

# SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

## Newsletter

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This 'New Year' issue of the Newsletter has appeared slightly later than in previous years, but still contains a crossword competition which will be drawn at our A.G.M. on June 4th. Please note this date in your diary now, together with our other events in April and May. There will probably not be a reminder!

Since the last Newsletter we have held a most enjoyable social evening at Holbrook watermill which was very well attended (apologies to those who had to stand) and more recently another of our annual public meetings at Ipswich Town Hall, when Vincent Pargeter gave a splendid exposition of his millwrighting work over nearly 30 years.

I hope this Newsletter contains something of interest to you. I am always grateful for more material, especially items of a technical nature or relating to mills in Suffolk.

Mark Barnard

### **VANISHED MILLS** PETER DOLMAN

RATTLESDEN: HITCHCOCK'S MILLS

There were three mill sites in Rattlesden, one on 'Mill Hill' at Grid Ref. 976590 and two out of the village at Grid Refs. 967584 and 968583. The older of these (967584) was occupied on Hodskinson's map (surveyed 1778-82) by a post mill which was offered for sale on March 1st 1805: 'All that Messuage, in four tenements, together with a Blacksmith's Shop ... together with a good POST WINDMILL, one pair of Capital French burr stones, flour mill, and going gears ... now in the tenure of the said William Nunn and his under tenants'.

The Bury & Norwich Post for 4th March 1818 advertised a 'Windmill ... to be disposed of immediately, upon the lowest terms, with one pair of 4 feet 10 inch stones, jumper, and flour mill; also a round-house, and third floor. The mill is to be removed 6 or 7 miles from where it now stands - in the occupation of Mr. T. Winson, Rattlesden ... apply to Scotcher and Mays, Millwrights, Stowmarket'.

I believe this gives us the date of erection of the subsequent smock mill. I don't know where this post mill was moved to, if anywhere (it may have been dismantled for spare parts).

In 1832, James Frederick Page, one of the mill workers, got caught in the fantail gearing while oiling it and was killed. (Full report of inquest in Suffolk Chronicle 15th September 1832).

In 1834, Robert Winson of Rattlesden Mill was advertising for a journeyman

miller, and again in 1838. The Tithe Map and Award of 1838-9 lists him as owner and occupier of 'Cottage, Mill, Offices & Yards'. He also owned the mill on Mill Hill in the village, although it was occupied by Sophia Craske. Kelly's Directory of 1840 lists Robert Winson as miller, as does White's Directory of 1844. He was advertising in November 1845 for a journeyman miller at Rattlesden Mills. Unfortunately it is impossible to deduce when the present tower mill was built from these records as Winson owned the other village mill anyway.

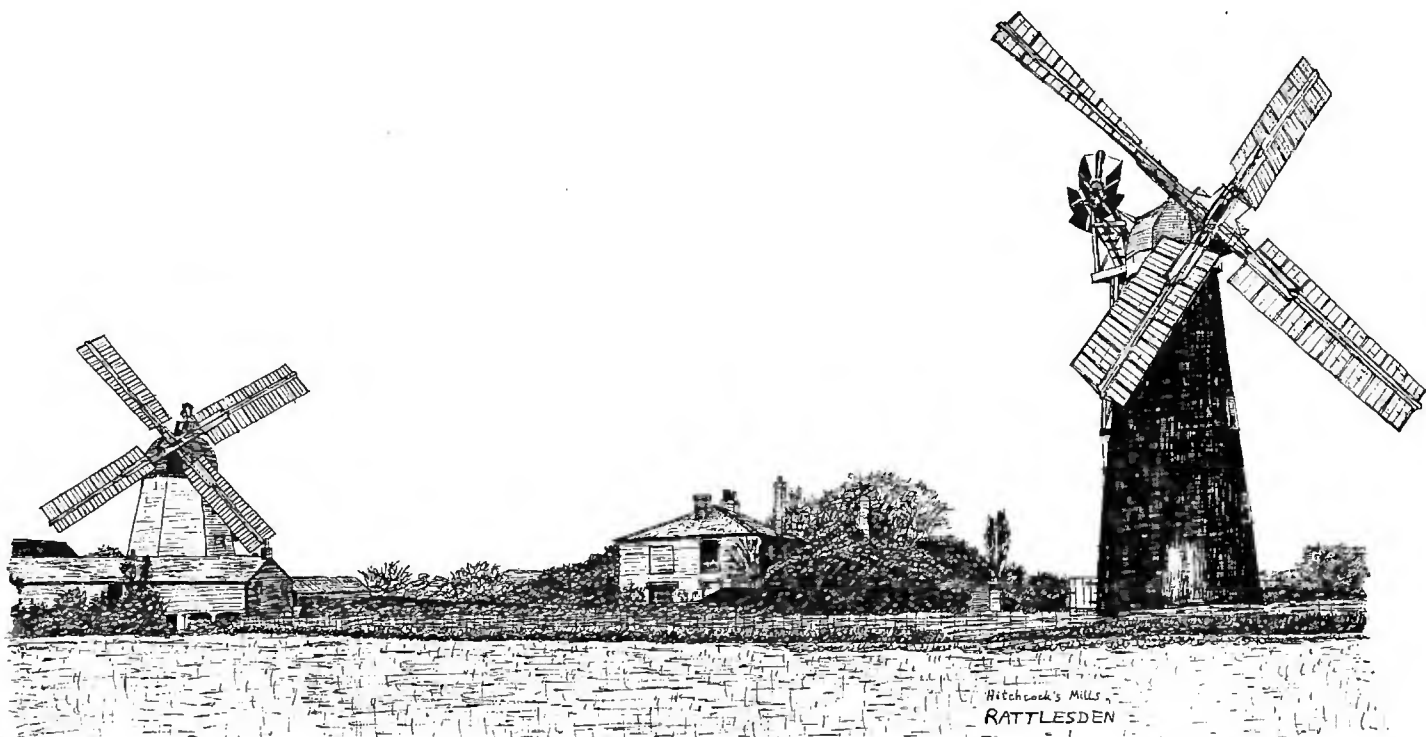
The present tower mill probably dates from the same time as the house, which can be dated stylistically to c.1850. I consider the mill may be a little earlier, but within the period 1840-50. It was almost certainly built by John Whitmore, millwright and engineer of Wickham Market. He never put his name to any of his firm's work so it is not absolutely certain, but on stylistic grounds the machinery and overall design point to his involvement. At about the same time as this tower mill was built the mill on Mill Hill, a post mill, was replaced by a tower mill, possibly while under Winson's ownership, although it is reputed to have been erected for a Mr. Branwhite. This post mill was possibly moved to near Potash Farm, just over the Brettenham border, where a 'small post mill' was offered for sale in 1857 on the retirement from farming of William Moore.

