

SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

Newsletter

No. 40
NOVEMBER 1987

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The summer months since I wrote the last Editorial have passed all-too-quickly, and all-too-damply for most people. While the rain has been a passing nuisance, the destruction wrought by the great gale on October 16th is an entirely different matter. The loss of so many trees has not surprisingly been the main focus of media attention, but these can eventually be replaced, even if we have to wait a hundred or so years. Losses of historic buildings are a different matter: once gone, they are gone for ever. Windmills are of course especially vulnerable in storms and sadly two Suffolk mills, at Syleham and Bardwell, were devastated, perhaps the worse damage to any mills in the country (I hope so). A full report on this and other mill damage known to us appears inside.

On a happier note, the work-in at Stanton was once again most successful, and structural work to the buck is now complete. There was a good attendance at the A.G.M. in June, also at Stanton, which was nice to see. Please note the date of the social evening in December (see Events), to be held this year jointly with the Essex Mills Group at Paycocke's in Coggeshall.

This Newsletter is our 40th issue, and I have now been editor for ten years! It's a sobering thought that the S.M.G. founder members, most of whom are still with us, are now ten years older. Is there another set of enthusiastic youngsters out there who could yet be groomed for a takeover?

Mark Barnard

WORK-INS AT STANTON

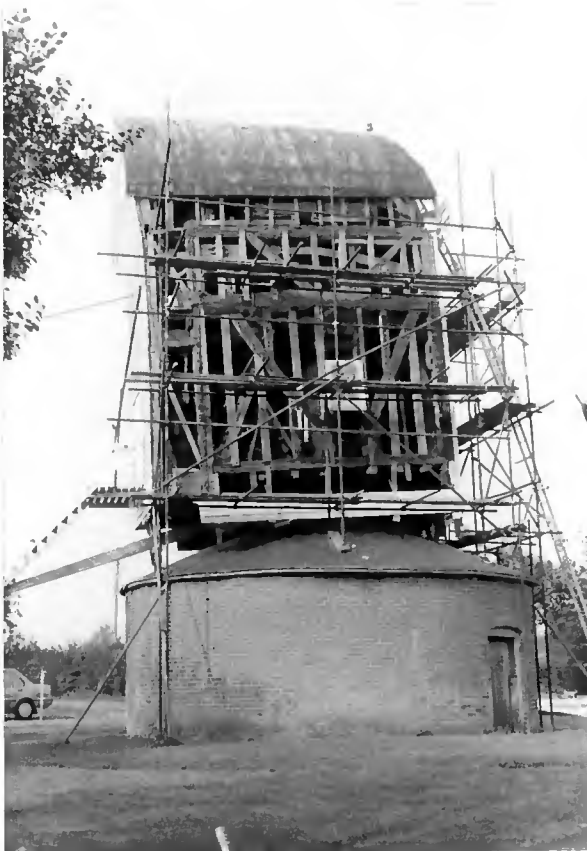
CHRIS HULLCOOP

The main objectives of this year's two work-ins were to complete the head and to repair and re-board the right hand side. We hoped to avoid last year's nasty surprises when weatherboards were removed by completely exposing the major timbers early in the year. Thus all new timber was at the mill in good time.

The lower side rail had a central shake and the mortices had been gnawed out by rats but there was still ample strength left in it. The side girt had been relieved many years ago with a massive purpose-made casting fitted where it passed over the end of the crowtree. From this, sag irons run down to the two corner posts, preventing the inevitable droop caused by a weak side girt. It had rotted and been gnawed hollow in the centre but otherwise was in good condition. As the early sag iron fitting was so good we decided to repair rather than replace the girt. The sag irons took care of the load passing down the corner posts but of course could not counter the force bending it horizontally in the centre when the buck turned to wind. We decided to repair it using a combination of wood and steel with a large



The buck during the first week



The repaired side, showing the first new boards in place

piece of unequal angle iron let into the girt which would be completely covered by the new boards.

We realised that support for the work-ins would be lower than last year because of the work-in at Wicken smock mill. The dates had been carefully chosen last year so as not to clash. Our first week at Stanton was in early July and everything was just about ready, including three window frames made by Terry Mallet, a Stanton carpenter with a most appropriate name! Quentin Garlic arrived early Saturday morning while I was having breakfast. He was soon on the scaffold platform erected the previous week and set to work removing the old weatherboards which were in a sorry state. The defiant message painted on the side during World War Two had been removed and discreetly covered to avoid the eyes of a German family spending a holiday in the cottage! The side quickly took on a skeletal appearance as rotten boards crashed to the ground. Thankfully this year there were no nasty surprises. The window posts and diagonals were good but some joints poor. Rather than replace everything, it was important to keep as much original frame as possible, so we strengthened the weak joints with heavy irons let in to the outside face of the timbers, and thus invisible under the new boards. The studs were another matter though and the longest had been butchered many years ago. Peter Dolman set to work on renewing the longest stud near the head while I blunted my chisels on old nails letting the irons into the diagonals and window posts.

