



The Magazine of the Mills Section of the
Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings

no
176

July 2023

Mill News



I find it very fulfilling...

and it gives me an enormous sense of purpose. (a mature apprentice millwright) page 2

Crowning glory

How to celebrate with a windmill (or two) page 8

Melchior, an informal Guest of Honour

At the formal opening of Kibworth Windmill page 20

Contents

1. Editorial
2. My life as a part-time millwright since March 2021
5. Demolishing a mill
6. Barrow mills on Bury Hill
7. View from the mill
8. Windmills celebrate the coronation of King Charles III
10. Some mills found in France
14. Volunteer curator wanted for Wimbledon Windmill Museum
15. News from the Committee Room
16. Casework report
17. Mill Repair Fund report
18. Online lecture: Windmills and the danger of wind loss
19. Letters to the Editor: Derek Ogden; David Jones
20. Cutting the ribbon: the official opening of Kibworth Harcourt post mill
22. Online Autumn Meeting – addendum
24. National Mills Weekend, 13-14 May 2023
28. The Mill of Benholm
29. What's behind the doors?
30. Replacing the sweeps at Windmill Hill Windmill
33. Mill Group News and Newsletters Review
35. News from the Mills: Great Gransden postmill; Bourn Mill reopening
36. Big steps at Mostert's Mill
40. Mills for sale: olive oil mill in Italy
41. Important UK mills for sale: Boston Windmill; Thurne Dyke drainage mill; Hellingly Watermill; Sutton Windmill

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Front Cover: The SPAB team and
volunteers at the official opening of
Kibworth Harcourt postmill.

Picture – SPAB team.

Back Cover: Wicken Windmill celebrates
the coronation of King Charles III.

Picture – Dave Pearce.

Editorial

Endangered crafts mean endangered mills

One cannot think of one without the other. Without the millwrighting craft skills, mills will always be at risk from decay and neglect. Today, there are just not enough millwrights to work on all the mills in need of urgent repair.

Mills are also at risk in other ways: lack of volunteers and millers retiring. Today, we see one of our flagship windmills, Maud Foster Mill in Boston, Lincolnshire up for sale. James Waterfield's parents were instrumental in buying him his first mill and subsequent mills. Now James and his partner have decided the time has come to enjoy visiting other mills before it is too late to see them.

Professional millers are hard to come by. James has been a miller for as long as I can remember, learning the skills at North Leverton as a youngster from another old-time miller, Bill Heathershaw. Following this, he took on several windmills over the years, finishing up at Maud Foster, which he has loved and cherished since taking it on. He has, along with his father, Tom, who is sadly no longer with us, done most of the repairs, even to making sails, mostly paid for out of his own pocket. He has built up a good trade, travelling far and wide with his many varieties of flour for sale in local outlets.

There are going to be other mills reach the same situation before too long and we can only hope that they stay in good hands. But where are these potential buyers? Those that would love the job cannot usually afford to buy a mill, and those who can afford them rarely want to keep the mill working, preferring to

use their investment for partial or total conversion.

The other option is for the mill to be taken on by a group or trust. However, millers and volunteers do not come in large quantities, and we nearly always see that their average age is almost middle age when they have the time to help out!

Dedicated volunteer millwrights have also brought mills back from the brink to working order. The story of two such lengthy projects have been published recently: *High Salvington: Saving Worthing's Last Windmill*, by Peter Casebow (2021); and *The Restoration of Wicken Mill: Millwrighting, Milling, and History* by Dave Pearce (2022).

We are now seeing a few younger craftsmen being trained up under the guidance of established millwrights, but this apprenticeship is not a quick fix and takes months, even years to enable them to go off on their own.

A mill will always be reliant on its owner or those looking after it. We can only hope in the years to come that we see some of our well-loved mills still surviving this crisis. Perhaps we can improve on Rex Wailes' intention in his book *The English Windmill* to ensure that at least a few mills not only survive but flourish. I hope we can look back with hand on heart and say, "We did our best".

Mildred



My life as a part-time millwright since March 2021

Bob Paterson

I have been booking tours of the UK for musicians and bands full-time since 1999. In March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic effectively shut down the live music industry. All theatres were forced to close and flights into the UK were banned. No one predicted this pandemic and its apocalyptic effect shocked and surprised us all.

I kept busy in the early months cancelling and rescheduling tours that I had booked throughout the rest of the year. This, of course, continued much longer than any of us initially anticipated. I was starting to panic in late August and I contacted my friend Tim Whiting, who runs his own millwrighting business Suffolk Millwright. He knows my business and my family situation and when I asked him if he had any casual work going, he was quick to answer positively.

For various reasons I didn't further the discussion of working for Tim until March 2021 when our girls went back to school following another prolonged lockdown. The abyss of life that had been created by the temporary cessation of live music was staring me in the face. We had done all the jobs we had planned to do and all my paperwork and filing was in tip-top shape. Tim invited me over to his workshop so he could show me where he worked and to meet his team.

Tim trained as a furniture maker and craftsman with wood. He went to college and got all the qualifications. He formed his own company in 1998. Tim met Vincent Pargeter in 2005 and in 2011 Vincent hired him with Paul Kemp as apprentices. Tim is arguably the last apprentice-trained millwright in the country. He is quick to admit he isn't a windmill aficionado. He grew up in Friston and is passionate about the post mill there. He even had his first workshop next to the windmill.

Fast forward to 2021 and when I first visited his workshop on 5 March I was mightily impressed. A week later I started working there, two or three days a week. I wanted to keep the rest of the week open so I could keep an eye on my business and have numerous Zoom meetings with clients and colleagues.

At the time we were actively working on five windmill projects in the workshop. We started making a new cap, fantail and six working sails for Sibsey Trader Mill in Lincolnshire and two new sails for Skidby tower mill in East Yorkshire. We also started making two new common sails for Bocking Churchstreet post mill in Essex and four new sails for Cranbrook smock mill in Kent. We had just removed the rotten fan stage from Rayleigh tower mill in Essex. Working on making 14 new sails at the same time is



Skidby four new sails on the left at Suffolk Millwrights, Dennington Suffolk – 17 March 2021.

Picture – Bob Paterson.

quite a task and no mean feat. We were also making 100-plus shutters for Billingford tower mill in Norfolk.

My first job was sandblasting shutter cranks and shutter pins for Billingford and Cranbrook mills. It was a very solitary job as I was working alone in a remote part of the workshop in cold March and so this was a real test for me. I soon got used to waking up at 4.50am – getting ready to leave the house by 6am to get to work for 7am. Even in the winter months I became accustomed to it, although no one likes de-icing their cars.

I quickly became the designated painter in the workshop and have painted new sail frames for Bocking (which went back on the mill on 11 September 2021), Sibsey and Cranbrook. I have treated new fan blades for Sibsey and Cranbrook mills with Protim and linseed oil and, of course, painted everything with half rich and rich (bottom and top coat) Kreideziet oil-based paint. I have also been in the team making the shutters for Billingford and sanding down and treating new wooden shutters made from Canadian western red cedar for Cranbrook.

In April 2021, we spent a fortnight at Horsey Windpump on the Norfolk Broads repainting the sails and fanstage, replacing some of the windows and applying Belzona membrane layer on to the cap. The team later replaced the

My life as a part-time millwright since March 2021 – continued

solid iron worm gear which had broken the previous winter.

In August 2021, we decamped to Guernsey to put the four sails back on the Le Mont Saint windmill in Perelle Bay, St Saviour. Bob Self made the four common sail frames a while ago, but clamps needed to be made and a brakewheel installed. The mill is owned by Essex businessman Ian McKellar and Tim has been involved in this restoration project for many years. I was able to explore the island at the weekends and saw pretty much all of the remaining mills on foot. Le Mont Saint Mill is empty below the curb and the intention is that the mill will one day become guest accommodation. The mill is most attractive and there are amazing views over Perelle Bay and also over Vazon and Cobo Bays from the fanstage.



*Le Mont Saint windmill, Guernsey – 19 August 2021.
Picture – Bob Paterson.*

In September 2021, we received the two sail stocks from Herne smock mill in Kent and two of the four sweeps. We will be looking at the stocks to see if they need replacing and we will be making two new sweeps for the mill.

On 15 December 2021, we removed the cap from Alford tower mill in Lincolnshire. The cap was rebuilt in 1978 and had become very rotten. The sails that were made in 2011 had become tatty and were removed in November 2019.

On 23 December 2021, Tim and I spent a very enjoyable (but very cold) day in the cherry-picker looking over the cap and sails of Pakenham windmill in Suffolk, very close to where I live. We had been asked to do an external survey pending a potential full restoration. It was obvious to us both that the cap, fantail and sails will all need replacing. Virtually no maintenance work has been done on the mill since 2001 and it really shows.

We received the remains of the cap from Burgh le Marsh tower mill in Lincolnshire, which fell off in a catastrophic tail winding in early February 2020, for safe storage pending future projects.

We also have a maintenance contract to monitor three of Lincolnshire County Council's windmills – Ellis Mill in Lincoln, Hoyle's Mill in Alford and the eight-sailer at Heckington. Tim is also working with Water, Mills and Marshes (an initiative of the Broads Authority) assisting them on the restoration of Mutton's Mill on the Halvergate Marshes in Norfolk.

It was good to be working on some Suffolk mills at last. In March 2022, we cleared all the junk out of Baylham watermill near Needham Market. We salvaged as many of the old corn bags as possible, but sadly the tests of time meant many were perished beyond keeping. It took a couple of weeks to do as the mill hadn't been cleared out for a number of years. A copy of an old *East Anglian Daily Times* dated 1984 was found, which would suggest that was when the new roof was put on the mill. It is a fascinating mill in a quite truly fantastic environment, being so close to the Rare Breeds Farm. We hope to do more work on the mill in the future including refitting new windows and making the lucam more secure.