'Hitchcock's Mills' were probably sold in the 1850's as no miller is listed in Kelly's 1853 Directory. The Suffolk Chronicle of 15th January 1859 contains a report of a court case over stolen meal in which John Clover is mentioned as miller and farmer. His miller was Henry Pike, both well-known Suffolk milling families. In Morris' 1868 Directory and also White's of 1874, John Clover is listed as miller. In 1883 only the other mill is listed (Harry Winson) but by 1885 Ennals and Hitchcock were in partnership at the mills. The Ennals is possibly William Ennals who later ran a steam mill at Cockfield and the smock mill at Bradfield St. George. By 1892 Ralph Hitchcock alone is listed as miller (wind and steam) and in 1896 he is listed at 'Roller Mills (wind & steam)',

In 1916 'gas power' is listed as auxiliary power, and the milling empire had expanded to include Bury and Elmswell. In 1925 'R.G. Hitchcock (Elmswell) Ltd.' were listed as millers at Rattlesden and Elmswell.

The smock mill was still working on the 1901 O.S. map but was demolished about this time and replaced by a roller mill. The tower mill worked on, doing animal feed only, until 1935 or early 1936. The sails and cap were removed early in the war when it became an observation post. It is one of the smallest of Whitmore's tower mills, and is of similar scale to some of his smock mills. It had two pairs of 4ft French stones, one pair of which was taken out in 1975 and installed at Michelham Priory watermill in Sussex.

The smock mill was very similar to mills at Bradfield St. George and Finborough Road, Stowmarket. The millwrights, Scotchmer and Mays, were in separate trade much of the time. They were assigning their effects for the



#### Hitchcock's Mills c.1880

benefit of creditors in early 1819. John Scotchmer was still at Stowmarket in 1823 but in 1844 he is listed at 50, Westgate Street, Bury. He appears to have ceased business about this time. Edward Mays (or Mayse) was also at Stowmarket in 1823. In 1837, the premises he occupied in Bury Street were auctioned. He remained though and advertised for assistants in April 1837. The 1844 directory is the last to record him, still at Bury Street. His premises presumably became the large ironworks of Woods & Co. later in the nineteenth century.

The tower mill on Mill Hill worked until the late nineteenth century and after being taken over from Harry Winson by Ralph Hitchcock was abandoned. Old postcards of c.1900 show it with no fly or shutters in the sails and it was eventually pulled down in 1919. Two millstones are all that remain at the site.

Both of Hitchcock's mills have left remains. The smock mill had a single-storey base with stepped brickwork, above which was a white weatherboarded smock of three floors, making four in all. The cap was a squat dome shape, horizontally boarded, and carried four eight-bay patent sails and a fantail. Although of broad proportions, the mill was not especially tall, probably little more than 40 feet to the finial. It is said to have had six pairs of stones but I suspect two or three of these were driven by independent steam power. Its remains are rather more substantial than appears from the outside, where only one side can be seen, to a height of about five feet. Inside the roller mill building much more survives. Each alternate side of the base remains to about full height with the main floor beams still in situ, incorporated into the new floor. Much of the smock has been re-used in the floors, including the old sheertrees. Another interesting relic is the wooden windshaft of Wetherden post mill, used as a post to support a floor.

The tower mill was taller than the smock, which stood on a large mound. It was, however, very much slimmer, almost to the point of being cramped. There were five floors and the cap, which was originally a typical Whitmore 'ogee' shape but was later rebuilt more as a dome with a shorter sweep up to the finial. Eight-bay patent sails were carried, with a fantail, at one time painted blue. The windshaft and almost all the machinery was of iron, only the brakewheel being wood. The upright shaft was in two pieces, with a dog-clutch above the bin floor. The upper section and wallower, together with the cap and about four feet of tower, were removed in the last war. The mill contains most of its heavy gearing, with an iron spur wheel and mortise stone nuts. There was a stone crane for the runner stones, due to the cramped stone floor, but this disappeared in 1975 when one pair of stones was sold by Mr. Hitchcock, to be used at Michelham Priory as noted above. Knowledge of its whereabouts would be appreciated. Although the mill is very derelict, many of the interior fittings remain, such as spouts and a neat tenting arrangement above the meal bins.

## **A TALE OF WOE** GUY BLYTHMAN

Though windmills are most common in the eastern half of England, in Lincolnshire, East Anglia, Sussex and Kent, there were certain other regions of the country, such as Somerset and the North West, where they were concentrated in fairly large numbers, and exhibited notable features distinguishing them from the mills of other areas. It is often forgotten that the Fylde and Wirral in particular constituted an important windmilling area with a fascinating collection of mills, including the sunk post mill at Warton, the tiny smock mill above a joiner's shop in Stopper Lane, Rimington, driving a circular saw and lathe, the wind-and-watermill at Helsby, and the 'pannier' mills at Formby and Hambleton. The tower mills of the Fylde, with their whitewashed brickwork and black caps, which along with the design of the sails are reminiscent to me of certain Danish tower mills, and lofty fantails, were particularly beautiful. Study the photographs in Allen Clarke's 'Windmill Land'.

