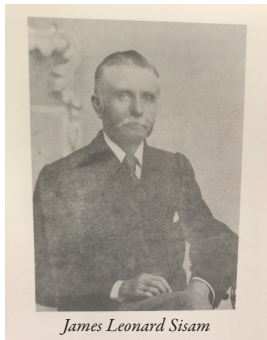




# History of Arrow Mill and Arrow

## Arrow Mill

On the river, a quarter of a mile south of the village of Arrow, is Arrow Mill, presumably on the site of the mill mentioned in Domesday Book and in 1210. About the same distance north of the village is Oversley Mill dating back to beyond 1086.



James Leonard Sisam

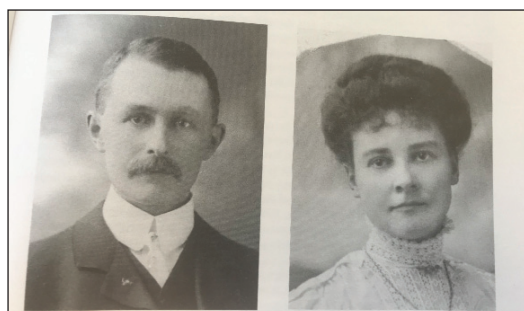
In 1870, when his father died, James Leonard Sisam inherited the lease on Arrow Mill. He was 25 at the time and single. Within two years he had married his brother's sister-in-law Latitia and had proved to have a sound business mind. He switched the mill from stone millstones to steel rollers which could create white

flour which had become highly popular since its origination in Hungary. Steel rollers however, could not handle the production of provender, or course grain, for cattle-feed, so the Sisam family rented Oversley Mill for this purpose.

As the years went by, many properties were added to the Arrow Mill enterprise, and housed many family members. Throughout this time, as in the days of his father and grandfather before him, flour was delivered to customers by wagons pulled by teams of cart horses. On average the mill kept 14 horses and 5 wagons. The meadows surrounding the mill provided good grazing and a crop of hay each year.

When James Leonard's oldest son Henry reached manhood, he was uncertain whether he wanted to take on Arrow Mill when his father retired. The representative of the flour industry magazine 'Milling' who visited him in 1909 wrote of him that 'the young gentleman is credited with having more ambitious ideas'. Be that as it may, when his father and mother retired into a corner house on Priory Street called 'The Priory' Henry did take over.

Henry had a reputation for not being the marrying type, but surprised everyone by marrying Mary, sister of his friend Tom Rouse.



Henry Leonard Sisam

Mary Westlake Rouse

They married late for the time and Mary was 40 when their son James Leonard Jr was born. Mary didn't like living at Arrow as she felt the river was a dangerous place for her son. Sadly in Arrow churchyard there can be found the grave of David Sissan who drowned in the river aged only 11. Mary would often tether her son to the kitchen table so she was sure he wouldn't wander off.

As years went on, Henry began to have severe back and leg trouble due to standing at the mill and lifting sacks. He appealed to his landlord the Marquis of Hertford to raise the roof of the upper level so he could at least stand up straight, but the Marquis declined because the mill would then be visible from his home, Ragley Hall; he then gave Henry notice to quit when the lease was about to run out in 1921. Thus ended a hundred years of Sisam occupation of Arrow Mill. Almost immediately the mill was sold outright to a firm of local millers, Adkins and Thomas of Broom. The first thing the new owners did was raise the roof!

It ceased to mill in 1962 and underwent a transformation and renovation.



Renovations at The Rectory

When we came across the beautiful building it had been owned for the last 30 years by Chef Simon Woodhams and his family who ran it as a hotel and restaurant. We are very grateful that he has seen us as worthy successors to continue to care for the precious building.

## The Village of Arrow

The village lies on the road from Wixford to Alcester, with the church, the rectory and a farm between the road and the river. Another road branches westward from the village to Worcester. Between this road and Weethley Gate, lies Ragley Park (500 acres in extent) including the Hall, a large lake, apparently constructed in 1630 and extensive woods on the edges of the park. The manor at the time of the Domesday Survey had woodland 1 league by 2 furlongs in extent and there is reference to the assarting and inclosure of land in Arrow in 1230. The parish is still well wooded; north of the Worcester road are Three Oak Hill Wood and Old Park Wood, the latter perhaps representing the woodland in Arrow which Robert Burdet was licensed to impark in 1333.