July 2022 was spent mostly in Lincolnshire and Kent. Sibsey Trader Mill is owned by English Heritage and she last ground corn in 2015. We have been building the new cap in the yard for 18 months and the base of the cap was transported to Sibsey in March 2022. The cap was then reassembled, boarded with western red cedar grown on the Helmingham Hall Estate in Suffolk, covered with a protective layer of Dupont Tyvek Supro, then vertically boarded with more red cedar. A Belzona undercoat, then membrane and top coat of Belzona 3111 (made in Harrogate) was applied. On 15 July, we removed the temporary lid and put the new cap on. It was easier said than done but, with the expert help of Crowland Cranes, the day went smoothly.



*Sibsey Trader cap lift – 15 July 2022.
Picture – Bob Paterson.*

Next, we transferred our energies to Cranbrook smock mill and on 26 July 2022, the four new sweeps, stocks and clamps were delivered by Holmes Plant and Construction. The site was the exact contrast to the one we worked on

My life as a part-time millwright since March 2021 – continued

in Lincolnshire. Union Mill is the tallest remaining smock mill in the country and is situated in the middle of a built-up village with new houses in the shadow of the mill. The village folk were very proactive and wanted to know what was going on at every moment, which didn't help matters, especially when the cherry-picker sprang a leak and delayed the proceedings by a day. Savage Cranes ably assisted us and the four (mostly shuttered) sweeps were hoisted into position on 28 July.



*Hoisting the sweeps into position at Cranbrook – 28 July 2022.
Picture – Bob Paterson.*

We hosted an open day at the workshop for Suffolk Mills Group on Sunday 25 September 2022 attended by 25-plus people. It was good for us to show off our premises and our working environment. I think everyone was suitably impressed.

The following week we were back on the Norfolk Broads, taking the sail frames and fan blades off Boardman's Mill, a small trestle mill on the How Hill estate on the banks of the River Ant. The mill is owned by Norfolk Windmills Trust and since restoration in 1981, has slowly become more and more dilapidated. There is a footpath running past the mill so the rotten timbers needed to be removed for safety.

The week after we returned to the Broads but this time to West Somerton, not too far from our beloved Horsey Windpump. Owned by Norfolk Wildlife Trust, the cap was renewed by R. Thompson and Son of Alford in 2000, but has – over time – become derelict. We took all the boards

off the cap and replaced them with treated Siberian larch, working from the new steel gallery which gave us extra security. Once fully reboarded we applied a Belzona layer. The work was completed on 11 October.

On 8 November, we revisited Kent and, under the watch of Luke Bonwick from Kent County Council, took the cap and sweeps (and steel stocks) off Meopham smock mill, which is situated between Gravesend and Tunbridge Wells. There had been a murder in a neighbouring pub the previous weekend and so the atmosphere in the pretty village was strange, but it didn't put us off! We were assisted on this occasion by J & M Cranes and Transport Services from Gravesend. We built the temporary roof on site and sawed the rotten sail frames from the cherry-picker. The steel stocks that went on in 1979 were taken down and left on site and on 10 November, the cap came off and the temporary roof was installed. Later that day the cap was delivered back to our workshop awaiting a total rebuild.

Tim and Talie Woolsey put the six sail frames back on Sibsey Trader Mill in mid November and were called out for an emergency at Mont Saint windmill in Perelle Bay, Guernsey. The brake had come loose and the brakewheel needed strengthening. The mill is now freely turning into the wind and the sails are able to turn if the wind allows for the first time in probably 150 years!

Since Christmas we have completed making four new sail frames for Stracey Arms drainage mill on the River Bure on the Norfolk Broads. We were asked by Norfolk Windmills Trust if we were able to complete the work expertly started by Richard Seago. We will install the sails along with the new wooden stocks and clamps this summer.

In February we delivered the four sail frames to Skidby tower mill on the outskirts of Hull in East Yorkshire – ready to be installed in the summer.

Just recently we finished rebuilding the fantail and rear steps for Holton post mill near Halesworth. New strings and treads were made. The cheeks around where the tailpole pokes through were made to match as were the new fan posts. The new rear steps were installed just before Christmas and the wooden elements of the fan carriage have since been renewed with the iron work fully cleaned and repainted. The work was completed in March, with the refurbished six-bladed fantail reinstated on 14 April. I have never come across fan blades as big or as heavy as these! Legend has it that they were originally made by Richard Seago and have lasted the test of time and so it was only wood treatment (Protim and linseed oil) and two coats of Kreideziet oil-based paint were required. Attention is needed to the buck weatherboarding and, most importantly, the weather beam, which has become rotten beyond repair and shunted forward, putting extra pressure on the front of the buck. It is a good job the remnants of the four sails have been removed thus putting less pressure on the structure.

My life as a part-time millwright since March 2021 – continued

Early in April, we spent a few days at Berney Arms on the edge of Breydon Water on the Norfolk Broads, patching up the rotten patches of the cap by first putting on a protective layer of Dupex Tyvek Supro and then nailing on painted boards, helping to stop ingress of water while English Heritage decide what they want to do with the mill.

Future works include building a new cap and four new sweeps for Meopham as well as two new sweeps for Herne. We will also be making a new fan frame for Rayleigh tower mill. We are also finishing off shutter production for Sibsey, Stracey Arms and Cranbrook mills.

Closer to home, we will soon be starting making two new sails for Buttrum's Mill in Woodbridge in Suffolk.

It is a very busy workshop with a lot of timber coming and going all the time. I am enjoying getting my hands dirty and working on some of our beloved windmills. I am very appreciative of Tim giving me the opportunity. The work is totally different to booking tours, but it is equally as rewarding. The beauty of self-employment is you can be flexible about what work you want to do and as long as Tim is happy for me to carry on "playing with windmills" a couple days a week, or longer if we go away on site, I am happy to carry on being as useful as I can be. I continue to enjoy the work. I find it very fulfilling and it gives me an enormous sense of purpose.

Demolishing a mill

As reported in the North Western Miller, 21 April 1937, originally appearing in The MILLER of that year



Pen and ink sketch by Karl Wood in 1933, a few years before it was demolished. (Courtesy of the Mills Archive)

"A new idea in mill demolition was last month tried out with success at Moulton Seas End in Lincolnshire. The mill, which was built nearly a century since, had at first four sails, and for the past 40 years had been owned by the Poklington family. One sail broke off in 1914, and then engine power was introduced, but the mill had been disused for two years. A traction engine brought on the scene hauled on steel ropes fixed round the tower. The first tug broke the mill in halves, and the upper portion crashed down. Another strong pull threw over the rest of the structure!"

George W Lenton appears to have been the miller and baker in 1891, born in Willoughby Lincs, and had working with him a miller and an apprentice.

But this was not the only mill to suffer this fate – in the Fylde area of Lancashire, in the mid 1950s a local farmer was asked by the owner of Great Singleton mill to pull it down as it was in his way! This he did in minutes by means of his tractor and a rope. Another Fylde windmill also succumbed to this fate.



1940s Great Singleton, with all sails in tact, but minus the fan. The mill was at this point run by gas engine.

Right: 1950s Great Singleton, minus her sails and fan, looking decidedly sad prior to demolition shown in Karl Wood sketch.



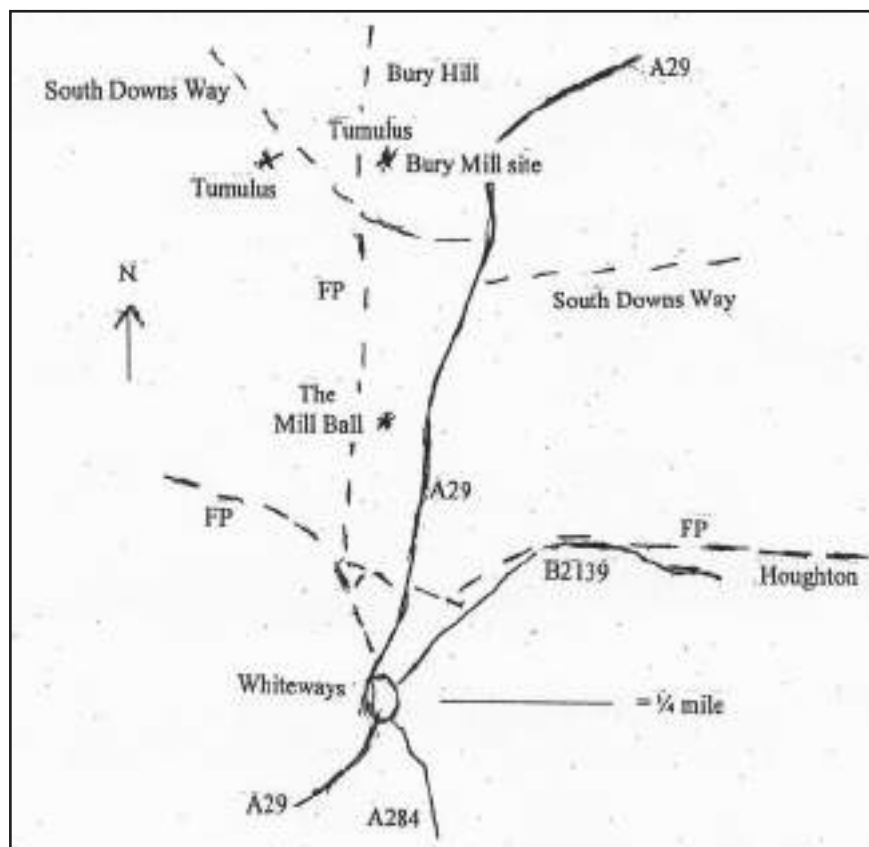
Barrow mills on Bury Hill:

Bronze Age barrows reused as windmill-steeds

Alex Vincent

A number of Bronze Age barrows were later reused as mill mounds or windmill-steeds mainly in the medieval period. The roundness of barrows was adequate for a windmill to be placed upon them. There are a number of examples in Britain, but the Bronze Age barrows at Mill Barrows at Beauworth in Hampshire may not have been associated with a windmill. The name could have derived either from the Anglo-Saxon "mylen beorh" (mill barrow) or an Anglo-Saxon name Maegla. It seems that only the bowl barrows were used as windmill-steeds. These windmills would have been open trestle and sunken post mills.