On Saturday Reg Clover brought members of the Thetford historical society to see the mill. He explained to them how a post mill worked and several climbed to the top floor and were amazed at the sheer size of everything. On Sunday afternoon ten fine vintage motorcycles drew into the mill yard. Dave Turner has a mill rally every year for the vintage motorcycle club and this year was the turn of Stanton. We gathered round to admire the gleaming old machines and our German visitors were particularly interested in a Zundapp made in their home town. We treated the vintage bikers to a cup of tea, payment for which was to give a hand fitting one of the long and heavy studs!

Cliff Lovett removed the tough horticultural polythene from the head gable where it had sealed the mill for a year without a single tear. He proceeded to repair the decayed lower ends of the head ribs in preparation for the new boards. The storm hatch opening had to be carefully worked out with special attention paid to weatherproofing around the neck of the windshaft. This is often neglected, with no provision for raising the windshaft neck. A leakage here will soon lead to rot in the centre of the weatherbeam. Vincent and Linda Pargeter were able to help us for a day and cut out the side girt ready for the anvil-shaped oak block. Fred Davis and Ted cut and drilled the angle iron and fitted it to the girt. This was a tricky job as a groove had to be cut into the girt to take the small leg of

the unequal angle and it had to let in flush so as not to obstruct the boards. Roy and Penny Berry fitted bolts to the lower side rail to contain the shake. Sharp flints and broken glass had been put in the shake to discourage rats. Alan Loasby fitted the petticoat studs, leaving in place the original short petticoat studs of 1751 when the mill had an open trestle.

At the end of the week we were joined by Roger Skinner and Kim West, a postgraduate engineer from Trinity College, Cambridge, appropriately engaged in research into wind energy. By the end of the first week's work virtually all the repairs to the frame had been completed and we were thankful for a full nine days without rain, a record for last summer. We sensed that all was not well on the weather front, so corrugated sheets were nailed over



Fitting the petticoat and painting on the last weekend

the head gable and a large tarpaulin tied over the left side. Our meteorological pessimisms were soon justified as our wet summer then really started. Despite the poor weather, Richard Duke, Fred Davis and Ted sanded and painted the weatherboards and fitted the new carriage, fly posts and all the iron gearing, making the mill look a lot less like an old hen without a tail.

Alan Wallis was first to pitch his tent at the late August work-in. I was late, having dropped my sleeping bag somewhere between Felixstowe and Stowmarket. Miraculously it lay undamaged beside the road. Saturday morning was cold and wet and it was after lunch before we took the covers from the mill. Bob Sharp brushed down and treated with Protim all the outside faces of the timbers which would be in contact with the new boards. It is usual to order 15% more boards than required to allow for those rejected through splitting and even then it is a tricky job selecting them. With the mill leaning towards the tail we had to fit them so that they will be horizontal when the buck is righted. The first board took a lot of pondering over but once this was fitted they soon started to appear. Cliff, Alan and Peter started to board the head gable while Martin Hanson and I gradually worked our way up the side to the first window. On Monday night it blew and rained hard and I awoke in a pool of water with the tent half blown down. In the morning the mill was awash and a depressing sight and it continued to rain non-stop all day. We managed a few more boards before a second onslaught of rain as bad as the first arrived. As soon as the rain stopped we resumed work, in a temperature more normal in mid winter, but the weather gradually improved and boards were soon appearing on the mill at a



The completed job, with the new sails in the foreground



The new fan carriage and fly posts

steady rate. Between the work-ins Quentin Garlic had fitted the casements to the window frames and painted them ready for fitting onto the mill.

By Saturday the boarding was nearly complete. John Deeves and his colleagues in the Scout Support Group arrived and were soon busy giving the mill a good clean out and tidy up. Duncan Breckels trimmed numerous bolts we had left overlength in our haste, Chris Seago fitted the petticoat boards while Mark Barnard applied Flashband to the corners. I had hoped, if progress was good, to do some first aid repairs at Ixworth watermill on the last weekend, and even with the loss of $2\frac{1}{2}$ days we decided to go ahead (see under News below).

Midday on Sunday saw the arrival of the two new sails which had been made by Chris Wilson at Over, transported by Richard Duke and Roger Skinner on a purpose-built stock trailer. Mercifully Monday was another fine day and after delivering the ladders and gear used at Ixworth back to Drinkstone we had a grand clear-up and took down our tents. Despite the poor weather of the second work-in we achieved a lot, with a good team spirit fostered by Annie Duke's tea and biscuits and her splendid Millwright's Suppers held at the end of both weeks and much appreciated. Stanton mill is a few steps nearer to the day when a post mill will work again in Suffolk.

WINDMILLS AND MILL RESTORATION IN FRANCE ROY BERRY

The European country which is always associated with windmills is, of course, Holland, but in France too there has been an immense number of mills and many still remain. There are five Associations Regionale des Amis des Moulins which take an active interest in the mills and their preservation. These cover the Nord and Pas de Calais, Anjou, Brittany, Sud and the plain of Beauce. Of these the Nord and Pas de Calais and Beauce regions have done some excellent restoration work. Some good restorations have also been performed in the Anjou region. The main driving force in the Nord region seems to have been Jean Bruggeman, and in Beauce, the very effective team of Christian Porcher and Jean Francois Amary.