In the 1950's, as Rex Wailes noted, the Fylde and Wirral areas boasted a splendid collection of derelict tower mills, most of which retained their internal machinery if not the remains of cap and sails. Sadly, however, very few of them were to be properly restored, i.e. as windmills, and the chance to make a valuable contribution to the list of preserved mills was lost. Some mills were demolished, such as Weeton in the early 1950's, Singleton in 1956 and Bebington in 1965. But the majority were to become residences - derelict windmills are more likely to be house-converted in the Fylde and Wirral areas than in any other part of the country. Pilling, Bretherton, Neston, Lydiate, Parbold, Willaston, Treales, Kirkham, Great Saughall, Great Crosby, Clifton, Bickerstaffe, Staining, Wrea Green and Preesall all succumbed over the years to what seemed a depressingly irresistible process.

By the 1970's there remained six derelict mills in the North West still worthy of restoration: Gayton, Great Saughall, Buerton and Threapwood (Cheshire) and Clifton and Staining (Lancashire), along with two which were still in use but not as windmills with machinery in place, namely Great Crosby and Preesall (Lancashire).

In 1971 Great Saughall (also known as Capenhurst) mill on the Wirral fell to the house converters. This was a broad three-storey tower mill, built in 1784 and last worked in 1926. At one time it had a fantail and one pair of shuttered sails - the only Cheshire mill, as far as I know, ever to have possessed such features. It is often referred to as 'Gibbet Mill', although the name more properly belongs to a now bygone post mill, situated about half a mile away, where a man was gibbeted. By the early 1950's the mill was derelict with the cap and one sail missing, but the machinery was still in place though in a collapsed state. During conversion a new cap and sails were fitted. Whereas the original cap was more rounded than usual for this area, the new one is more like the typical North Western cap (i.e. roughly prismatic in shape), and the new sails are considerably shorter than their predecessors. Whether any of the machinery has been retained I do not know.

In 1972 it was the turn of Great Crosby mill. This tall tower mill, built in 1813-14, must have been an impressive sight in its working days. The domed cap is more typical of the North East than the North West, and may be explained by the fact that the mill was built by an engineer from Chester-le-Street in Durham. Crosby Borough Council gave permission for it to be converted despite its being one of the last two windmills in the North West to earn their living (albeit by electric power). It has at least retained its winding wheel and the cross for the sails, although I am uncertain as to whether any internal machinery survives.

In 1976 Clifton mill was derelict and sailless (although two sails were still in evidence in 1970). All the machinery below the windshaft had been removed, but there was no reason why it could not have been externally restored, as its overall condition was quite reasonable compared to some. In the event, in 1978 or so, it was converted to a house with a licensed bar and restaurant, called the 'Windmill Tavern', built on.

At this time Staining mill was getting into a bad state of repair. This small eighteenth century mill was of particular interest as it was of more primitive design, with common sails and hand winding gear, compared to the large Fylde mills such as Thornton and Lytham with their patent sails and fantails. By now its sails had gone, although the winding gear remained, and the cap was starting to collapse. In the early 1980's it was bought, apparently to be restored, but in December 1981 was gutted by fire with the wooden machinery completely destroyed, only the iron windshaft surviving the blaze. House-conversion duly followed.

Finally I must mention Preesall mill. Latterly, although the cap and sails had gone, the mill retained its machinery and in fact was still operating commercially under electric power - the last windmill to do so in the North Western region.

Surely this important survivor deserved to be restored as a monument, if not as a working mill? A year or two ago it closed and was put up for sale. Surprise surprise - permission was granted for it to be house-converted, although the S.P.A.B. Wind and Watermill Section has urged the local authority that it be fully recorded and the machinery saved. One would have hoped that it could be re-used in an empty tower somewhere in the region, but such a restoration project is unlikely as most of the towers have of course already been house-converted.

The house conversions are by no means all tasteless. In fact some attempt to reproduce the traditional local style has usually been made. Most of the towers are whitewashed with black caps, and where a new cap has been fitted, as at Kirkham and Wrea Green, it normally copies the typical North Western form; that at Wrea is particularly good. The best conversions are undoubtedly Clifton and Willaston. Kirkham, Clifton and Staining have been fitted with replica sails, though these are not authentic and cannot turn. But however tasteful a conversion might be in some cases - and it might be possible to view some conversions as restorations - they are no substitute for renovation as windmills, working or static. They render any existing machinery inaccessible and are something of a fait accompli, precluding any possibility of the mill resuming its true identity.

What of the remaining derelict mills? The future of Gayton mill, a very old tower mill with some interesting wooden machinery, looks bleak, although it must be said that local authorities and conservation groups have done their best to save it. In 1969 an unsuccessful attempt at preservation was made by the Gayton and District Residents' Association, and further exhaustive efforts, involving much correspondence and visits, have been made more recently by the Wirral and Heswall Societies and other interested parties. All this came to nothing and the mill is now almost certainly beyond repair. The windshaft has fallen to the bottom of the tower taking the floors with it, and everything is a mass of debris. The sandstone tower is overgrown and crumbling badly. Whatever happens, one would hope that the gear can be saved.