Some examples in Sussex are at Houghton, Piddinghoe, Beddingham Hill and on Rookery Hill at Bishopstone. In the case of the last, the windmill is one of the earliest recorded in Sussex. In the 18th and 19th centuries during excavations of some barrows, stone foundations and timber structure remains of post mills



Map of barrow mills on Bury Hill.
Map – Alex Vincent.

were found. These were not identified as mill remains until the early 20th century. Charles Monkman was one of the first to discuss some of these cruciform structures found in East Yorkshire. Grinsell studied some 10,000 barrows during the 20th century and has stated which ones were later reused as windmill-steeds and some possible cases.

The Mill Ball at Houghton near Arundel centred at TQ 002 144 was once a Bronze Age bowl barrow, which dates from the Middle to Late Bronze Age period. It is situated on the crest of the South Downs just south of Bury Hill, east of a footpath and west of the A29 main road. This barrow comprises a central mound 24 metres in diameter and 0.8 metres in height. A ditch surrounded it, which has since been infilled. Bronze Age, Roman and medieval pottery has been found on the site.

This bowl barrow was later reused as a mound for a windmill. This was

Barrow mills on Bury Hill: Bronze Age barrows reused as windmill-steads – continued

probably during the Middle Ages. The medieval pottery may have been associated with it. Sussex Archaeological Collections (SAC) Vol 75 states, “upon which it is stated a windmill once stood, but no field name confirms it”. Simmons states “a likely spot upon which a mill would have been built”. The site today is marked on some maps as “The Mill Ball”. It is a scheduled ancient monument.

Another Bronze Age bowl barrow, which became a windmill-stead, was further north on Bury Hill centred at TQ 002 122. It is situated on the hill west of the A29 and north of the South Downs Way. Medieval pottery and oyster shell was found on the site, which may be associated with the windmill. The barrow has since been

completely ploughed out, but there is a very slight dip on the site today. Both sites are visible on LiDAR.

There could be other medieval windmills in Sussex, which have used Bronze Age barrows for their bases. One such case could be Highdown, where the mill mound looks as if it may have once been a barrow. Another case may have been at Broadwater, whose site is at the north-western end of Hill Barn Golf Course, where a slight mound still marks it. The bowl barrow on Patching Hill may also be another case where the windmill at Clapham situated on the hill above Michelgrove (gone by 1595) may have been erected on it. Excavations by future archaeologists are needed to see if these sites were once barrow mills.



*The Mill Ball, Houghton. Bowl barrow and mill mound.
Picture – Alex Vincent.*



*Bury Hill. Site of barrow and windmill.
Picture – Alex Vincent.*

View from the mill

Mildred's photographs, taken on visits to Denmark and the Netherlands.



Windmills celebrate the coronation of King Charles III



*Cranbrook Union Mill.
Picture – Philip Hicks.*



*Great Gransden.
Picture – M Davies.*



*Heage.
Picture – Anthony Sharp.*



*Nutley.
Picture – Brian Pike.*

Windmills celebrate the coronation of King Charles III



*Oldland post mill.
Picture – Philip Hicks.*



*Wicken.
Picture – Dave Pearce.*



*Nutley.
Picture – Brian Pike.*



*Cranbrook Union Mill.
Picture – Philip Hicks.*

Some mills found in in France

Colin A Smith

While on a driving holiday in France, we had an overnight stop in the village of Bassac, a village not far from the historic city of Angoulême. Wherever I stay, I like to have a wander around to explore my surroundings, especially to look out for any mill sites.

Bassac

First of all, I found a huge abbey still very much intact and in use. The condition was very original, with courtyards and associated buildings, a huge church and the occasional ringing of bells. I continued on and found an old bridge over a clear river with fish swimming, although it was barely running due to drought conditions (late last summer). However, all the weed was leaning with the flow that perhaps indicated a much faster flow at other times. Following the stream and finding a footpath it was only a short distance until I spotted a mill building.

From the mill end of the building it looked derelict, but further on it looked like the upper half was a house conversion. It was fairly quiet and I did not fancy trying my very limited French, but decided to return with one of my party who has a better grasp of the language.

The return visit the next day was more rewarding. I have to confess I always thought the French did not care about their mill history. I was about to learn that they are similar to us, a few good ones here and there, many converted and many in ruins or gone.

The upper part of the mill building is converted to quite extensive B&B accommodation, the road to it is called the road of mills, which confirmed it was a mill that once had two wheels. The owner's mother did speak some English and was about to go out, but allowed me a brief look in the house converted part, so armed with a camera I took pictures as quickly as possible. The undershot waterwheel was wooden bar the metal axle area and driven by large wooden angled paddles, a guestimate was about 15ft diameter. It has three pairs of stones and the hurstings were organised in a circle. One of the stone housings looked new! Time was up very quickly.



Some mills found in in France – continued

Outside we learned it is run on Sundays to grind corn for the finest French bread and other similar products, and the miller sells the flour around the district and online. The lower half or second mill is under different ownership and I was advised is gutted, however having researched the mill on the internet I believe there is an edge runner and a crown wheel still in that one. The mills were known as the Abbey Mills.

Verteuil

The following day we travelled north of Bassac to a small town called Vertheuil on the large River Charente. There is a huge château there, under new ownership and, much to the dismay of the locals, not currently open to the public.

Nestling under the town next to the first river bridge is Le Moulin de Vertheuil which was open. Part of the building has been converted to a restaurant and some of it is home to the owner. On the house converted side you could see

a large pit wheel leaning against the building. The doors were open to enter. On entry, you were immediately drawn to a turning waterwheel that was no longer connected to any machinery. It was an all-metal wheel with large angled wooden paddles – again about 15ft. This one did have a fall of water that at best could be described as low breast-shot.

Across from the waterwheel was a full set of machinery connected to a second wheel – same size – that would clearly be workable, but was stationary. The mill has a website and a short film with an interview with a presenter. Looking at their website, they claim to make special pastries or similar from their product, however the corn that was waiting in the shoe feeding the stones looked as though it had been there for a little while. If I was asked to guess, I think it worked grinding about two years ago, possibly just



Some mills found in in France – continued



before Covid, but I could easily be wrong. On the first floor, there was a power-driven wooden machine labelled *blutrie*, which translates directly to the word bolter. The building and surroundings were most attractive – picture-postcard perfect with the castle in the background.



The next bridge over the river – barely a minutes' walk from the first – revealed another mill. Looking from the



bridge a classic French riverside mill which did not look house converted, but was! Or I should say it was inhabited by an elderly lady. It was difficult to find out much about this one (they need a Mills Archive in France). From what I could see, it may have been a forge at one time. It very possibly had a wheel on the outside and certainly a larger wider one inside, I really wanted to delve into this one further but did not want to disturb the resident with two English gentlemen standing there in her yard. Had I taken a photo in black and white and claimed it was old, it would have been believable.



Aigre

There is another French mill I would like to share with you, in the village of Aigre, north of Angoulême. Scotland has its distilleries, many of which had water power, but this is a Cognac Mill. Although the tiny waterwheel, about the size of a pumping wheel, was I believe used for bottling, I was told it was noisy and caused a lot of vibration.

The watermill, which must have had a much bigger waterwheel, was taken over in 1890 by the Gautier family, one of the longest standing Cognac makers dating back to 1644. They claim to have the oldest existing bottle of Cognac in the world. Like the Scottish distilleries, they do tours and tastings and have a beautiful shop in the mill

Some mills found in in France – continued



building, which is known as le Maison de Gautier. As a result, it is a very fine-looking building with extensive old outbuildings. The River Osme bypasses the mill to the right-hand side as you face it.



Near Le Mans

The final find was about 30 miles south of Le Mans. The first thing to be spotted was a huge lake (used for boating) that clearly had a dam at one end. We just had to stop and have a look. Below the dam was a building in a ruinous condition. Inside the walls, well fenced off for safety, was a large metal overshot waterwheel, approximately 20ft in diameter. With its sluice gate and chains, it made an interesting site. What little information there was, this was definitely a forge site from iron working days and the power was used latterly to power a workshop and metalwork manufacturer. It is a shame there seems to be little chance of preservation – the dam and the water stored used for leisure activities, the part below the dam left to gradually deteriorate.

Online, which I have yet to find again, is a mill trail (all in French) with descriptions and a picture, showing quite a few mills that might be visited, both wind and water.

Volunteer curator wanted for Wimbledon Windmill Museum



The Museum

The Wimbledon Windmill Museum is situated within the windmill on Wimbledon Common. The mill was built in 1817 and is listed Grade II*. The freehold is owned and maintained by Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators. The Museum Trustees have a lease for use of the mill building as a Museum of Windmills. The Trust is a registered charity (No. 1015265) and a CIO.

The affairs of the museum are managed by a board of eight trustees. Opening times are seven months in the summer (closed during the winter), Saturdays 2pm to 5pm, Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays 11am to 5pm. Volunteer guides act as room stewards at all times the museum is open.