As well as the three types of windmill with which we are familiar in this country, there is a fourth type which has existed in quite large numbers in France and of which numerous examples remain, some in an excellent restored condition. This is the cavier or cave mill of the Anjou region. The cavier is a form of hollow post mill. A small cabin called a hucherolle and resembling a miniature post mill body is supported by the post as in a post mill. The post is bored through its length to accommodate a vertical shaft which drives one or two pairs of stones in the masse or cave at the base of the mill. The masse is entirely a man-made structure of earth and a very soft local stone called Tuffau. Three or four tunnels converge at right angles onto the central area below the post. As well as being used for purposes associated with milling these tunnels were often used to house a wine press. Above the masse a masonry cone surrounds the post and, through its walls, doors allow grain to be delivered into the mill above the stones. There have also been a

number of other types of mill. Some were decidedly odd, of which more later.

One noticeable difference between English and French windmills is the smaller number of moving parts which are made of metal in France. Wooden windshafts are certainly the norm, indeed I can only think of one post mill, at Sancheville in Beauce, and the cavier 'Croix de Cadeax' at Avrille in Anjou which employ iron windshafts. The life of a wooden windshaft is, an old French miller told me, the same as the working life of a man: sixty years. For me, perhaps the most attractive feature of French mills isn't any of the many technological differences from the mills with which we are familiar, but rather the woodwork, always of excellent quality, nicely finished and often ornately decorated and carved.

Most of the smaller post mills and indeed a lot of the tower mills only employ one pair of stones, usually of rather larger diameter than those commonly encountered in this country. For example, at Bois de Feugères post mill the stones are 1.9 m. across. In these simple mills bins for the storage of grain at high level are seldom used, the miller feeding the stone hopper directly from a sack. The most common way of turning the sails to wind is by the 'queue d'orientation' or tailpole, which is often very long and frequently lead-clad on its top and sides to help prevent ingress of water. The physical turning may be achieved by the manual effort of the miller directly, via a winch mounted on the tailpole, or, as was frequently the case in tower mills, by one or two internal gear systems meshing with a toothed iron curb. An ingenious 'automatic self winding system' was used in some caviers. A donkey was harnessed to the ladder leading up to the hucherolle, which also acted as a tailpole. When the sails were into the wind the donkey was in the lee of the cone. As soon as the wind moved around by a few points it began to blow into his ears. To alleviate his discomfort, the donkey moved back into the still air behind the cone, and the sails once more faced the wind! I only know of one French mill, a tall tower mill, La Transolière a St. Clement, north of Angers, which has a fantail or papillon (butterfly) for winding. Another tower mill, built to a British design at Crucey Villages in the Eure region, was so equipped. It also had a battered tower as in England, patent sails and a 'roundel' at the base of the tower (like Stone Cross mill in Sussex). After only some twenty years of use this high-tech mill was abandoned, perhaps because of the amount of maintenance work needed on the sails. The empty tower remains. In vogue in much of France at the time was the ingenious (and indigenous) Berton sail system, but this never entirely displaced traditional cloth sails.

If claims made are to be believed, French mills exist of much greater antiquity than any in England. Our oldest example is probably the post mill at Great Gransden where there is a date of 1575 on the post. By contrast the more northerly of the mills at Hondschoote in the Nord, near the Belgian border,

is said to date from 1127. It is maintained that this can be substantiated by carbon dating. At Maves, just south of the Beauce, another post mill claimed to date back to the fifteenth century and the subject of at least one removal, still grinds. Experiencing this mill at work, five years or so ago, I felt, as the mill rocked in a stiff breeze, that some major structural joints might have developed quite a lot of slack, perhaps to be expected after 500 years!

Of the restoration / preservation work in France, perhaps one of the most spectacular jobs was that of moving a tower mill in metropolitan Paris! Ivry mill looked like being the victim of a road improvement scheme until it was rescued by moving its rather derelict tower some 35 m. on rails and then refurbishing it with a new cap, sails and some machinery. At least as impressive is the work of Jean Bruggeman in removing two post mills and the frame of a smock mill to a new site at Villeneuve d'Ascq on the outskirts of Lille. One of the post mills is a stamping type oil mill and has been restored to working order (although apparently it has done only a few demonstrations). The other is a corn mill not yet in full working order, but externally complete. The smock mill frame, a reconstruction of an original from St. Omer, is that of a pumping mill using an Archimedes screw of some 0.6 m. diameter. The frame, the screw and the rebuilt cap are all superb examples of the millwright's craft. Jean Bruggeman was also largely responsible for the restoration of a very odd mill at Templeuve. Looking like a conventional parallel-walled tower mill at first glance, it encloses a rotating assembly which comprises the complete interior of the mill, all attached to a massive central post which rotates on a footstep bearing on the ground floor and is centralised by horizontal rollers running on a metal band three or four feet below the top of the tower. This extraordinary affair is appropriately nicknamed 'The canned post mill'!

On the Beauce the total rebuilding of Le Moulin Pelard at Bois de Feugères by our good friends Christian and Jean Francois continues. The mill was blown down in 1978 in a very high wind, after they had put in some two years of hard work on it. Dismayed but not deterred, they returned to their formidable task which has had to be fitted in between working on other mills in the region and doing such non-mill work as is necessary to provide food and a roof over their heads. Their restoration work is of an excellent standard but is hampered by a lack of funds. The mill, owned by the community, is to receive a wooden windshaft salvaged from another mill where a new one was fitted. It is to have about 1.5 m. cut off the front of it and a poll-end fabricated from steel plate by Jean Francois is to be fitted. Christian has built a fine brakewheel which together with the windshaft are the next items to be fitted.