Buerton has lost cap, sails, windshaft and brakewheel but retains its cap frame and machinery. The ground floor currently serves as a farm store. There seems little prospect of restoration at present. For Threapwood the outlook is perhaps slightly more hopeful. The mill is in very bad condition; cap and sails have gone, and the interior is in a state of collapse, while the tower has several serious cracks in the brickwork. However it is not thought beyond repair and the City of Chester Council are hoping to carry out a holding operation in the near future if the owner is willing.

There are several restored mills in the North West; the best are Bidston mill near Birkenhead and Thornton mill near Fleetwood. Lytham mill is also worth noting, a well-known landmark which has been externally renovated. However, Little Marton mill on the outskirts of Blackpool has been very badly restored

in the past, with elements such as the cap and fantail not being typical of the region. The restoration of the interesting and beautiful little brewery windpump at Haigh near Wigan some six years ago was sadly botched; it is far from complete (compare its condition today with the photograph in Allen Clarke) and it has been said that the new cap makes it resemble a shampoo bottle. What happened to the machinery is uncertain.

It is a tale of woe. Exactly why does the North West have such a poor record where windmill, as opposed to watermill, restoration is concerned? The blame lies not with conservation bodies and enthusiasts but with the local authorities, who have failed to appreciate the role of windmills in their region's heritage and to keep the developers under control. One can only hope that everything will be done to save the remaining mills worthy of restoration. Whatever their fate, it will be impossible to reverse one of the great tragedies of windmill preservation.

## **VIEWPOINT** DAVID BARTON

Although I have never given you anything more than moral support perhaps you will accept a controversial opinion? Windmills have been developed down the years with post mills being adapted for automatic winding, the vestigial tail-pole often being found under the steps at the rear of the buck. I believe that the steps provided a stronger form of support to the buck where they were lifted in winding the mill as can be seen at Mountnessing. Likewise sails were adapted, first of all with spring shutters and later with William Cubitt's balanced gear. But for me the common sail has always been the more interesting feature of mills. The miller has to spread the sail-cloths, first on one sail and then the next, to a 'sword point', a 'dagger point' or full spread depending upon the strength of the wind. This activity, rather akin to the crew of a sailing barge setting sail, embraces more action than operating the striker rod and spider coupling that controls the shutters of automatic sails from within the buck or tower.

Common sails offer less windage than patent ones when reefed and, so we are told, pull better on the wind. Dutch tower mills have wide galleries upon which the miller sets and reefs his sail cloths. It would appear that one must journey to Herringfleet, so delightfully depicted in Viv Codd's film, to see our worthy Chairman set up a 'common sailer'. He has often reminded us that mills stand in need of constant attention if they are not to deteriorate and furthermore they are subject to natural hazards through the vagaries of the weather.

Many things with which our forefathers struggled to wrest a hard-earned living are now the objects of leisure interest including sailing barges, canal narrow boats, steam locomotives, water and wind mills and traction engines. All were potentially hazardous in operation and the buck of a post mill was never intended to accommodate streams of visitors. One regrets the dreadful accident at Saxtead mill where the miller's young grandson was fatally injured. Suffolk post mills with their massive stairs over a high roundhouse can be particularly daunting structures for those not accustomed to heights like the intrepid Chris Hullcoop, Peter Dolman and Brian Flint.

Ipswich must have been a beautiful town before the industrial revolution. The great William Cobbett was particularly attracted to it. He wrote in 'Rural Rides', 'The windmills on the hills in the vicinage are so numerous that I counted whilst standing in one place, no less than seventeen. They were all painted or washed white; the sails are black; it was a fine morning, the wind was brisk, and their twirling all together added greatly to the beauty of the scene, which having the broad and beautiful arm of the sea on the one hand, and the fields and meadows, studded with farm-houses, on the other, appeared to me the most beautiful sight of the kind that I ever beheld'.

It would be nice to have a windmill in the Borough but of course the Group has its hands full with the important work of preservation and the idea of erecting

a mill for amenity purposes would not be in accord with its aims. Possibly the interest of the Recreation & Amenities Department, the Suffolk College, various government agencies and local industry might be canvassed. The erection of a small post or smock mill like Bourn or Wicken Fen in one of our parks would be an attractive amenity and assist in reminding us of the place of mills in our town in the past. I recall visiting High Salvington at Worthing when the round-house was a tea-room. The present idea is to strip it out of course. The body of the mill might serve as an information centre like Thorpeness, a refreshment kiosk or a tool store for the park-keepers. One applauds the magnificent work of the Group at Thelnetham but it is over 25 miles from Ipswich and for most people can only be afforded an occasional visit. In the absence of an industrial and maritime museum we have no centre within the Borough for such interests. In other places the work of Sir William Cubitt would be honoured in some way. He was the chief engineer at Ransomes responsible for the building of Stoke Bridge, manager of the town's gasworks and designer of the prison treadmill in St. Helen's Street! His most famous building is King's Cross Station, designed for the Great Northern Railway. With the guidance of Sir George Biddell Airy, Ransomes made the castings for the massive transit telescope at Greenwich Observatory.

When the new station was opened north of the tunnel in 1860 passengers had a view of Stoke Hill windmill, a post mill with two common and two spring sails, a thought with which I will conclude these comments.

## **EDMUND LEE'S PATENT** BRIAN FLINT

Most windmill enthusiasts will know that Edmund Lee patented the fantail in 1745. This device, for keeping the mill sails facing into the eye of the wind, was often referred to as the fly or flyer in Suffolk. It eventually became widely adopted in Denmark and Germany as well as in England but never found favour in Holland.