The Museum was set up in 1976 following major repairs and restoration of the building in 1975 and was improved in 1999. The Museum site includes a grassed area adjoining the tearooms and used for outside events. It includes a display area outside the mill building.

The role

The role of curator has been filled by the founder of the museum Norman Plastow. He now wishes to retire and the trustees seek to appoint a volunteer curator.

The Collections

- Models of various types of windmills – approximately 30
- Large working model of Wimbledon Windmill in its working form
- Working full-size model of millstones
- Small demonstration stone quern – for hands-on use by visitors
- Large selection of windmill components collected from various mills around the country
- Recreated Victorian room as used by a seamstress
- Large collection of handtools used by a carpenter
- Working full-size spur wheel
- Model of watermill
- Display area outside the mill building for millstones and farm machinery such as grain cleaners and winnowers.

Main requirements

1. This is a voluntary role
2. Knowledge of curatorial duties will be advantageous
3. Familiarity with windmills may be desirable but not essential
4. Knowing how to look after and care for the museum's various artefacts and displays
5. Create exhibitions
6. Keep records of the exhibits and update regularly
7. Talk to visitors
8. Give talks on behalf of the mill museum

More information

This note gives an outline of the role. The trustees will be willing to engage in further discussion on the scope of the role, and to provide a conducted tour of the museum – contact rhys@rwtconsulting.com.

Timeline

We would like the curator to take up the role as soon as possible during the 2023 season.



From the Committee Room

Our last committee meeting, at the end of May, discussed the future of the Section and a way forward for the coming years.

Several ideas were put forward and the main consensus was we just concentrate on specific areas of importance. Casework in particular, along with our Mill Repair Fund – where we are hoping to increase the amounts we can offer. We really do need help from any of our members with experience of fundraising or social media. We hope to increase our courses and our popular 'Practical Flour Milling' will hopefully take place later this year.

Lunchtime lectures prove popular and if you can offer to do a talk for us for 40 minutes on a Wednesday lunchtime, we would love to hear from you.

Helping mill owners was discussed and we do realise our web site does not really help with visiting a mill. A new web site is envisaged for next year, but in the meantime we need your help: please let us have your contact details, opening times etc., Thank you to those mills who already do this and we also realise that these details do change, but keeping us up-to-date really helps, especially at times like National Mills Weekend. By working together on this we can make a difference.

You will read in this issue of our collaboration with SPAB Scotland and the Irish branch, who ran their first National Mills Weekend.

We would also like to hear from you on how you feel the Section can help more. Our big handicap is we do not have enough committee members to cover all the work we would like to do. We need more members, not only to help with the amount of work we deal with now, but also if we are to undertake more work in other areas.

We were sad to hear of the retirement of James at Maud Foster windmill, but hope a good owner can be found to continue the running of the mill.

We still do not have anyone to write up our group newsletters, so if you feel you could do this for us please get in touch. All the group newsletters and journals will be sent direct to you by the group.

Guardian elections 2023

The Section is currently looking to fill vacancies on its committee. Details of the skills that are particularly sought are fund-raising, social media, but help in other areas are also needed. Please do get in touch with Silvia for more details if you feel you could help us. Also encourage other suitable applicants to apply. The Guardianship Agreement expects a commitment of time and regular attendance at meetings. The current committee are extremely grateful to those who already offer their expertise voluntarily.

Guardians' online conference: 27 June 2023

Please put this date in your diaries. Further details will follow, but the theme will be Guardianship, with a range of Guardians speaking about their experiences. The event is expected to be held in the middle of the day on 27 June.

One of our Mills committee members will be speaking at the conference.

Casework report

Silvia McMenamin

Recent planning applications

Dunster Watermill, Somerset

An application was submitted to Exmoor National Park Authority for listed building consent for the proposed installation of new stair access to the bin floor, new external access and the creation of a new dormer and external door, along with a new external stair and walkway across the leat, and associated works. The SPAB Mills Section was concerned regarding changes to the leat which entails loss of part of the walling and installation of a new walkway, as there is currently no Health & Safety risk and a new walkway would change the appearance of this historic mill. The SPAB Mills Section also recommend using a black colour for the GRP anti-slip decking instead of the proposed grey and is concerned about the availability of slates of comparable character to those that are already installed. Listed building consent was granted subject to conditions.



*Dunster Watermill, Somerset.
Picture – Lewis Clarke via Geograph.*

Mutton's Mill, Norfolk

An application was submitted to the Broads Authority for listed building consent for the installation of lightning conductors on the drainage mill. The SPAB Mills Section is supportive of the proposed plans and is assuming that the applicant is aware that the lightning conductors must be inspected and tested annually. Listed building consent was granted subject to conditions.



*Mutton's Mill, Norfolk.
Picture – Eirian Evans via Geograph.*

Updates on previous planning applications

Land South of Melton Road Whissendine, Whissendine Windmill, Rutland

An application was submitted to Rutland Council for residential development with associated works and access from Melton Road. The SPAB Mills Section objected to the proposal due to the threat of wind loss for nearby Whissendine Windmill. The SPAB Mills Section commented on a wind report commissioned to investigate the impact on Whissendine Windmill and concluded that the planned housing development would have a negative impact on the windmill. The application was refused by Rutland County Council, based on reasons that the housing development would have a negative impact on the historic agricultural economy of the windmill site.

Boardman's Mill, Norfolk

An application was submitted to the Broads Authority for listed building consent for the repair and restoration of Boardman's Mill. The SPAB Mills Section was supportive of the plans and is endorsing that the mill, once repaired, will be removed from the Heritage at Risk register. Listed building consent was granted subject to conditions.



*Boardman's Mill, Norfolk.
Picture – Oast House Archive via Geograph.*

continued opposite >>

Mill Repair Fund report

Silvia McMenamin

Recent applications

Heage Windmill, Derbyshire – Grade II*

The Heage Windmill Society has submitted an application for funding to support extensive repair works on the cap sheers and sails. They applied for an amount of £2,420. The SPAB Mills Committee has decided to award a grant of £1,000 to support the repair of the sails.

Winchester City Mill, Hampshire – Grade II*

The National Trust has submitted an application for MRF funding to support a major repair project. The SPAB Mills Section has agreed to offer a grant of £750 to support the repair works.

Applications under review

Crabble Corn Mill, Kent – Grade II*

The Trustees of Crabble Corn Mill have applied for funding to support the works required to replace the main hoist timber arm. They have applied for an amount of £970.



*Heage Windmill, Derbyshire.
Picture – Colin Park via Geograph.*

Earnley Windmill, West Sussex – Grade II

They have applied for Mill Repair Fund support to make the structure of the mill watertight in advance of carrying out a full structural and mechanical survey prior to repairing the mill. They have applied for an amount of £1,500.

Unsuccessful applications

St. Martins Windmill, Kent – Grade II

The owners applied for a grant from the MRF for work on the exterior of the tower to remove the current mortar and repaint the mill as water is now getting inside the structure. As the mill was converted back in 1920 to a dwelling on all five floors it was felt that we could not support this application but have recommended a paint system to use for the exterior.

Previous applications update

The Windmill, Windmill Hill, East Sussex – Grade II*

An application was made for the replacement of the sweeps. The SPAB Mills Committee offered a grant of £1000. The replacement of the sweeps has been completed (see page 30) and the grant will be paid shortly.



*Winchester City Mill, Hampshire.
Picture – Robert Eva via Geograph.*

Casework report – continued

Cleator Mills, Cumbria

An application was submitted to Copeland Borough Council for the demolition of dilapidated former mill buildings and construction of a new warehouse unit with ancillary offices. The SPAB Mills Section defines Cleator Mills as a site of substantial local historical significance and is objecting to the demolition of the existing mill buildings and recommends their reuse. The outcome of the application is currently not known.

Old Mill, Llandybie, Carmarthenshire

An application was submitted to Carmarthenshire County Council for listed building consent for change of use and the repair/adaptation of the mill into a multifunction building with associated access for all. With ground-floor reception area, multipurpose first-floor space and accommodation on the second floor. The SPAB Mills Section has been supportive of the plans and has no objections to the application. The SPAB Mills Section recommended that the millstone in the mill house garden is moved to a secure location within the mill building to provide some evidence of its previous use. Listed building consent was granted subject to conditions.

Live online lecture:

Windmills and the danger of wind loss

Speaker: Steve Temple

Wednesday 26 July, 12pm-1pm



“Loss of Wind leads to Loss of Windmill” – Dutch saying

Dutch planning law recognises and regulates wind loss resulting from new buildings close to a windmill. With help and support from the SPAB, Steve Temple has been working to validate the Dutch techniques for assessing wind loss with the aim of achieving national recognition of the need to protect our stock of windmills against over-development. This talk updates his 2019 Mill News article and outlines the next steps. Every windmill owner and planning officer responsible for windmills needs to be aware of this problem and how it can be addressed.

Speaker information:

Steve Temple is an inventor by profession and an engineer by education and finds the technology of mills fascinating, not least as major contributors to the know-how of the Industrial Revolution. He is the owner of Impington Windmill and a former Vice Chairman of the SPAB Mills Section. Steve teaches annually at the Cambridge University's Impulse programme for budding entrepreneurs.

SPAB Member £8 – Non-Member £9

Please note that bookings for the lecture will close on Tuesday 25th July at 6pm.

The lecture will be recorded and only registered bookings will receive a link for the recording after the lecture. The recording link will be available for up to 10 days after the live lecture.