Their work is also bearing fruit at Le Moulin Frouville Pensier at Ozoir. When we first saw this tower mill in 1982 the remains of the cap frame, the windshaft and the wreckage of one sail were in place and the very large stones hung

threateningly on rotting floor joists, green with slime. By our 1984 visit a sectional temporary cap of wood and plastic kept out the rain and the pigeons that had bred there for generations and new floor joists had been made and assembled into place. It now has its permanent cap, brakewheel, windshaft and stone floor. In its final restored form, in contrast to that in which it last worked, it is to be tailpole-winded and equipped with cloth sails. The woodwork here is a testimony to the time, the dedication and the skill that Christian has expended on this part of the project.

In addition to all this, the 'boys' are putting in time and lots of work on the mills at Moutiers and Levesville Le Chenard, the properties of the late, and much missed, brothers Marcel and Fernand Barbier respectively, who between them must have contributed well over a century of milling on the Beauce. Jean Francois and Christian are also very busy equipping a 'new' workshop let to them, rent free, by the people of the nearby township of Voves.

An exciting prospect waiting in the wings for A.R.A.M. Beauce is the restoration of a very rare, if not unique mill. This had a vertical windshaft, so that the sails rotated in a horizontal plane.

On a recent tour of Brittany we saw only two restored mills, both towers and both on the north coast. Two mills on the Atlantic coast might be described as preserved; the tower mill at Erdeven and one of the 'Petit Pied' (little foot) tower mills unique to north west France, Le Moulin Du Diable, near Guerande - perhaps strictly in Loire Atlantique and not Brittany. Beyond these there were several tower mills, some tall and cylindrical, some short and squat, and two Petit Pieds, all of which had been house-converted. A further considerable number are derelict and slowly eroding away. Considering what has been achieved elsewhere in France, Brittany turned out, from a mill enthusiast's point of view, to be rather depressing.

To date we haven't seen any mills in the south. The most southerly we have visited was the diminutive tower mill at Chevres near Poitiers. Penny fell in love with this one because of its 'littleness'. There was only just room to walk around its single stone tun. So far as I know the mills of the south are all towers; indeed, there are only two post mills south of the Loire, both near its southern bank. We look forward to discovering the mills of the south sometime - but, perhaps not during the high summer tourist invasion.

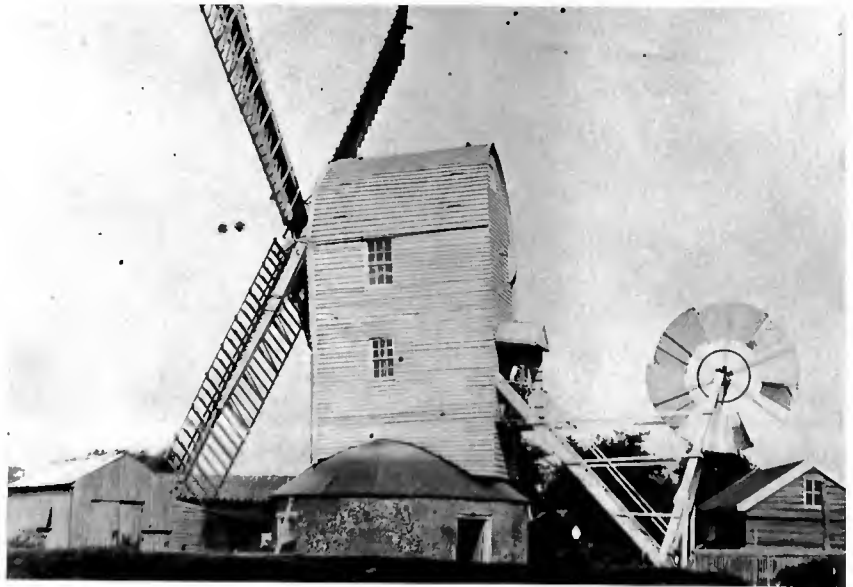
Editor's Note Roy and Penny will be organising a trip to France next summer to give S.M.G. members an opportunity to see something of the French mills. If you are interested, see the enclosed questionnaire.

VANISHED MILLS PETER DOLMAN

PARHAM POST MILL

Parham mill, at Grid Ref. 313612, was built on a new site in 1821, probably from parts of an older mill from elsewhere. It was typical of post mills in this part of East Suffolk with a tall buck lit by large windows. In 1840

Edward Gray was miller,
with Samuel Stannard there
in 1853 and 1858. In 1868
Richard Titshall was miller,
and D.R. Deeks in 1874. In
1883 William Gray, perhaps
a descendant of the earlier
Edward, was there but by
1892 Isaac Self was miller,
using wind power alone. By
1908 his sons E. & W. Self
were millers by wind and
steam and the mill worked



until the death in 1941 of Ernie Self. It was then acquired by some east
Europeans (Czechs or Poles) who didn't use it but left it to its own devices. A
fully shuttered windmill cannot be left alone for too long or something is bound
to happen. Unfortunately in June 1944, despite attempts to have it preserved, a
tailwind managed to tip the buck forwards making the mill dangerous and bringing
about its untimely, and total, demolition.

