

Entry for Joshua Bowron in *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers in Commerce and Industry 1775-1920*, Edward H Milligan, Sessions Book Trust, York, 2007.

**Bowron, Joshua (1774?-1837)**, seed crusher, was born at (probably) Cotherstone, near Barnard Castle, about 1774, son of Caleb Bowron (1704?-1791), weaver, and his second (?) wife, Hannah Bowron (born Fletcher, 1741?-1779). By that year he was established as a seed crusher at Great Ayton. In 1823 his was one of two stamper mills driven by water power off the River Leven, the firm being styled Richardson & Bowron. He had married in 1821 Sarah Coning (1776-1837), daughter of William Coning of Guisborough, merchant, and Ann Coning. There were no children. He was in Ayton at the time of his death 2 August 1837. Following his death his mill was rented in 1840 by Weatherill, Sanderson & Co of Stockton-on-Tees, but it was probably this building which was later absorbed into the Ayton School properties. H W Brace, *History of seed crushing* (1960), 99; *Annual monitor for 1838* [1839], xvi.20-23.

Milligan has entries for two of Joshua Bowron's brothers: John Bowron, born 1769, grocer and miller at Billingham mill, and Joseph Bowron, born 1771, flax dresser in Darlington.

There were three water mills in Ayton. The mill on the Little Ayton side of the village, which was sold to the Ayton School by the Hesletons, the mill at the end of Race Terrace (historically known as East Mill), and the Grange Mill (or West Mill), fed from the tail race of the East Mill.

We know that the first of these had been operated by Philip Hesleton (1764-1826) as a linseed oil mill. When he died his sons Philip and Joseph tried to sell the mill, but were unsuccessful and rented it to Weatherill, Sanderson & Co of Stockton. They continued to use the mill; when George Dixon moved into Philip Hesleton's old house on High Green to start the Quaker School, he could hear the sound of the stampers. Some time after the opening of the school the Hesleton brothers sold the mill to the school who, in turn sold the milling equipment and used the building as part of the school. Edward Milligan is incorrect in his supposition that Joshua Bowron's mill was the building later absorbed into the Ayton School.

John Harrison lists the millers at the East Mill:

Joseph Ayre (1800), John Audus (1840), Francis Audus (1841), John Peacock (1865, 1879), George Metcalfe (1890, 1897, 1913).

John Harrison says that the last owner was George Metcalfe and the last miller Jim Huggett. Robert Kettlewell described the mill, in his book published in 1938, as having being severely damaged by fire, and patched up with brick and corrugated iron, and that Mr Oxendale told him that he broke up the old waterwheel. It is not clear as to when this description referred.

For many years the West Mill was associated with the Richardsons of Langbaugh Hall. John Harrison catalogues the relevant history of the mill from 1765 as follows:

1765 "11 July. Brother Wilson, Mr James and self saw John Richardson's Oyl Mill near Ayton."  
Ralph Jackson's Diary.

1794 "On his water Oil Mill, Storehouse, granaries and dwelling house adjoining brick and tiled with machinery therein situate at or near Great Ayton in North Riding of the Co of York £140. Utensils and trade £150. Henry Richardson, Stockton in the Co of Durham."  
Royal Exchange Fire Insurance, no 140259

- 1817     *"... oil mill of Mr H Richardson at Ayton."*  
George Young, page 819
- 1800s    *"There were two oil mills one near Ayton Grange known as the Low Mill, belonging in the early nineteenth century to Henry Richardson, then lord of the manor."*  
Robert Kettlewell, 1938, page 85
- 1840     *"... both stamper mills were rented by Weatherill, Sanderson & Co of Stockton ..."*  
H W Brace, 1960, page 99

Millers:

Henry Richardson (1817), Ralph Richardson (*"oil miller"*) and Robert Harker (*"oil miller"* 1841), John Dixon (1865, 1879), William Wilkinson (1893, bankrupt in 1895).

According to Edward Milligan, Joshua Bowron was crushing linseed at a mill in Ayton from 1779 to his death in 1837. For him to have been crushing linseed, he must have been at the West Mill. In 1823 the business was Richardson & Bowron. The Richardson here is Henry Richardson (1741-1818), who had bought the Manor House from the Skottowes in 1801. West Mill was owned by the Richardsons before this, as can be seen in the Ralph Jackson Diary entry of 1765 referring to John Richardson..