Please book via the SPAB website using the link below:

<https://www.spab.org.uk/whats-on/lectures/windmills-and-danger-wind-loss>

Letters to the Editor

Derek Ogden

Derek Ogden, whose obituary appeared in the April 2023 edition of Mill News, did much good work on mills in the English Midlands and beyond, and was happy for people to know it; but I would like to mention another, less well-known, thing that he did for which posterity should be grateful – namely that he was the first person to set up a regional association in the UK for wind- and watermill enthusiasts. That was in 1965 and was the West Midlands Branch of the Wind and Water Mill Section of SPAB. Jack Crabtree was the chairman and Clyde Riley the treasurer. I remember my father drawing my attention to a letter from Derek to the *Birmingham Post* about the Branch being founded, and I hastened to sign up, having already joined the Wind and Water Mills Section of SPAB in January 1965.

Derek was very much the driving force behind the Branch and it had a good programme of events, especially visits to mills in the Midlands. A visit to the flint mills of north Staffordshire when we saw Froghall Mill actually grinding pottery materials particularly sticks in my mind – the waterwheel spinning remarkably fast and the slip sloshing and gurgling in the grinding pan. However, when Derek became extremely busy with millwrighting work and subsequently moved to America, it became difficult to hold the Branch together, in spite of significant efforts by Jennifer Tann, and the Branch folded in the early 1970s.

The idea of local groups had however been born, and the East Kent Mills Group came into existence at about that time, and others followed.

In 1976 Clyde Riley asked me whether I thought it might be a good time to restart the Branch. I said yes, with the proviso that we should accept as members other people beside those who were members of the SPAB Section. And so it was reborn as the Midland Wind and Water Mills Group, and is still active 47 years later. For a few years we did describe ourselves as “affiliated to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings”, and paid Mrs Dance 10p per member per year for the honour, but the membership has always been independent.

I would also like to mention Derek's kindness to me personally in encouraging my interest in old mills when I was in my late teens; for example, he let me come and “help” when he was working at Chesterton windmill, though looking back I can see that for various reasons I must have been more of a hindrance than a help. He arranged an extremely enjoyable six-week stay for me in 1967 with the millwrights Ernest Hole & Son of Burgess Hill, with free board and lodging. A highlight of that time was taking part in putting up new stocks and sails on Polegate tower mill by the (now) old-fashioned method using two crab winches. When I mentioned many years later to Derek how grateful I was for him having made this experience available to me, he had completely forgotten.

John Bedington

David Jones

I read of the death of our friend and colleague David Jones in Mill News today and felt I ought to add a few words of appreciation.

David was active in the Mills Research Group (MRG) for many years – correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe he was a founder member – and his contributions there and towards mill research generally, particularly in the field of recording, were of crucial value. He had a long and quite remarkable life; I gather that as a very young man towards the end of the Second World War, he worked on the prototype computer system Colossus. He continued to attend MRG Conferences until a very late stage, indeed we never knew when he was going to turn up!

A great character and one who will be much missed.

Guy Blythman, former Chairman, MRG

Mill News no longer lists converted mills for sale. Only mills that have significant machinery are featured. A list of all known mills for sale is on our website for members to view: spab.org.uk/members/mills-for-sale

Mill owners: please let the Section know of any change of contact details for your mill, so we can keep our website up to date.

Cutting the ribbon: the official opening of Kibworth Harcourt post mill

Mildred

On Sunday, 14 May 2023, as part of National Mills Weekend, we had the grand opening ceremony of the mill after the recent major repairs to bring it back to a workable state. The mill looked splendid and with the sun looking on was a sight worth seeing.

Although I was unfortunately unable to attend, it was still 'All hands to the grindstone'. Ten new local volunteers, the SPAB team and Silvia, our Administrator, worked hard to make the day a great success; they did manage to keep the rain away, but unfortunately they could not provide the wind for the sails to turn.

The mill was gifted to the SPAB in 1936 by Merton College Oxford and Julian Reid, the current Archivist at the college, who has helped us with the history of the mill, was able to be at the opening ceremony.

The work done on the mill over the course of the repairs was acknowledged by Matthew Slocombe, Director of SPAB. He thanked all those who had played a part in the repair and the Briggs family, on whose farm the mill stands, for their patience during the work and past commitment to keeping an eye on the place. David Holmes, our long-standing volunteer, now stepping down, has been the contact over the years for all mill visits. He was thanked and presented with a framed lino-cut print.

Dr. Kevin Feltham, Chairman of Leicester County Council, also gave a speech and was then asked to cut the ribbon.

Although the official opening was by invitation only, due to the confined space around the mill, there was much publicity on the BBC, local radio and newspapers, as well as videos on our web site for all to see. Martyn Taylor, who for some years now has provided coverage of mills for National Mills Weekend, was also present to video the day. Photographs were taken by Daniel Bridge on behalf of the SPAB.

Refreshments provided by the Brigg's Farm Park café went down very well.

Finally, to complete the day, we even had a 'mill cat' on the steps of the mill. Owned by SPAB's Chi-Wei Clifford-Frith, Director and Projects Team Assistant, who attended the opening along with her family, Melchior was brought along as there was no room at the 'cat hotel'. Melchior is apparently named after Saint Melchior, who was purportedly one of the Biblical Magi along with Casper and Balthazar, who visited the infant Jesus after he was born.

So all in all, a grand day out was had by everyone.



*Presentation to volunteer David Holmes (right) by Duncan McCallum (Chairman of SPAB Trustees).
Picture – Graham Watts.*



*Dr Kevin Feltham, Chairman of Leicester CC, cutting the ribbon.
Picture – Matthew Slocombe.*

Cutting the ribbon – continued



*John Bedington (left) on the mill steps with SPAB staff member Chbi-Wei Clifford-Frith and her cat, Melchior.
Picture – Duncan McCallum.*



*The SPAB team and volunteers sitting on the steps of the mill.
Picture – Daniel Bridge.*



*Dr Kevin Feltham and Matthew Slocombe inside the mill.
Picture – Daniel Bridge.*



*Melchior the cat.
Picture – Daniel Bridge.*



*Volunteers setting the sailcloths.
Picture – Daniel Bridge.*



*A grand day out.
Picture – Matthew Slocombe.*

Online Autumn Meeting – addendum

Mill News, Issue 174 (January 2023) contained a report of the Section's Online Autumn Meeting held in November 2022. One presentation was missing from that report and is printed here to complete the report of the meeting.

My year as the first SPAB Millwright Fellow Toby Slater

My name is Toby Slater and I am the 2021 SPAB inaugural Millwright Fellow. I specialise in the repair and conservation of timber-frame buildings. I started my woodworking journey as a shipwright for 10 years, later moving on to the repair of listed buildings. I set up Slater Conservation Ltd and have been conserving buildings for the past nine years.

My fellowship started at Kibworth Harcourt where I helped Dorothea Restorations with the repair and conservation of the SPAB post mill. One of the first jobs was to crane in the new weather bar that had been made off-site at their workshop. Next on the list was installing additional noggins for the roundhouse roof to give additional support and fixing points for the new roof. The previous corner-post sister repairs had decayed and it was decided that these needed to be replaced.

One of the major jobs that needed doing was the crosstrees and quarter-bar repairs. We scarfed new sections of timber on to the quarter bars, which were later bolted through. The crosstrees had some very small half laps, but also slots for flitch plates. These plates allowed for smaller half laps which retained more of the original fabric. Later in my millwright fellowship, I visited Dorothea Restoration's workshop in Bristol, saw the sails for Kibworth being made and helped make the new oak staircase, ready to be installed at a later date.

My next visit was with Paul Sellwood at Owlsworth RJP at Brixton and Wilton Windmills. These visits were mainly to look at how the maintenance of these windmills is carried out. At Brixton Windmill, we rotated the cap and thoroughly checked over the gear and sails. At Wilton Windmill, we were looking at some fan-tail repairs and a sheared bolt on the sale whip, trying to make a plan for how best replace the bolt without completely removing the sail.

Another visit was to Charlcote Mill with Fellow and miller Karl Grevatt.

We first started looking at the mill where Karl explained some of its history and gave a brief introduction of how the mill functions.



One of the first jobs was to make repairs to the waterwheel. Some new oak starts and new softwood paddles were needed. Charlcote is a working mill and so constant running repairs are needed.

Karl then explained the milling process and taught me how to run and operate a watermill. He taught me how to start, stop and control the speed of the mill. I was then given the opportunity to use the sack hoist and adjust the stones using the tendering screw, which gave me a feel for the texture of the type of flour that he produces.

I later re-visited Charlcote Mill where I was lucky enough to try my hand at stone dressing under the expert watch of Karl. We lifted off the top runner stone then flattened the stone all over. We then flattened the stone again, leaving the last 6 inches. This meant that as the flour travels along the stone, the gap between the stones reduces at the end, therefore reducing the flour coarseness as it works its way throughout the stone. Once the stone is flattened, we then had to dress the fly, the apprentice, the journeyman and then the master furrow. Once we were happy with the dressing of the stones, the runner stone was lifted back into position and balanced, inserting lead weights into the stone.



Online Autumn Meeting – addendum

I also visited Wickhamford Watermill with John Beddington. He explained the process of fitting new teeth to a spur wheel. The process starts with truing the wheel by using a stick, at a fixed point and spinning the wheel. You can tell how far the wheel is out of true by how far the wheel moves away from the stick as it rotates. The chocks that hold the spur wheel can be driven in to adjust the wheel to make it true.

John then taught me how to find the centre point of the teeth in both directions using the jig in the photo. A top and bottom template were made; both had centre lines marked on them. This was then offered on to the cog and the teeth were shaped by using a straight-edge from the top template to the bottom template. Once the correct shape of the teeth was made, it was then inserted into the wheel.

John Beddington took me to Whissendine Windmill and I met Nigel Moon, who was currently repairing the fantail gearing. Nigel had some parts that had worn out machined and we were assembling it back together. Unfortunately, one of the cogs did not quite mesh as there

was an error in the machining, which meant it had to be removed, re-machined and installed at a later stage.