Parham mill had a three storey buck with a single storey roundhouse, the walls
of which were a mixture of brick and flint, and which latterly housed a hurst
frame driven by engine.

When first built it was open trestle, driving a single pair of 5ft 3ins stones,
with a bolter under the stone floor at the head on the left. About 1880 it was
refitted by Whitmore & Binyon, who put in an iron windshaft and eight-armed
'spider' to replace the wooden spokes of the brakewheel, which was 9ft diameter
with 105 teeth. The wallower was iron, with a mortice spurwheel driving overdrift
through iron nuts. The right hand stones were 4ft 4ins and came from Kettleburgh
smock mill, the left hand pair were 3ft 6ins; both were French. In addition to
the old bolter, a modern centrifugal dressing machine was installed at the tail.

The tentering gear used Whitmore & Binyon's typical iron bridgetrees, the
governors being mounted on each stone spindle.

Power came from four double shuttered patent sails and a large fantail kept the
mill into the wind, both probably the result of Whitmore & Binyon's refit of
1880-1.

The mill didn't take too kindly to all this weight ahead of the post, so
developed a marked 'headsickness'. The frame was also rather light and
strengthening timbers had been applied to the crowntree and sheers.

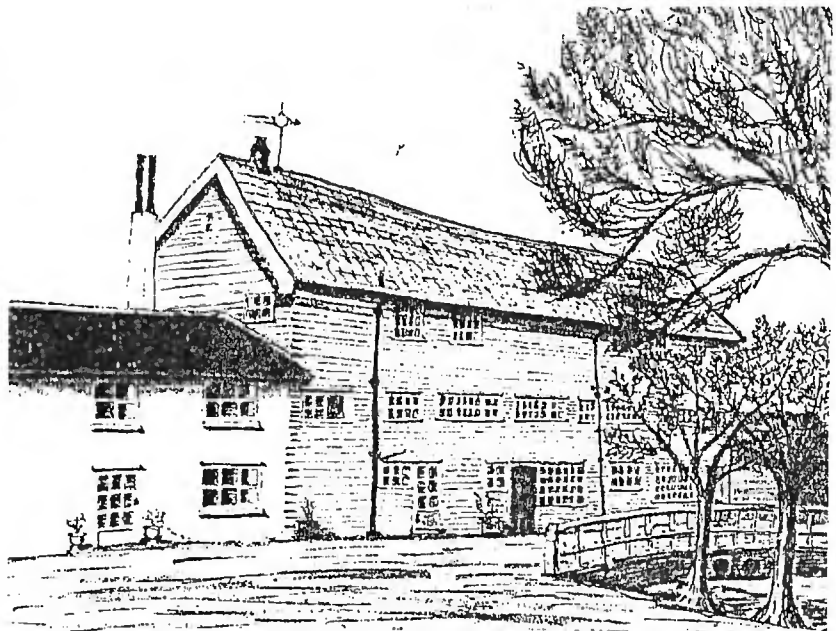
MILLS AND ME (3) PETER STEGGALL

BACK IN SUFFOLK

In June 1962, while still living in Essex, I went to Ipswich for a day, part of
which I spent sitting by the New Cut making the drawing of Cranfield's dockside

mills which I used 25 years later to illustrate the first of these articles. As always, I was very happy to be back in Suffolk, if only for a day, but I did not know then that within three months I would be taking up an appointment at County Hall, Ipswich.

The job came more or less out of the blue, and on 3rd September 1962 I started work in the administrative section which served the



Wenhaston Mill (drawing by the author)

County Planning Committee of the East Suffolk County Council. The Committee, as in Essex, was responsible for the County Council's planning functions which included powers and duties to protect buildings of architectural and historic interest. I soon became aware that East Suffolk had decided to secure the preservation of one of each type of windmill, tower, smock and post.

Buttrum's Mill, a tower mill at Woodbridge, had become the County Council's responsibility in 1950 under a lease granted by its owner, and restoration was completed in 1954. Herringfleet mill - a smock mill - was a wooden windpump on the marshes by the lower Waveney; it had been restored and was being maintained by the council under a lease from the Somerleyton Estate; the handing-over ceremony took place in 1958. Holton post mill near Halesworth became the responsibility of the County Council later, under a lease from the owner in 1966.

I also read reports in the early 1960's indicating that the County Council had been trying for several years, in conjunction with other interested bodies, to secure the rescue and restoration of Woodbridge tide mill; it had ceased working by tidal power in 1957 when the main wheelshaft broke, and the building was in danger of collapse.