Arrow Rectory is partly of 16th-century origin but has been much altered and enlarged. It faces south and has an approximately symmetrical front: the west cross-wing shows some close-set studding in the lower story of the west elevation, the upper being rendered and there are traces of other framing inside. A stone built chimney-stack has a modern shaft. A coved ceiling in the upper story has grape-vine ornament in the cornice, probably of the 17th century, but other parts are of the 18th century and later.



*The Rectory at Arrow 1905*



*The Rev. B. Stannus standing in front of the Lych gate and the Rectory at Arrow. Circa 1900*

On the main road to Alcester are several ancient buildings. One, opposite the roadway to the church, is a 17th-century house, with a jettied east gable-end towards the road. Another, farther north, at the corner of the Worcester road, is a long building of one story and attics, all of square framing of the 17th century; and another a few yards farther north is similar: both are divided into tenements. Nearer to Alcester on the same side is a house of similar framing, probably of the late 16th century.

Ragley has been the family seat of the Marquis of Hertford since the eighteenth century, an Earldom that dates back over 1000 years.

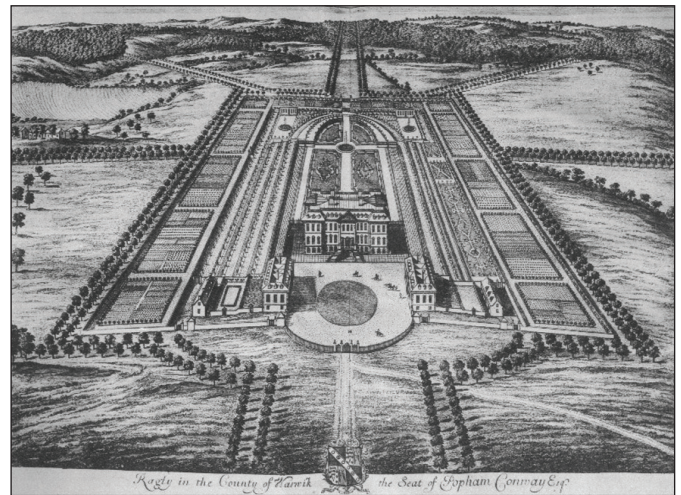
Ragley was given to Evesham Abbey by the King of Mercia in AD 711. Seven hundred years later the Abbey sold Ragley to the Rous family who built an embattled castle thought to be on the site of what is the Rose Garden today.

In the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, Sir John Conway came from Conway Castle in Wales to marry the heiress to Arrow, just outside Ragley Park. He then bought Ragley Castle and its lands: the last time Ragley has changed hands by purchase.

It was Sir John's grandson, the first Earl of Conway, who engaged Robert Hooke to design the Palladian House which can be seen today. Hooke, a contemporary of Christopher Wren, was a notable architect and scientist and of the several great houses he built, only Ragley remains.

The building was not completed until the middle of the 18th century. James Gibbs designed the baroque plasterwork in the Great Hall in 1750 and Wyatt added the portico, as well as decorating the Red Saloon and Mauve Room, in 1780.

A view of the house in 1697–9, engraved by Kip, shows it much as it is now, except for the later alterations to the middle bay and the rooves; it then had a forecourt and side wings, which were pulled down in about 1780.



*Ragley Hall as illustrated by Jan Kip*

In 1813 the architect Wyatt was called in. He built the portico with the colonnade to the middle bay of the east front and probably it was he who heightened the great hall by taking in the story above it and furnishing it with the vaulting. The whole of the rooves have also been altered and repairs were effected in 1891, the date that appears on many of the rainwater pipe-heads.

*Information gathered with thanks to Ragley Hall and the descendants of the Sisam family.*

## Arrow Mill

Arrow, Near Alcester, Warwickshire, B49 5NL

[www.thearrowmill.co.uk](http://www.thearrowmill.co.uk)