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Windmills in Barkway

Hertfordshire as a county is relatively rich in river systems, so that water mills are common. However, Barkway was one of those places in the higher north of the county which employed wind power. There is record of a windmill in existence in the 13th century, but its exact whereabouts is not clear.

The 1587 muster rolls record the presence of two millers in Barkway, so there was the possibility of two working mills in that year. There would appear to have been a windmill in Newsells manor in the late 1600s. Two windmill sites in the village were recorded beside the Royston Road for most of the 18th and 19th centuries. The Bryant map of 1822 shows clearly two Barkway mills. These two mills were within two hundred metres of each other. This proximity appears odd, but they existed under the ownership of two separate manors. Firstly a smock mill belonging to Newsells manor existed on the north side of the road, and a brick and flint built barn still exists on the site. The second mill was where the present Millcroft site is – now new housing. This was a post mill belonging to Rokey manor. (A smock mill has a turning cap, and a post mill revolves entirely around a central post).

The Newsells mill was demolished in 1873 on the orders of the new owner of the Newsells estate, Lord Strathnairn. The Rokey mill base was converted into a cottage around 1900, so essentially ceased to exist as a working mill.