All these cases interested me, but in an academic way as I was not directly involved until later years, as I shall record in my next instalment. However, as I happily re-explored my native county I came across a few mills and even wrote notes about some of them. At Wenhaston, I happened on, and sketched and photographed, the beautiful weatherboarded watermill in the course of writing an article on the Blyth Navigation ('Barges on the Blyth' - East Anglian Magazine, February 1965). Visiting Saxtead in 1967, I naively recorded the 'fact' that, 'with the help of the excellent leaflet (with cut-away drawing) by Rex

Wailles, I was able for the first time to understand the external and internal workings of a windmill'. I realised, in later years, the limitations of my understanding, but at the time I was carried away and dashed off several pages in a lyrical vein, concluding as follows:

'Although this mill has ceased to grind corn, it is in full working order, and the sails are sometimes turned. I have seen them spinning round - a startling sight at first glimpse across the fields or along the road - but how impressive and even frightening to be inside the mill and to hear and feel the vibration of the great sails and the shafts and wheels under the cap!'

1987 A.G.M.

The 1987 Annual General Meeting was held at Stanton post mill on Sunday June 21st. It was attended by 31 members and friends. Apologies were received from Bob Sharp, Rob Shorland-Ball, Andrew Bell, Don Porter, John Spencer, Martin Hanson, David Barton, Bob Starling, Patricia Parr and Len Ball.

The minutes of the 1986 A.G.M. (see Newsletter 36) were approved; this was proposed by Mr. Goatcher. Among the matters arising, it was reported that the Group's deposit account had been transferred to the Cheltenham & Gloucester building society. Ironically the society no longer allowed the window display facility we had used in the past to publicise our public meetings. The question of insurance had been examined but this was thought to be adequate. Some discussion of insurance followed, especially regarding invited visitors, and the need for commonsense safety precautions at work-ins, such as the wearing of hard hats, was stressed.

Treasurer Brian Flint reported that, overall, the Group's balance was slightly down on last year, but some £130 had been paid in shortly after the accounts were closed. The £500 loan to Richard Duke for Stanton mill had been repaid. Brian Flint was thanked for his efforts throughout the year. Peter Dolman proposed the accounts be accepted; Des Codd seconded.

Editor Mark Barnard told the meeting that the Newsletter issue had settled down to three a year, in about January, June and October. Material was in short supply as usual. The cost of copying had doubled and each run was now about £40, but this still represented good value compared to commercial outlets.

Secretary John Snowdon said total membership stood at 147, an increase of about 9 on 1985-6. He drew attention to the Data Protection Act as he kept membership details on a computer file. Some light-hearted discussion followed, during which Chris Hullcoop said he was computer-illiterate and proud of it!

Chris Wilson offered his services as a Committee member, even though he lived the other side of Cambridge. His membership was proposed by Roy Berry and seconded by Penny Berry. As they were all willing to continue, it was proposed by Cliff Lovett that the remainder of the Committee be re-elected en bloc; this was seconded by Quentin Garlic.

Under Any Other Business, Roy Berry said he will lead a tour of French windmills

in the summer of 1988, all details to be arranged. S.M.G. members were invited to come along and would be canvassed in the Newsletter.

Chairman Chris Hullcoop concluded the meeting with a report on S.M.G. activity in the past year, and there were slides of work at Stanton and Thelnetham. The meeting finished at 12.55 pm. Immediately afterwards a superb cake, baked specially by Caroline Shackle and cleverly decorated as a millstone, was cut and shared to mark the 10th anniversary of the Group.

In the afternoon Stanton mill was inspected, followed by a visit to Ixworth watermill.

NEWS

THE OCTOBER STORM

In the early hours of Friday October 16th ('Black Friday?') the south of England was afflicted with the worst hurricane since records began, with mean wind speeds in East Anglia of over 50 m.p.h. and gusts over 100 m.p.h.. The damage to property and trees was immense. With a sense of foreboding I set off to inspect as many mills as possible for damage.

By 10 o'clock I reached Thelnetham and was relieved to see the big 'V' of the sails above the fields. The mill was safe and well and after I had released the 'sprags' and brake she roared away at over 12 rpm., releasing all her tensions. As I was freeing the rather tight sprags I could feel the cap vibrating and in gusts actually lifting and dropping back onto the curb with a bang! After a couple of hours I stopped the sails and put both pairs of stones to work, which at first they would do with the shutters almost completely open. I very quickly had enough flour ground to last a couple of weeks! The only damage at Thelnetham was to



Bardwell mill after the storm, with the traction engine & remains of the sails

our faithful old caravan which lost half its roof; this is repairable though and has given us the chance to move it away from the mill at last.

On my way home I called at several other local mills. I had passed Pakenham and Stanton earlier and could see they were O.K. but I had not been able to see Bardwell from the main road which alarmed me somewhat. As I approached the village my worst fears were confirmed when a sailless mill came into view. In the early part of the storm the winds blew from all points of the compass and during this time the mill had been facing north when the main gale blew up from the south. The fantail couldn't take it and stripped itself completely, after which the mill was virtually doomed. The full force of the wind got behind the sails and, after turning them backwards for a while, wrenched the canister away from the rest of the shaft. The sails fell some 40 feet from the tower, smashing themselves to pieces and in the process demolishing a greenhouse and damaging a traction engine. What a tragedy for the owners, who have only been in residence a few months! Our sympathy goes to Geoff, Enid, Sue and Simon, with the sincere hope that the damage can be put right with the minimum of trouble. The one bright light in the gloom is that the mill was insured and a possible second-hand windshaft has been located at a museum in Sussex. The mill's flour trade is meanwhile being continued by kind permission of Pakenham watermill.