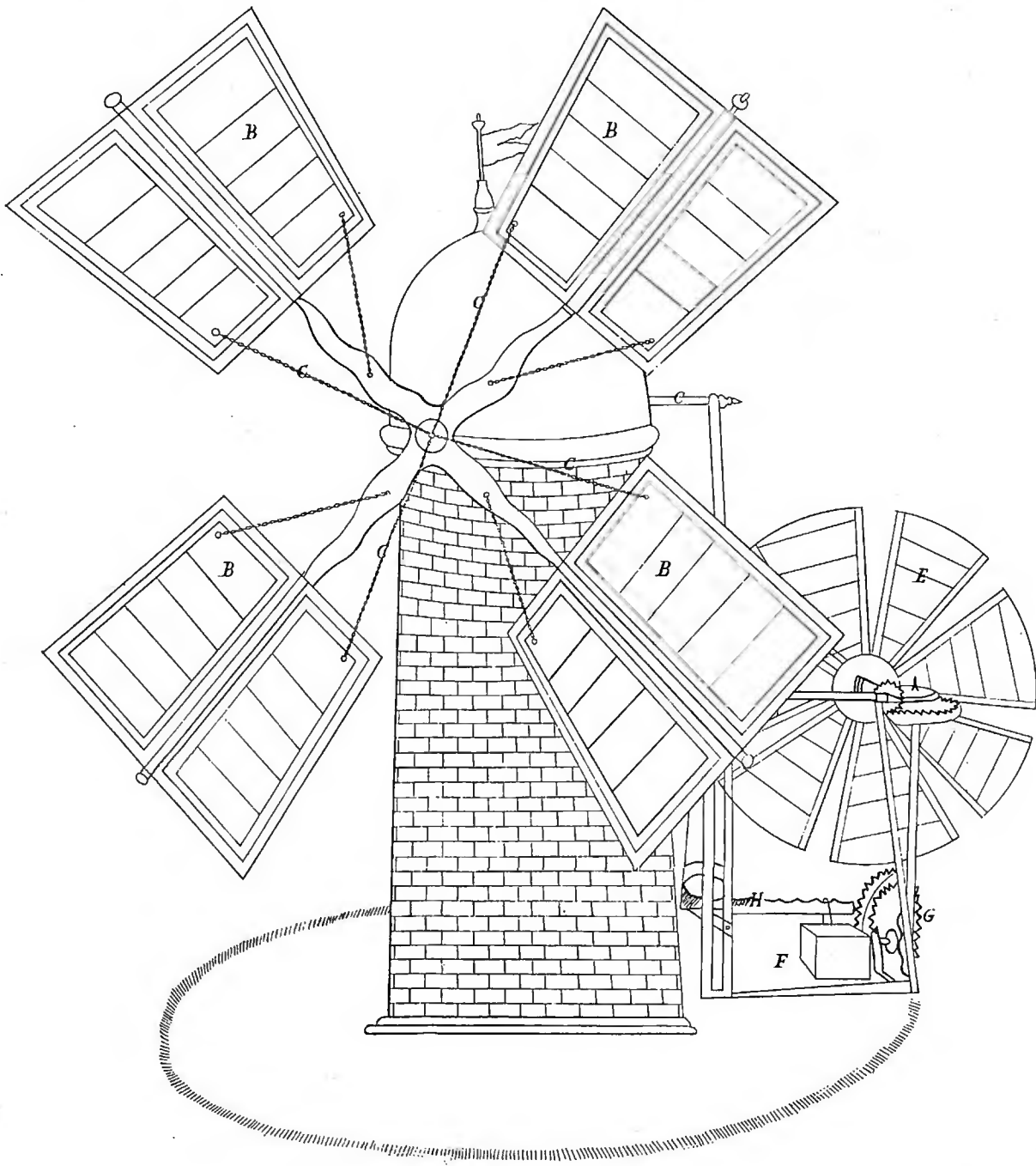
A copy of Lee's patent has recently been obtained by John Snowdon and is reproduced below. The most interesting feature is that the patent refers, not only to the winding device, but to a 'Self-regulating Wind Machine' whereby the sails, apparently carrying shutters, connected to a Regulating Barr (sic) passing through the centre of the windshaft by chains, are controlled by a weight. This invention, although not fully explained in detail, predates William Cubitt's patent relating to sail control (also unearthed by John Snowdon and which will be described in a forthcoming Newsletter) by more than 60 years.

Although the fantail was readily adopted I don't know of any example of a windmill being equipped with self-regulating sails following Lee's patent. As far as I am aware sails with a degree of self-regulation had to await the granting of Andrew Meikle's patent of 1772 for spring sails. It seems strange that 27 years should elapse before a working alternative to the common or cloth sail should make its appearance.

Perhaps evidence will come to light relating to a windmill having had self-regulating sails prior to 1772 otherwise we can only speculate on this possibility.

Note The S.P.A.B. Wind and Watermill Section hope to publish a paper on Lee's fantail patent, researched by Stephen Buckland, in the near future.





A, the case of the Machine, B, the Sails, C, the Regulating Barr passing thro' the center of the originall axes, D, the Chains from the Barr to the Sails, E, the Back Sails which keep the machine Constantly in the wind, F, the weight which regulates the Sails according to the winds force, G, the Travelling wheel which moves on planks round the machine, H, the Regulator to which the weight is Fixed

Note That notwithstanding the above plan or draught only represents four sails, The Inventor Intends to erect most of his machines with six, or more in nature of the Back Sails, which will have more power, Likewise the Inventor can perform the same regularity on a wind machine that Turns on a perpendicular post.

A plan of the above New Invented Wind Machine

By me Edwd. Lee.

# CROSSWORD Compiled by MARK BARNARD

Below is the 1989 prize crossword. We are again offering book tokens as prizes, the first prize to the value of £15 and a second prize of £5.

Once again, I have managed to make all the clues relevant to mills and milling, although you may recognise words from past crosswords as there are not that many to choose from (I deliberately avoid obscure terms and places so as not to make it too difficult).