Since the fellowship, I have not yet had the opportunity to work on a mill, but was lucky enough to work with Dolmen Conservation on the treadmill crane in Harwich, Essex. The treadmill crane is the only surviving double-wheeled crane in the UK. The work included some soleplate and stud repairs, as well as re-roofing.

I have also been back to work for some of my long-term clients, carrying out timber frame repairs, as well as some period joinery pieces.

I did also manage to visit Upminster Windmill with Cam Southgate, this year's Millwright Fellow, Owen Bushell, and SPAB Fellow David McFerran. Cam kindly showed us around the windmill and the extensive repairs that have been carried out over the years; as well as seeing the sails turn and the technology they use to monitor the weather and much more.



Dennis Coombs

As we were going to press, we were very sorry to learn of the death of Dennis Coombs.

Dennis was Chairman of the Upminster Windmill Preservation Trust after Bob Sharp retired. He was also recently Chairman of the Friends of Upminster Windmill.

Dennis will be sadly missed.

An obituary of Dennis will be in the October issue of Mill News.

National Mills Weekend: 13-14 May, 2023

Volunteers make their world go around

Carole Leith

After working in the voluntary sector most of my life, I was sad to read that post-Covid it is even more difficult to recruit new volunteers and to retain existing ones. But after touring Kent during National Mills Weekend 2023 it was obvious that volunteers are the lifeblood that keep our valuable mills turning.



First destination on Saturday was the White Mill and Heritage Centre, Sandwich, where the welcoming volunteers were setting up their craft fair. I found a rare example of a mill set within its original outbuildings, now fitted out as workshops dedicated to a traditional trade. I was particularly taken with the cobbler's shop.



Work parties are held twice weekly and I found that many of the well-informed volunteers had links to other mills. Vince Pargeter had worked on the White Mill, often using his own time and money until the town council took it over.

The cap had been removed for extensive repairs and was expected to be reinstated in September. The volunteers' enthusiasm to get the cap turning again after 40 years was palpable and they are busy fundraising for essential materials. There was a welcome cafe and much on display at craft stalls indoors and out. A well thought out quiz was given to each child to encourage them to fully explore the site with the promise of a prize for completion.

Chillenden was the next stop for a charming post mill located in the middle of beautiful Kent countryside. It was

closed but I was able to have a good look at the outside. A roadside board showed that it was open on Sunday afternoons.



Then to Draper's Mill, Margate, where their open day was in full swing with many visitors exploring all the floors and appreciating the wide range of exhibits. Assisted by a gas engine, the sails were turning. The proud engineer told the interesting story of its first location and subsequent owners.



Teas were being served and a souvenir bag on sale containing a Kent mills tea towel, with map and images; a Draper's Mill mug; a printed guide and copy of an old photo. Irresistible for £10.

Davison's Mill in Stelling Minnis was the first destination on Sunday where I was impressed with the care and cleanliness of the mill, its linked museum and tea shop. The very professional interpretation boards, printed materials and well-chosen artefacts made this a memorable visit. Sadly, the sweeps and fantail had been removed with no real prospect of reinstatement this year.

National Mills Weekend: 13-14 May, 2023 – continued



There was a constant stream of visitors exploring the mill and taking advantage of the fabulous £4 cream teas. The volunteers were very enthusiastic about their mill, mentioning that it was difficult to find new volunteers; they were particularly interested in finding someone to maintain a website.

It was difficult to leave but we had a date with Herne Mill where the informative and enthusiastic volunteers had decorated it with bunting. Herne Mill, also with its sails missing, benefits from an innovative and modern update. The Dutch millwright, Willem Dijkstra, had installed an electric engine and the associated carpentry to run one pair of stones. This was partly paid for by volunteer fundraising and its owner, Kent County Council. A local company has also taken an interest in supporting the mill, an idea other mills might like to explore. Sadly, there were few visitors over the weekend; possibly another case of not enough publicity?



Each mill I visited had its own characteristics and demonstrated areas of good practice. All were obviously dependent on the practical work and fundraising by people who cheerfully and freely give of their time and skills. New volunteers and targeted support will help to keep our mills in better condition and volunteers in good heart. Next year, let's make it a very good one to remember.

SPAB Ireland mill tour

Triona Byrne

SPAB Ireland organised an event to coincide with Mills Weekend, for the first time. We organised a bus tour of some mills in Co. Offaly, in collaboration with the Industrial Heritage Association of Ireland and the Mills and Millers of Ireland groups. It took place on Saturday 13 May, in conjunction with National Mills Weekend.

Our first stop was Fancroft Mill (photo by Shóna O'Keeffe, right), with delightful hosts Marcus and Irene Sweeney, followed by a walking tour of Clara, Co. Offaly led by Bernie Henry and others from the Clara Heritage Society, which included visits to sites such as Erry Mill and the Clashawaun Jute Works. We were joined on the day by industrial archaeologist Dr Fred Hammond, who provided excellent insights into the development of the various sites. A mix of working mills, derelict mills and adaptive reuse projects provided many discussion points and the day was rounded off by a tour of Kilbeggan Distillery and a review of the conservation of the waterwheel.

It is our first time hosting any sort of mills-focused event and it has become an unofficial theme for us this year, as our Working Party will also be held at a derelict mill site on 18-20 August. So, we hope that these events will inspire some mill enthusiasm among our Irish members!



National Mills Weekend: 13-14 May, 2023 – continued

SPAB Ireland mill tour – continued



Fancroft Mill.



Kilbeggan Distillery.



Kilbeggan Distillery.



Kilbeggan Distillery.

National Mills Weekend: 13-14 May, 2023 – continued

Photographs taken at some mills in England open for National Mills Weekend



*Two photos at the windmill at Windmill Hill.
Pictures – Windmill Hill Windmill Trust.*



*Wilton Windmill.
Picture – Chris Kerr.*



*Bourn Mill, Cambridgeshire on the day of
its reopening (see page 35).
Picture – Steve Temple.*

The Mill of Benholm

Mill of Benholm Enterprise (SCIO)

The Mill of Benholm is a rural watermill complex in the North East of Scotland, situated within the hamlet of Benholm, near the fishing village of Johnshaven in the Mearns. The current mill originated in the 18th century (1711 was engraved on a stone and visible until recently) and was altered and rebuilt in 1817.

Although the origin of the Mill of Benholm goes probably back to the 12th century, a charter in 1492 gives further evidence of the mill when John and Isabel Lundy granted the lands and barony of 'Benhame' with the mill to their son Robert. In the following century the mill passed by marriage from the Lundy family to the Keiths, the powerful Earls Marischal, as records show. The nearby Benholm Kirk displays the Keith Monument from 1620. The first miller officially recorded was Archibald Brown in 1696.



The Mill of Benholm comprises a small two-storey meal mill with attached kiln and external overshot waterwheel. Close to the mill is a mill pond holding enough water for one day's work. The pond is supplied via a lade taking water from the Castle Burn and the Burn of Benholm. There is as well the former miller's house (occupied until 1876 when a new cottage was built on higher ground and the "Auld House" by the stream used to house the pigs, cattle, hens and horses of the miller), a byre to the south of the mill and a grain store to the north.

According to Historic Environmental Scotland, the Mill of Benholm is an exceptional and rare survival and the site received its category B listing in 1972, upgraded to a Category A listing in 2009.

The mill was a fully operational working mill and produced oatmeal from oats grown on the local farmland until the last miller, Lindsay C. Watson, retired in 1984. Shortly afterward the then Kincardine and Deeside District Council purchased this Grade A-listed complex and after extensive restorations over nine years in 1995 re-opened it as tourist attraction, community hub, learning centre and cafe with the mill being in full working order.

From 1996 to 2014, the Mill of Benholm was a successful and much-loved hub for the community and for many visitors. The facility was closed and mothballed in 2014 by its owner Aberdeenshire Council.

The Mill of Benholm is situated in an idyllic spot of five acres of land opposite the Mill Brae Woods. A footbridge leads into these semi-natural woods composed mainly of wych elm and ash, with scattered sycamore, gean, larch, hazel, and Norway maple with now overgrown, nature walks, viewing areas and an open-air classroom.



Since its closure in 2014 the community has been looking into a sustainable way to revive this 'Gem of the Mearns' with the Mill of Benholm Enterprise (SCIO) being founded in 2017. Since 2017, the Mill of Benholm Enterprise (MoBE) has worked on a sustainable solution and in 2019 has applied for Community Asset Transfer of the site with the support of the North East Scotland Preservation Trust. This unfortunately failed, but a new board of trustees has started a fresh approach in 2023 and restarted the process of the Community Asset Transfer to Aberdeenshire Council by submitting the Expression of Interest in May 2023.

The main focus is on halting any further deterioration of the site as maintenance has been reduced to the bare minimum. Nature has started to take over; roofs have become leaky, and the wheel has not been turned for more than three years. Until 2020 the waterwheel had been turned weekly with the lade, sluices and pond kept in good working order.

As soon as MoBE secures ownership, work will start to deal with the overgrown vegetation, leaking roofs and

The Mill of Benholm – continued

other urgently needed repairs to enable MoBE to open the site safely to the public. At the same time work will start on the water structures of the lade, sluices, pond and waterwheel to restore these back to working order. All this work depends on grant funding and will be undertaken with the help of volunteers and suitable contractors.

Due to being mothballed since 2014, the electrical system and plumbing will need an overhaul in this phase as well to ensure lights, toilets and all other facilities are in good working order.

After all necessary work has been completed a mobile catering unit will be used to serve coffee, cakes and other refreshments to visitors enjoying the historic mill and the nature paths through the grounds and Mill Brae Woods.