The other tragic loss in Suffolk was poor old Syleham mill (see below). Elsewhere, damage has been less severe, although some mills had lucky escapes. Herringfleet broke loose and, facing north, must have turned backwards at an alarming rate, giving it quite a shaking up but no major injury. Thorpeness lost a couple of shutters; Drinkstone post mill had a single board come loose; fully-shuttered Buttrum's Mill, Woodbridge was unscathed. Thornington Street watermill lost over 100 roof tiles and cannot have been the only such mill casualty in the region.

In Essex, Stock and Fryerning mills broke loose, but without damage, and the house-converted Great Bardfield mill shed a sail. In Norfolk the only damage I have heard of so far is at Billingsford (minor sail damage), Thurne and Horsey (both lost their fantails).

Sussex mills suffered almost as much as those in Suffolk. The rebuilt post mill shell at Winchelsea was blown down. 'Jill' post mill at Clayton broke loose, setting fire to herself by friction of the brake. This was happily extinguished by several of her local supporters who came to her aid in the early hours. Other damage also occurred to the fantail and steps, which broke away from the buck. Nutley also had a narrow escape, the wedges securing the base of the post to the crosstrees having come out, allowing the post to keel over, breaking off two of the horns. It was only the ladder digging in which saved her from going right over. Fantail damage was reported at Shipley and Patcham, sail damage at Argos Hill and Rottingdean. West Blatchington managed to wind itself through 90°, despite having no fantail blades!

In Surrey, Outwood mill had a sail filleted and in Kent Rolvenden mill lost a sail.

No doubt this is not the only damage to have occurred. Let's hope that this 'once in 200 year' storm will not repeat itself before another 200 years have passed. (Peter Dolman)

SYLEHAM MILL DOWN

Amongst the havoc caused by the storm on October 16th, probably the worst post mill casualty was at Syleham. Standing derelict and with no maintenance for over 30 years (apart from a little weatherproofing by S.M.G. in 1980), it still carried two sails and was largely complete inside, although the head stones had long been removed. The buck frame however was frail and stood little chance as it was sideways-on to the southerly gale. The sails, windshaft and head and tail wheels were blown down, taking much of the buck with them, fortunately causing no damage to the roundhouse. As the photographs show, the left hand side and tail below side girt level are still in position, with the crowntree and tailstones undisturbed. The saddest thing in all this destruction was the breaking of the cast iron windshaft just behind the brakewheel on impact with the ground, no doubt caused by the weight of the tailwheel at the opposite end.

At the time of writing,

Top Syleham on October 19th, looking into the buck

Right Chris Hullcoop starts salvage operations



S.M.G. is endeavouring to salvage something from the wreckage, with the hope that one day Syleham mill will be rebuilt, possibly at a museum. Luckily we have a detailed survey of the structure and Peter Dolman has done some scale drawings. We are trying to rescue sound timbers and machinery and a poignant moment came when



we retrieved the S.M.G. boards put on in 1980. It is hoped to dismantle the remainder of the mill in the coming weeks, and to make good the roundhouse roof. The two pairs of hurst-mounted stones in the roundhouse will remain, together with their drive from the Lister oil engine.



Syleham mill in her prime c.1930

Until the loss of Syleham, Suffolk's total of eight post mills had been unchanged for almost 25 years, since the regrettable losses in the 1963-4 period of Woolpit, Westleton and Wenhaston. Let us hope that the final seven will survive. (M.B.)

FIRST AID AT IXWORTH

During the last weekend of the August work-in at Stanton we found time to attend to the hole in the roof of Ixworth watermill which had been letting in water for many years. Quentin Garlic and I brought straw bales and ladders from Drinkstone and we started work on Saturday afternoon, with the help of the Scout Support Group. We fitted a couple of ladders to the roof, set on large

sacks of straw to spread the weight over the delicate and easily broken slates. Brian Prettyman and I worked from the ladders with the others inside the roof passing out battens, slates, tools and nails. None of us had worked with slates before and it proved very tricky to get them to sit down nice and flat as the rafters had rotted where the hole had been. It was a pleasant surprise though that the slates were so easy to drill and cut accurately. A full day's work on the Sunday saw the job completed and the mill roof weathertight. I only pray the recent gale has not undone all our good work. (C.H.)

HERVEY BENHAM

Suffolk and Essex mills have lost a champion with the death of Hervey Benham. He was well known as proprietor and editor of the Essex County Standard and his books on East Coast sailing ships and the lives of the men who made their living in them are and always will be classics. He had a soft spot for wind and watermills and I first met him while working at Ramsey mill in Essex. He had never seen a group of volunteers working at a mill before. 'You are doing a grand job, dear boy' he said (he called most people 'dear boy'). He gave Mike Organ and I a small grant from a trust fund he had established to help buy materials for people engaged in voluntary projects. 'Your mills group must restore a mill and then use it to produce flour' he urged us. The chance of a working mill came with Thelnetham and although in Suffolk and not in his own county of Essex he helped us through his fund. As a fellow member of a Colchester orchestra, Peter Dolman kept him posted on progress and he was delighted when the mill was working again.