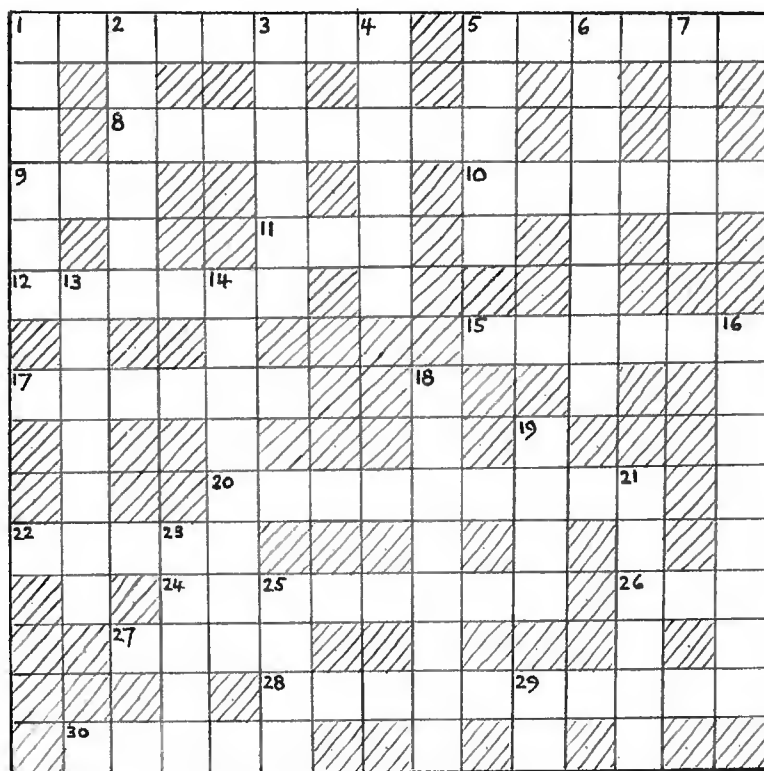
To enter, please complete the copy at the end of this Newsletter and post it to reach me by the post on Saturday June 3rd. The draw for the winners will this year be made at our A.G.M. on June 4th. Past experience suggests you have about a one in ten chance of winning one of the prizes so why not give it a go?

## CLUES ACROSS

1. Suffolk tower mill, demolished in 1962 (8)
5. Mounted on the horse (6)
8. Product of roller milling, on the way to fine flour (8)
9. Surrounds all of the stones, not 15% (3)
10. Governors do this automatically (6)
11. Some watermills had traps to catch this fish (3)
12. A turning stone (6)
15. Watermill author, sadly no longer with us (6)
17. Fine windmill near the capital (6)
20. Moved to Museum of East Anglian Life (Stowmarket) in 1970's (5,4)
22. See 13. Down
24. (& 5. Down) Recently dismantled post mill (8,5)
26. Another name for 9. Across (3)
27. (& 16. Down) These often superseded bolters (4, 8)
28. Norfolk millwrights, now defunct (10)
30. (& 19. Down) Distinctive form of French tower mill (5,4)

## CLUES DOWN

1. Norfolk tower mill (6)
2. Recently restored five-sailer (6)
3. Patented the roller-reefing sail (6)
4. Innovator of another sail type (6)
5. See 24. Across



6. --- lines are attached to sail cloths (8)
7. 15. Across wrote on the mills of this county (5)
13. (& 22. Across) Always found in smock & tower mills, sometimes in post mills (7,5)
14. Superseded the sack hoist (8)
16. See 27. Across
18. This Sussex 'Town' has a fine smock windmill (8)
19. See 30. Across
21. See 29. Down
23. Suffolk windmill author (5)
25. Another windmill author (4)
29. (& 21. Down) Yet another windmill author! (2,6)

## MILLS AND ME (7) PETER STEGGALL

### HOW I JOINED THE SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

In March 1979 Robert Hale Ltd. published my book 'East Anglia' in their Regions of Britain series. Obviously no topographical book on this region could avoid mentioning mills, but my book, being aimed at the general reader, could not go into much historical or technical detail. So, in the first chapter, on 'Origins and Evolution' of the landscape, a summary of the effects of twentieth century farming methods is followed by references to the decline of associated rural industries. Then out come the well-worn platitudes which I had been reciting for several years to children visiting Buttrum's Mill at Woodbridge...

"The region's landscape, well into the twentieth century, contained many windmills and watermills, still grinding corn, but they disappeared steadily as they could no longer cope with the ever-increasing demand. So these familiar landmarks, some of the most picturesque and romantic of rural buildings, were either demolished or allowed to decay.... In the Fens and the Broads, the old windpumps, either wooden smock mills or brick tower mills, with their fascinating silhouettes in the marshy levels, were superseded by diesel engines or electric pumps in crude sheds of cheap brick and corrugated iron."

Corny, perhaps, but true; and I go on to remind my readers that

"... since the last war the community has taken a growing if belated interest in saving relics of rural industry... Some windmills have been restored complete with machinery, some as mere shells, some as houses. Though a very small proportion remains of the many hundreds that existed in the nineteenth century, East Anglia inevitably has more than any other region in view of its long-established importance as a corn-growing area. Windpumps and watermills similarly have been saved by private and public enterprise, and although they are admittedly few in number they continue to play an important and much appreciated part in our rural scene."

The subject comes up again in the chapter on 'Farming Country' where it is recorded that the rural scene has suffered through...

"... the disappearance of nearly all the windmills of which only a handful have been preserved, and only one or two, notably Bryant's Mill at Pakenham near Bury, still grind corn. In the same village is a watermill with its machinery intact, and there are hopes that it may be restored to working order. The majority of our watermills have gone, but some have been converted into very beautiful houses in idyllic settings. The work these mills once did now takes place on a much larger scale to feed the greatly increased population, in huge concrete dockside mills at Ipswich and other ports."