In a second phase MoBE will restore the site further to enhance the historical and natural beauty of the site, with more learning facilities, outdoor events, closer connection via a path to Benholm Kirk, showcasing the milling and farming history of the area, and much more.

We hope as well to host volunteer weekends together with the SPAB on this site in the future.



What's behind the doors?



Pictures by Mildred

Replacing the sweeps at Windmill Hill Windmill

The Windmill Hill Windmill Trust

Our volunteers had first seen signs of rot on the sweeps in 2019 and the decision was taken not to turn the sweeps again until the extent of the problem could be determined. Following visual inspection, it became apparent that a more detailed physical inspection would be required by use of a cherry-picker access platform.



The survey was carried out in February 2020 and the news was not good. Less than 15 years old, the sweeps had rotted beyond repair in several places. The trustees arranged for Douglas Andrews to visit the windmill to give an estimate of the work required and the possible costs. After further inspection it was concluded that all four sweeps and one stock would have to be entirely replaced. The cost of the work and materials at that point was estimated at around £40,000.

26 March 2020 lockdown!

We all remember what happened next – but at that time we had no appreciation of how long lockdown would last or its consequences.

Over the Easter period of 2020 we researched grant-giving trusts and prepared detailed funding applications. Over 40 applications were submitted – some requiring just a few paragraphs, others several detailed pages.

Of course, we were unable to open the windmill to the public at this time and so lost an important source of revenue. Gradually, though, money was raised. Smaller amounts at first and then a breakthrough in October when the Pilgrim Trust confirmed a grant of £20,000.

The Pilgrim Trust nominated the Mills Section of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) to advise on materials and methods. This required weeks of discussions on the most suitable timber to be used – at a time when there were difficulties with obtaining timber due to movement restrictions imposed because of the pandemic and the construction industry drawing down current world reserves. We needed timber from trees grown in a cold climate, where growth is slower and the wood is more dense.

After lengthy discussions by Zoom and telephone, agreement was reached. The timber to be used was Siberian Larch, grown at latitudes above 55 degrees and laminated for extra strength. Now the challenge was to find a source.

In anticipation of being able to start the work, and for safety reasons, the old sweeps were removed from the windmill in March 2021. This job took place in freezing conditions.



Replacing the sweeps at Windmill Hill Windmill – continued

One of the sweeps was taken to Douglas Andrews' workshop where detailed measurements were taken to provide a blueprint.

Once the measurements were taken a specification was prepared and we invited tenders from three timber suppliers approved by the SPAB. Because of the scarcity of obtaining timber, our tender return analysis showed the most competitive quotation was over £16,000 – double our original estimate. With no other options available, the contract was awarded to Constructional Timber (Manufacturers) Ltd in Barnsley.

The windmill at Windmill Hill is a Grade II* Listed Building, so consent was required to replace the sweeps. This was granted in June 2021.

With the sweeps off-site, the mills team of maintenance volunteers were able to start work on cleaning and refurbishing the 188 shutters, 376 shutter-bearing brackets and numerous control and operating mechanism components. This work took several months – all of the second half of 2021.



After three months, in September 2021, the timber arrived in the UK and was delivered to Constructional Timber (Manufacturers) Ltd in Barnsley.

Another month and the laminated timber was delivered to Douglas Andrews' workshop. Our quality-control inspection revealed that some sections did not pass. Negotiations took place with the company, which agreed to rectify the problem pieces.

Could things get any more difficult? Yes, they could! In February 2022 Storm Eunice ripped several pieces of zinc cladding from the windmill. Luckily, this was accepted as a valid insurance claim and the panels were replaced in August 2022.

It took several months for the replacement pieces to arrive, delaying the project once more and, by May 2022, Douglas Andrews had other work to complete.

Douglas was able to give our project priority in the Summer of 2022 and the sweeps were constructed.



Then began the long process of treating and painting – a task undertaken by members of the volunteer maintenance team in less than comfortable weather conditions from October to December 2022.



Replacing the sweeps at Windmill Hill Windmill – continued



The sweeps were ready to be fitted by the beginning of 2023, but we had to wait for a period of dry, calm weather for the lifting and fitting operation. Several dates were set, but it was not until late May that conditions were right.

At 8am on 24 May the meticulously prepared operation began – and by 5.30pm the stocks and sweeps were in place. On the days that followed the shutters were fitted and everything was tested. Finally, the windmill was cleaned – ready for visitors and, eventually, milling.

We would like to thank the many Friends of Windmill Hill Windmill, supporters and visitors who donated towards the project as well as the following grant-giving trusts and organisations:

- Ian Askew Charitable Trust
- Garfield Weston
- The Leche Trust
- The Pilgrim Trust
- Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (Mills Section)



Mill Group News and Newsletters Review

Mildred

Midland Wind and Watermill Mills Group Journal No 42, 2023

Sadly no one has come forward to do reviews of group newsletters, but the Midland Mill Journal deserves a review.

There are four excellent articles in the journal published by the group and edited by Tony Bonson.

The first article is on *Alfred Summers, Millwright of Tamworth-In-Arden*, at work in the 1890s and beyond, by the late Tim Booth and is the conclusion of the Summers family of millwrights. It is an excellent detailed account covering this period up to the time in 1890 when Summers died leaving debts of more than £500 and three properties heavily mortgaged. He left his workshops and tools plus household goods and livestock to be divided between his 10 children, which meant that if everything was sold they would receive at best £50 each.

Tim's research is second to none and he details all the millwrights' work with images of the mills he worked on and many letters from solicitors and clients who were not always satisfied; an example of this from a letter to Summers starts off with: 'Are you ever going to finish this job or are you going to tinker on till next Xmas?' and finishes with: 'You have never kept a single promise yet you've made enough to fill a mill pond'!

And one other response from a client, Mr TH & JG Reeve, Maltsters: 'If we do not get the Malt Crusher delivered here before 12 o'clock on Thursday morning next we shall place the matter in the hands of our solicitor and order from another maker as we cannot go on any longer without it'.

Summers used the Turton Foundry for his castings and even here ran into trouble over payments. Still, throughout all this Summers remained in demand.

Towards the end of the article is a late Victorian photograph of Summers himself, looking like a man deep in thought as if with something on his mind. All the various letters written and received by Summers provide a wonderful insight on the woes and tribulations of this millwright.

Mills on which Alfred Summers worked include: Mercote Mill, Henley in Arden Mill, Hurst Mill, Beehive Corn Mills, Blyth Mill, Priory Mills, Solihull Lodge, Darley Mill and Berkswell windmill.

The second article is on *The history of a village corn mill at Welford*, by Victoria and Linda Johnson. This was written as much physical evidence of the mill was disappearing. The mill, on the River Avon, was situated in a small village in Northamptonshire right on the border with Leicestershire. There is a good write-up of the history of the mill, with an inventory from 1717 and maps and aerial images showing the site of the building.

Country grinding and desperate diversity: Robert Sly, miller of Chedworth is the subject of the third article, by Mike Beecham.

Robert Sly's milling business was short-lived and the surviving records in the Gloucestershire Archives for the period 1800 to 1830 show very little of man's life.

The article goes on to the second decade of the 19th century, which saw 11 millers and mealmen declared bankrupt in Gloucestershire.

Again: a well written and illustrated story, with images of the mills mentioned and some interesting tables, one of cereal purchase price comparisons per bushel and another of Sly's grinding records for farmers from 1812-1815.

It is noted that it is not certain why some of these millers actually did milling. Some were small-time corn merchants and even money lenders and a tax assessor.

The effects of the war against France caused a severe slump in trade, with military contracts ceasing – which had been necessary for the mills to survive.

Once again: a very interesting story giving us an insight into the goings on of these millers.

The final article is by Stuart Mousdale on *Listed Mills in Cheshire*. The entries of listing vary considerably as most of us who have looked at them will sometimes find errors and omissions. The details were dependent on who was doing the listing and whether or not they had the background and knowledge of the subject of mills.

The article is well-illustrated with images of the wind and watermills mentioned including: the windmills at Bidston, Ravensmoor, Willaston and Buerton, the saw mill at Dunham Massey and other watermills at Bunbury and Stretton. Also the larger mills: Hovis Mill at Macclesfield, Frosts Mill at Chester and the water-powered textile mill at Styal.

Textile mills played an important part in eastern Cheshire. It was noted that the obvious feature of most of the textile-mill listings was their length and detail compared to the majority of corn-mill entries. Auxiliary structures are also mentioned as well as some unusual ones such as the Chapel Mill at Macclesfield: which seems to have been originally a place of worship as the details in the listing contain decorative architectural details as would be found in a church. The mill was only converted to textile use as late as 1946.

Historic England always welcomes additions to a listing or to correct any errors made in the past. One point is that some of our mills are not entirely graded correctly – many Grade II mills deserve higher listing and this is something which we can help with.

We offer the following services throughout the country:

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News from the mills

Great Gransden postmill

I'm very pleased to say that the new sails were fitted at Gransden on Wednesday, 19 April.

Two cranes were used, with a crane basket for access.

The photograph (right) shows the mill on Thursday morning, with sails locked so they could not turn unwantedly.

The sails have been designed to follow closely the working sails as photographed by Rev LeGrice in the 1870s, but with sail clamps for greater durability.

All credit to the Gransden village carpenter John Vinnell for interpreting my drawings very faithfully.

I can't wait to see the sails turning – I think they would run in a stiff breeze.

Dave Pearce



Bourn Mill reopening

Bourn Mill is one of a cluster of open-trestle postmills in Cambridgeshire and has been undergoing major work over the last few years. It is owned by Cambridge Past Present and Future, who aim to preserve this type of local heritage and keep it alive with the aid of a large volunteer group. They also own Hinxton Watermill and several other sites as part of their general brief to protect the historic Cambridge environment.