Hervey believed that the crafts of the East Coast shipbuilders, sailors, millwrights and millers should survive and contribute to the quality of life today. He did his best to help those who showed practical initiative in mill restoration but knew there were too few of them. He spelt this out in the concluding chapter of his fine book 'Some Essex Watermills', published in 1976: 'How many of the surviving mills ... can be preserved? The answer will depend on how many people care enough - and at present very few people care at all. (C.H.)

MIKE PEEK

Mike Peek had only just retired from the CEGB when he died. An enthusiast for the Suffolk coast and marshes, he had a caravan at Sizewell, close to the Minsmere bird reserve and the grazing marshes of Lower Abbey Farm. He saw the decline of the last remains of wind-powered drainage on the marsh and was delighted to help us with the rescue of East Bridge smock drainage mill and the Titt wind engine. It is sad that he was not able to spend a long and happy retirement in the landscapes he loved. (C.H.)

PETER DOLMAN MOVES

From 13th November Peter Dolman's address will be The Mill House, Thorington Street, Stoke by Nayland, COLCHESTER CO6 4SS (Telephone Higham 279).

He is renting the mill from the Tendring Hall Estate with the intention of carrying out repairs to the building and machinery in order to get it working once more.

Thorington Street mill is reputed to date from 1760 and in appearance is similar to Wickham Market mill. It worked until about 1963 when Joe Munson retired. Following his death last year the owners have been seeking a new and

sympathetic tenant. The mill is one of the most important in Suffolk in terms of completeness, ranking alongside Pakenham, Wickham Market and Sapiston. It has the benefit of a good water supply to its breastshot iron wheel and has three pairs of stones together with several auxiliary machines, including a dynamo.

While it appears to be in reasonably good condition, there are problems. The machinery is intact, but out of order through subsidence and wear. The floors are riddled with woodworm and the ceiling to the bin floor is falling off. The recent storm damage has revealed that the roof battens are beginning to fail.

Peter appeals to local mill enthusiasts for a helping hand in getting repairs started and proposes first to give the mill a thorough 'bug out' and survey to reveal the full nature of problems. Please give him a ring if you can help at evenings or weekends.

STANTON UP-DATE

Since the end of the work-in a particularly tricky job has been tackled. For many years the mill has had a jaunty head up, tail down look, even though the buck is good and true. There were two reasons for this problem. The buck was leaning on the post, with the tail woodwear tight and a gap behind the head woodwear. Also, the post was leaning in the direction in which the tail of the mill had stopped. The direction and amount of the lean was determined by fitting eight plumb lines to the post, four on the top half and four on the lower half. The lean was more or less along a crosstree, so it was decided to raise one end of this crosstree and lower the other. Before this was done the crosstree - quarter bar joints were closely examined. One showed ominous cracks springing from the joints, and all had been gnawed by rats. The plates on the pier tops were also in very poor condition. These joints had to be reinforced before any adjustment could be made and a lot of thought was given to possible pitfalls. This done, the buck was hand-cranked round (the first time it had moved since 1968) until the heavy head was positioned away from the



Thorington Street mill in 1906

lean. Jacks placed on short stout lengths of power line pole were used, the joints being constantly monitored for any movement. A course of bricks was taken from one pier and new oak plates were fitted to all the piers. The post is now vertical although the woodwears still have to be adjusted. The eight fantail blades are under construction and I shall shortly resume work on re-cogging the spurwheel. (C.H.)

NEW RESTAURANT HAS MILL THEME

S.M.G. has been helping with the interior decor of the new Trust House Forte 'granary' restaurant at the Copdock Mill interchange to the south west of Ipswich, adjacent to the new Tesco superstore. The interchange is named after the nearby Copdock watermill, and this prompted the developers to give the interior a 'mill' theme with, we understand, a mural, a model windmill sail and several groups of photographs mounted on the walls. The photographs are mostly of Suffolk and Norfolk windmills. The restaurant will be opening in mid November, and should be worth a look.

EVENTS

S.M.G./E.M.G. JOINT SOCIAL EVENING: SATURDAY 12th DECEMBER AT PAYCOCKE'S, COGGESHALL

This year we are joining our Essex Mills Group colleagues for a joint social evening in the splendid surroundings of Paycocke's, a late medieval merchant's house owned by the National Trust at Coggeshall, and the home of Richard Ward, the E.M.G. secretary. A buffet with wine and beer will be provided together with an opportunity to talk mills and to show your latest slides. Any offers of help with catering would be appreciated; please contact Mark Barnard.

The meeting starts at 7.30 pm. Paycocke's is in West Street, the old main road through the village. Please park in the centre of the village or alongside the road as there is no parking space at Paycocke's itself.

HERRINGFLEET OPEN DAY: FRIDAY 1st JANUARY 1988, 1-3.30 pm.

Members are invited to the customary New Year's Day opening of Herringfleet mill, a chance to see your first working mill of 1988! Let's hope for a good windy day, we're due for one. If the weather is wintry, 'phone Ipswich 727853 to check if the mill will be open.

S.M.G. PUBLIC MEETING: SATURDAY 27th FEBRUARY 1988 AT IPSWICH TOWN HALL

The theme for next year's public meeting will be '10 Years of S.M.G.'. Further details in the next Newsletter.

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STOP PRESS

5.11.87 Salvage of Syleham mill will not go ahead.