Ten years later, it is good to recall that Pakenham watermill was acquired by the Suffolk Preservation Society, and that the Suffolk Mills Group took part in the restoration and subsequent operation of the mill.

Several other mills are mentioned very briefly in the book, including the paper mill at Bramford which Fison's took over in the 1920's, windmills at Burnham Overy, Cley and Horsey on the Norfolk coast, windpumps at Minsmere and Wicken Fen, the windmill at Thorpeness (now an information centre for the Heritage Coast), and the little watermill at Lode in Cambridgeshire. Woodbridge tide mill gets more attention, particularly as, in the 1970's, it had been transformed by the removal

of the corrugated iron cladding and its replacement by white weatherboarding. The machinery was being restored but normal working was "unlikely to be resumed as the mill pool is now a yacht harbour". In 1979 I must have forgotten Hugh Young's forecast, on Radio Orwell in 1976 (see Newsletter 43), that a new though smaller mill pool could be created; which shows how careful a writer needs to be!

Flatford Mill gets even more space, because of its association with John Constable and its present use by the Field Studies Council as a centre for ecological and artistic courses.

When it came to illustrations, photographs of mills were inevitable, both because of their significance and their attractiveness. It transpired that 7 of the 48 photographs in the book were of windmills and watermills, and there was also one of Cranfield's dockside flour mills at Ipswich. The publishers chose Trevor James' excellent photograph of Woodbridge tide mill to illustrate their 1979 catalogue. We did consider using a windmill for the coloured book jacket, but concluded that people would have thought it was a book on East Anglian windmills.

What has all this to do with my joining the Suffolk Mills Group? During the late 1970's I lunched occasionally with Mark Barnard and Peter Dolman in the Civil Service canteen at Greyfriars, Ipswich. The conversation, to which I listened rather than contributed, inevitably concentrated on mills, with which my two young colleagues were already much involved. The S.M.G. had been established only a few months before my book was published. Peter Dolman said to me "I'll do a deal with you, Peter. I'll buy a copy of your book if you will join the Suffolk Mills Group and if you will buy a copy of my 'Windmills in Suffolk'" (published in 1978). I agreed readily and that is how I became a member!

## **NEWS**

### KERSEY WATERMILL CONVERSION PLANS

An application has recently been submitted to Babergh District Council by Geoff and Christina Mellor for the change of use of the ground and first floors of Kersey watermill to residential accommodation, retaining the six pairs of hurst-mounted stones on the ground floor and their drives. The wheelhouse and engine house, now largely collapsed, would be rebuilt as part of the scheme. The accommodation would be an extension of the adjacent mill house, and a new link between the two is proposed at first floor level. Both mill and mill house are listed Grade II\*.

When the Mellors moved their expanding electronics business to the site some ten years ago, S.M.G. hoped that the neglected mill would escape conversion (see Newsletter 9). Sadly the mill has received little attention since then apart from the cosmetic re-boarding of the front, and remains very derelict and in need of major structural repair. In the circumstances S.M.G. is unlikely to oppose

conversion but will wish to be assured that both interior and exterior are most sympathetically treated. (M.B.)

#### WICKEN WINDMILL 1988

Progress on the restoration of this (potentially!) magnificent smock mill was excellent during 1988, much better than I dared hope. On behalf of the Preservation Group I'd like to thank S.M.G. for very valued help, in arranging both the transfer of machine tools from Norsk-Hydro, Royston, and the provision and sawing of apple blanks for gear teeth. In particular we are grateful to all those S.M.G. members who strayed across the border into Cambridgeshire to work with us on the mill - this kind of help is very important; you can imagine how overstretched we would otherwise be. I'd also like to thank all those who lent equipment - one area where there are always shortages at the start of a major project.

Four of the twelve sides have now been stripped down to the framing and fully restored. The cant posts proved to be in remarkably good order. The sill plates, which we believe to have been renewed by Hunt's about 95 years ago, are being largely replaced. Otherwise, apart from studs and diagonals near windows, etc., the framing is in excellent condition, but to strengthen and protect the tower after 175 years it is being sheathed in plywood and felting before fixing the outer coating of vertical boards. There is a good chance that we will finish structural work on the tower in 1989.

One interesting find was Alan Loasby's discovery of the mill fire insurance mark, imprisoned between the inner and outer layers of smock cladding for 100 years or more. The Suffolk & County mark had been placed prominently at the top of the tower, overlooking the driveway. It has been removed for safekeeping; we plan to fix a replica on the restored mill.

In 1989 the major task will be to complete the smock (only another 8 sides!). Then the next large step will be to strengthen the cap frame, followed by jacking up to dismantle and refurbish the cap roller race. Other smaller items of work will continue between times of course, such as making shutter cranks (208 off), and provided we continue to attract support, working order in 1994 is perfectly possible.

We will again be holding two work-ins in summer, July 8th-16th and August 19th-28th. Anyone interested, contact Dave Pearce, 30, Rushams Road, Horsham, West Sussex (telephone 0403 53909), or any other member of the Preservation Group. (D.P.)

#### NEWS IN BRIEF

A new warden for Woodbridge tide mill has been appointed to replace Gordon Dunnett, who retires at the end of March. The new warden is Geoff Gostling of 54, Farriers Close, Martlesham Heath, Ipswich (telephone Ipswich 626618).

Oxfordshire-based Millwrights International have recently gone into liquidation.

The firm was started some ten years ago, and had carried out a number of projects in Suffolk, including the restoration of Buttrum's Mill, Woodbridge.