It had been discovered that old repair work to the trestle was failing – partly because cracks and cavities had been filled with concrete, which is not only not structural but promotes rot by holding water in. As a consequence, once the buck had been jacked up clear of the post, the entire trestle has been rebuilt with new wood. Tree-ring dating of the post has been carried out and it was found to have been felled between 1513 and 1549, making it the oldest such timber in an English mill, and dating the mill itself to around 100 years before the first recorded reference to it in 1636.

Bill Griffiths did the millwrighting work on the project and took time off from putting sails on Great Gransden Mill to come to the opening on 19 May. The oak for the trestles came from France, where huge amounts have been felled for the rebuilding of Notre Dame, some of which is not up to their very demanding requirements. This source could be of great help to our mills over the next few years! The trestle was last replaced in 1874, so we hope that the new one will take the mill far into the next century.

The project was principally funded by the National Lottery and Historic England, but the SPAB Mills Section made a contribution to the required residue out of the Mill Repair Fund. Personally, I'm delighted that such a near neighbour has been given a new lease of life.

Steve Temple



Big steps at Mostert's Mill

Andy Selfe

The sails went up at Mostert's Mill on 3 March 2023. Much planning had gone into the day, not least the wind factor. It looked as if the following day would be less windy, but Johannes Uys of MME, in charge of the rigging and craning, was confident, particularly as the wind was coming from directly behind the mill.

As it happened the wind abated at the critical time, although I did battle to keep the bare second stock square in the mortice as it was lowered in. Johannes had calculated that water in a flow-bin hung from the front of the poll-end, plus the fully assembled outer sail in its mortice closest to the end, as suggested by Paul Moonie Kemp, would balance the assembly, if slung just outside of the overhang of the thatch roof.

The water was running in slowly from a domestic garden tap, so we added three chain-blocks and any heavy rocks we could find. Eventually it was possible to lift the tail bearing with a finger, and we were ready to lift, swing away from the tower to an open space over the threshing floor, turn it 180 degrees, then feed it carefully into the opening at the front.



Then we discovered we'd miscalculated the height of the pillow block that the stone bearing rests on. It was too high!

We compromised and laid the block temporarily on its side and lowered the stone bearing, already strapped to the windshaft, into place. The crane could then lift the other sail stock at the end already assembled with



latticework for the sail, and the bare half could be lowered through the other mortice and wedged when it came to rest on the stock shoulder block.

Big steps at Mostert's Mill – continued



Pilot John then rushed home to collect the decoration for the end of the windshaft so I could install it. Straight Jon can now assemble the fourth set of lattices.

The third lift of the crane was the brake-pole, much easier to lift with a crane with its long outer section and operating chain. So Jamie the Scottie's mate is 7metres in the air.



We drilled a hole for the anchor chain in the end of the tail-pole, primed it and then drove in a 40mm PVC tube so the chain won't wear the soft spruce.

Last thing we strapped the sails back against the long stretcher in case of being tail-winded, as we can't 'wind the cap' into the prevailing wind from the south until the fourth sail is assembled. The assembled end will swing to the bottom if the two guy ropes at the ends of the now horizontal sails are released.



I asked a well-known local photographer Irene McCullagh to record the proceedings in stills. Keith Wetmore as usual will do a follow-up video. Irene put together this selection of stills she took and put it on YouTube at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0zubvGLkzs

At the same time, in the Netherlands, our team was putting the final touches to the pair of millstones which they have bought with the proceeds of the crowd funding. This team will be visiting us shortly to check up on our progress.



Also beavering away, Charel and Juan are making great progress with the 'furniture'. Overleaf is the curb which will hold the bedstone in place, made from reclaimed wood from a house on a farm here in Elgin.

Also pictured is a detail of the corners. No nails or screws have been used. It is secured by dowels which they have made with the same wood. Lastly there is a photo of the rings for the top and bottom of the tun.

Big steps at Mostert's Mill – continued



I had a busy day at Mostert's Mill in early May. I started off by 'saw-gauging' between the lower ends of the long braces where the angles I calculated weren't quite right, where they join the tailpole.

I had cut a piece of polypropylene (like perspex) and attached it to one side of the saw with thin double-sided tape to hold the blade a certain distance away from the tailpole and to avoid damaging it.



The stud is still in place, so I had to saw from all sides to work all around the stud. That job isn't finished yet and we'll need to get primer on the exposed end-grain of the wood before we pull it together.

The big job was to get the new correct 'pillow block' under the neck bearing, which meant jacking up the windshaft and somehow the stone bearing with it. Jon had brought the new one with the 2-degree taper built in, as well as an indentation on the underside for the top of the stud that goes through the Burgemeester below it. We used my 12-tonne jack standing on the Burgemeester (top photo, opposite page).

To add extra weight to the tail of the windshaft, I decided to attach the brakewheel to it with the wedges that had



Big steps at Mostert's Mill – continued



The view from up there is magnificent, but not so much looking down on De Meule, still untouched



The new pillow block had to have slots cut in it for the 'folding wedges' which are knocked in from both sides and exert a parallel force. We were then able to centralise the neck bearing and lower it on the pillow block and wedge the neck bearing from both sides. We could then turn the sails. But only a quarter-turn to start with because the side wedges weren't in the mortise of the sail that was vertical, and it could have moved. Once that sail stock was horizontal I could knock wedges in, and also mark the position for the holes to be drilled in the remaining retaining block (*keerklos*, in Dutch).

been made. It's not necessarily in the right place yet, to mesh with the lantern pinion, but at least it's a start! The windshaft landed up slightly smaller than planned, so the wedges go in a bit too far. We might have to make more, or add thickness to these.

At least it meant we could turn the sails later. Theo and Khaya managed to strap the neck bearing to the windshaft, so they came up together, and by climbing the sail, I was able to knock the temporary one out with a mallet.



Jon and his team could then wedge the tail bearing the two degrees difference where we had to lower the angle of the windshaft by that much. We did some experimental turning of the sails, and were able to leave them in the 'St Andrew's Cross' position for the first time.



Now, from the outside, Mostert's looks like it does in all the picture postcards.

Mills for sale

Water powered olive oil mill near Pescia, Tuscany, Italy

Some years ago, my family and I moved to Tuscany and bought a very old, 16th-century, horizontal waterwheel-driven olive mill. It was a wreck and we have restored much of it, but have not completed the job. Last year, I went blind and although I have healed after a lot of surgery, can no longer do heavy work. We are looking for someone who might wish to buy our mill.

The mill is in the Pescia valley in northern Tuscany, a narrow river gorge in the Apennines that opens up on to the Arno plain. We are an hour from Florence, Pisa and Lucca. Local Pescia is five miles away and is lovely with all facilities.

We have around three hectares of flat land (a luxury around here!), which falls in the DOP of the valuable Sorana bean (retailing currently at around € 25 per kilo), three bedrooms, living room, kitchen, dining room, bathroom, three large cantinas, the mill with its own kitchen and bathroom, workshop and barn. The former owner is happy to assist in starting the mill back up, and has a large client list all of whom would support the venture. The mill was highly profitable until closed in 2013.

The mill has all the relevant, fully operational machinery. All that remains to be done is to restore the laide, for which there is EU subsidy, and application to reopen, again for which there is EU support. We have restored much of the house, with new electrics and plumbing in place.

I am open to any serious offer. It is currently on the market for € 330,000, but that is as a holiday home. However, if the right person comes along and seriously wishes to open the mill again, I am happy to go a good bit lower to help with the reopening costs, say € 280,000, leaving the buyer with a € 50,000 budget to make all the changes. We have been quoted around € 35,000 for all the work.



The olive mill and house.



The horizontal waterwheel.



The olive crushing stones.



The olive oil presses.

It is unlikely that I will find an Italian buyer and I would hate to see this place go as a holiday home.

Harry Schnitker

h_schnitker@btinternet.com

Important UK mills for sale

The Maud Foster Mill in Boston Lincolnshire

One of the finest windmills in England is now on the market. Owners James Waterfield and Richard Pennington have decided they would like to retire and enjoy visiting other mills across Great Britain and perhaps further afield.

Built in 1819 for the Reckitt family, Maud Foster Mill has seven floors and is fitted out as a commercial flour mill where James and Richard have run a successful business for the past 35 years. There is extensive warehousing and an owner's flat in the adjoining granary.

The adjoining Mill House and two workmen's cottages are also available with the mill.

The agents are Bruce Mather Ltd of Boston, tel. 01205 365032, www.brucemather.co.uk where James Mather is dealing with the sale for us.

James Waterfield



Thurne Dyke Windmill



Picture – Mildred Cookson.

The Staithe, Thurne, Great Yarmouth
Complete drainage windmill, land and mooring, guide price £200,000
Grade II, complete workings
Town and Country Estate Agents, 7B Calthorpe Green, Old Road, Acle, NR13 3QL
https://www.rightmove.co.uk/properties/96607030#/?channel=COM_BUY

Hellingly Watermill



Picture – Paul Farmer via Geograph.

Mill Lane, Hellingly, East Sussex BN27
4 beds, detached watermill, granary, bake house, 5.3 acres
Complete watermill, £1,499,950
Grade II*, waterwheel, workings
Foresters, 17 High Street, Heathfield, TN21 8LU
<https://www.primelocation.com/for-sale/details/64604378>

Sutton Windmill

Mill Road, Sutton, Norwich NR12, Norfolk
6 beds, 1.85 acres
Derelict or incomplete windmill, £1,900,000
Grade II*, mostly complete inside
Trett Phillips, 142 High Street, Stalham, NR12 9AZ
<https://www.primelocation.com/for-sale/details/64683311>

