called thereafter.

The numbers employed rose to a peak of about 1,550 in the 1960s when automation began to reverse this trend.<sup>58</sup> In general, the reductions were achieved through natural wastage rather than redundancy. An exception was in 1968 when the Indian paper mill, set up by Portals, came on stream. This meant that production at Overton had to be reduced for a while and 150 people were made redundant. This was 12 per cent of the workforce of 1,200.<sup>59</sup>

Sir Francis retired in 1968. It was said of him that *'He had seen the business grow from a youthful private company in the early 1920s to an organisation with world-wide interests. For 29 years he had been chairman and managing director, in which the welfare of his employees came high in his list of priorities and preserved for Portals its long reputation of being good employers.'*<sup>60</sup> He was succeeded as chairman by John Sheffield and the connection between the company and the Portal family finally ended.

By this time there was an extensive range of clubs subsidised by the company, including football, athletics, cricket, bowls, golf, amateur dramatics and a motor club.<sup>61</sup> It is unsurprising that many marriages were made at Portals and that family connections with the company were very strong. In 2017, one former employee could trace a family connection going back four generations.<sup>62</sup> Another employee had all his three brothers and two sisters working at the mill.<sup>63</sup>

In 1967, Dennis Ottway was appointed as Technical Sales Director with the remit of introducing technical changes to remove out-dated systems and practices, *'provided he did not rock the boat'*. In practice this meant that his proposals were blocked by conservative members of the board and progress was slow.<sup>64</sup>

In the 1970s, the operating climate became more difficult, with company reports speaking of intense foreign competition, the depressed state of the industry and the difficulty of containing costs.<sup>65</sup> Britain's entry into the Common Market was viewed with apprehension.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, the company won the Queen's Award for Export and Technology in 1977.<sup>67</sup> In view of later events, it is ironic that on two occasions in the 1970s, the Board considered a take-over of De La Rue when its

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<sup>58</sup> Ottway, D.S., *A contribution to the History of Portals*, (2007), 35, unpublished, supplied by J. Seargeant, Archive Manager, Bombay Spirits Co.

<sup>59</sup> *The Times*, 6 Jan. 1968.

<sup>60</sup> Wood, W.A., *250 years of Papermaking*, (1975), 24.

<sup>61</sup> Portals Newsletter, Mar. 1973. HRO 162A10/2.

<sup>62</sup> Surtell, J., pers. comm.

<sup>63</sup> Overton Mill Newsletter, Winter 2000, No 134, 6. HRO, 162A10/8.

<sup>64</sup> Ottway, D.S., *A contribution to the History of Portals*, (2007), 63, unpublished, supplied by J. Seargeant, Archive Manager, Bombay Spirits Co.

<sup>65</sup> Portals Newsletter, Jun. 1971, 4. HRO, 162A10/1.

<sup>66</sup> Portals Newsletter, Sep. 1971, 4. HRO, 162A10/1.

<sup>67</sup> Portals Newsletter, Sep. 1977, 6. HRO, 162A10/2.



printing operations were in financial difficulties. The idea was rejected as being bad for business with other customers.<sup>68</sup>

In October 1976, the families of employees were invited to visit for the first time, though there were tight restrictions on what they were allowed to see. Security was always a priority at the mill and when transporting paper. Any theft could result in forgeries on the correct paper which would be hard to detect.<sup>69</sup>

When John Sheffield retired in 1977 he was able to write, *'Our prosperity in the past nine years has enabled us to improve many benefits which we could not have afforded otherwise. I refer to our new and greatly improved pension scheme, sickness and insurance benefits and considerably greater support for sports and social activities in the area.'*<sup>70</sup>

John Sheffield was succeeded as chairman by his son Julian. He recognised that costs were rising faster than their competitors' and that productivity had to be improved by investing in new machinery.<sup>71</sup> The company changed from a people-intensive to a capital-intensive business. At the end of the 1970s, it was said that, *'Portals was immensely feudal. The Board sat there, pontificated, gave out orders and everyone jumped to attention and carried them out without question. The Board met every two weeks and effectively ran the business.'*<sup>72</sup> That also changed and in later years, Portals was *'a well-run business producing a high-quality product'*.<sup>73</sup>

A 1982 Household Survey of Overton showed that of the 1,180 residents in full-time employment, about 360 (30 per cent) worked at Overton Mill.<sup>74</sup> Even as a public company, Portals continued to hold a considerable estate which also provided employment for agricultural workers, gamekeepers, water bailiffs and gardeners.<sup>75</sup> A 1975, a report identified the proximity of work and home as a factor *'favourable to the social cohesion of Overton. The Mill provides not only a focus of village life but the economic base for a substantial sector of the community.'*<sup>76</sup> During the 1980s, employees living in company houses were offered the opportunity to buy them and many did so.<sup>77</sup>

In 1987, demand for paper plunged early in the year, resulting in cutbacks in capacity and workforce.<sup>78</sup> By 1990, with the long-running India contract at an end, the message to employees was of the need for reduced production and further redundancies.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ottway, D.S., *A contribution to the History of Portals*, (2007), unpublished, 61, supplied by J. Seargeant, Archive Manager, Bombay Spirits Co.

<sup>69</sup> Document in possession of Richard Oram, Overton.

<sup>70</sup> Portals Newsletter, Dec. 1977, 2. HRO, 162A10/2.

<sup>71</sup> Portals Newsletter, Dec. 1979, 2.

<sup>72</sup> Cardiff, C., quoted in Pugh, P., *The Highest Perfection: A History of De La Rue*, (2011), 296.

<sup>73</sup> Cardiff, C., quoted in Pugh, P., *The Highest Perfection: A History of De La Rue*, (2011), 298.

<sup>74</sup> Overton Local Plan, Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council, 1990.

<sup>75</sup> Sheffield, J., pers. comm.

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in Overton Local Plan, Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council, 1990.

<sup>77</sup> Sheffield, J., pers. comm.

<sup>78</sup> *The Times*, 4 Sep. 1987.

<sup>79</sup> Portals Newsletter, Christmas, 1990, 3.

In 1994, there were talks with De La Rue plc about a possible merger.<sup>80</sup> They were inconclusive but Portals succumbed to a take-over bid by De La Rue in 1995.<sup>81</sup> Most of the remaining low rental company housing was sold which resulted in more social change in the village.<sup>82</sup>

By this time, the village had expanded further but, with the numbers of people employed at the mill steadily reducing, it was no longer the single dominant employer. By 2015, the number of Overton residents employed at the mill had fallen to about 30.<sup>83</sup>

In 2017 De La Rue plc continues to make security paper at the factory.

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<sup>80</sup> Portals Newsletter, Summer, 1994, 3.

<sup>81</sup> *The Times*, 3 Jun. 1994.

<sup>82</sup> Sheffield, J., pers. comm.

<sup>83</sup> Overton Neighbourhood Development Plan, Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council, (2016), 29.