The Museum of East Anglian Life at Stowmarket have announced that Alton watermill will be at work this year on May 7th, July 9th, September 17th and September 20th-21st. The last two days are specially for school visits.

A listed building application recently submitted for Copdock watermill, gutted by fire last year, shows the exterior appearance of the restored mill is to be essentially unaltered. The application is for the removal of the upper floor to enable new machinery to be installed. The original gear was removed in the mid 1950's.

An important planning case involving a repairs notice served on the owner of Willesborough mill, Ashford, Kent was finally decided by the House of Lords early in March. The validity of the notice was upheld, despite requiring complete restoration of the mill, and the way is now clear for the local authority to compulsorily acquire the mill.

## EVENTS

VISIT TO STANTON POST MILL: SUNDAY APRIL 16th, from 2.30pm.

This visit gives members a chance to see the progress being made by Richard Duke and his colleagues in returning this fine eighteenth century mill to working order. Much has been achieved since the S.M.G. work-ins in 1986 and 1987, and currently a second pair of sails is being made which it is planned to hoist later this year.

HERRINGFLEET MARSH MILL AT WORK: NATIONAL MILLS DAY, SUNDAY MAY 15th, 12.30-4.30pm.

As usual on National Mills Day, a contingent from S.M.G. will be setting the cloths on the sails of one of the country's few working marsh mills (is there another still working on its original site?).

The East Anglian branch of the Steamboat Association will be holding a 'rally' at the mill to co-incide with its opening and, weather permitting, the boats will be an added attraction.

S.M.G. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: SUNDAY JUNE 4th at WISTON WATERMILL, NAYLAND, commencing 11am.

By kind permission of Mr and Mrs Cohen, we are holding this year's A.G.M. at Wiston watermill, on the River Stour, about a mile west of the village of Nayland (Grid Ref. of mill 962333). Members may recall that we visited this mill last May and were most impressed by both the mill and its beautiful grounds.

In the afternoon there will be a visit to Alston Court in the centre of Nayland village, a very fine late medieval merchant's house.

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CROSSWORD ENTRY FORM

To enter the crossword competition on page 10, please fill in the copy below and your name and address and post to The Editor, Suffolk Mills Group, 41, Melbourne Road, Ipswich IP4 5PP. Entries must be received by June 3rd 1989.

Name .....

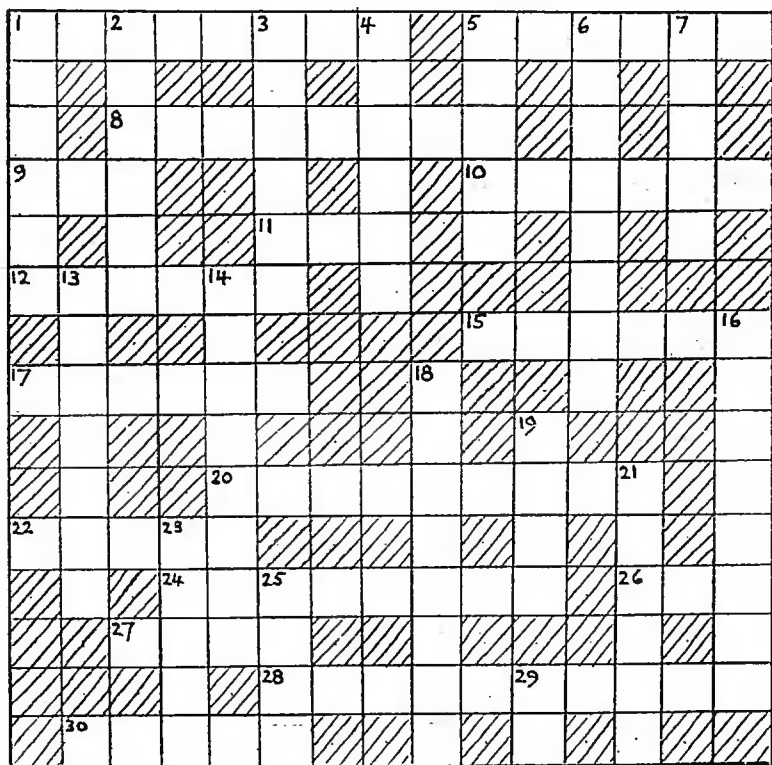
Address .....

.....

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CLUES ACROSS

1. Suffolk tower mill, demolished in 1962 (8)
5. Mounted on the horse (6)
8. Product of roller milling, on the way to fine flour (8)
9. Surrounds all of the stones, not 15% (3)
10. Governors do this automatically (6)
11. Some watermills had traps to catch this fish (3)
12. A turning stone (6)
15. Watermill author, sadly no longer with us (6)
17. Fine windmill near the capital (6)
20. Moved to Museum of East Anglian Life (Stowmarket) in 1970's (5,4)
22. See 13. Down
24. (& 5. Down) Recently dismantled post mill (8,5)
26. Another name for 9. Across (3)
27. (& 16. Down) These often superseded bolters (4, 8)
28. Norfolk millwrights, now defunct (10)
30. (& 19. Down) Distinctive form of French tower mill (5,4)



6. --- lines are attached to sail cloths (8)
7. 15. Across wrote on the mills of this county (5)
13. (& 22. Across) Always found in smock & tower mills, sometimes in post mills (7,5)
14. Superseded the sack hoist (8)
16. See 27. Across
18. This Sussex 'Town' has a fine smock windmill (8)
19. See 30. Across
21. See 29. Down
23. Suffolk windmill author (5)
25. Another windmill author (4)
29. (& 21. Down) Yet another windmill author! (2,6)

CLUES DOWN

1. Norfolk tower mill (6)
2. Recently restored five-sailer (6)
3. Patented the roller-reefing sail (6)
4. Innovator of another sail type (6)
5. See 24. Across