

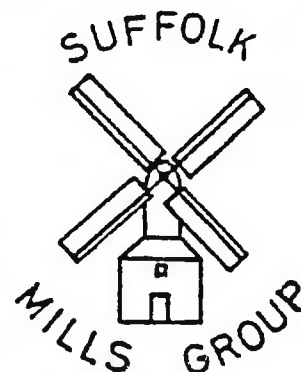
# SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

## Newsletter

No. 50  
JANUARY 1991

Secretary: PETER DOLMAN  
3, St. Mary's Close,  
Bramford, Ipswich IP8 4DL

Editor: MARK BARNARD  
41, Melbourne Road, Ipswich IP4 5PP



The New Year sees us reach a half-century of S.M.G. newsletters, of which I have edited (and typed, on my redoubtable 1955 Imperial!) all but two. For the record, the first 49 contain no less than 746 A4 pages; I wonder if any other local mills group has published more? In future issues I would like to include more material relating to Suffolk, as apart from the regular 'Vanished Mill' we have been a bit thin on local items in recent issues. For my part, a few visits to the record office at Bury St. Edmunds has yielded some very interesting material, which will form the bones of an article to appear (hopefully) in the next issue. Can anyone else do the same?

As is now the custom, forthcoming mill events are summarised below.

Sat. February 23	S.M.G. public meeting, Ipswich
Sat, Sun. March 2-3	Work at Thorington Street watermill, Stoke by Nayland
Sat. March 16	S.P.A.B. windmill meeting, London
Sun. April 28	S.M.G. visit to Rattlesden mills
Sun. May 12	National Mills Day
Sat. May 18	S.P.A.B. day tour to Buckinghamshire mills
Sun. June 16	S.M.G. Annual General Meeting, Letheringham watermill

Finally, I hope you enjoy our 50th issue - and yes, there is a crossword, with £30 worth of prizes to be won!

Mark Barnard

## OF MILLS AND MEN (5) CHRIS HULLCOOP

### SEEING THE WOOD THROUGH THE TREES

Reading through S.P.A.B. Wind & Watermill Section chairman Martin Watts' report to the 1990 watermill meeting and thinking back to Niall Roberts' article in a recent newsletter on authenticity in preservation has urged me to continue this theme in the hope of prompting more discussion on this most interesting but difficult subject.

Niall sums it up when he says 'Principles for restoration of mills are relatively easy to enunciate. Their application can be less straightforward.' Doubtless the chairman's skills of persuasion, mediation and compromise have been severely taxed by developers who seek large profits from converting mills into houses, and by well-meaning restorers who lack knowledge and judgement. He says 'It is no longer enough to say that as mills were frequently altered during their working lives, there is no reason why they should not continue to be altered and adapted.' I have known even S.P.A.B. members use this argument for major changes in a mill or for the unnecessary use of a modern material or method when the

traditional way if they did but know it was better. Other members have said they were little interested in mills as historic buildings.

It is worth reminding ourselves that S.P.A.B. stands for Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. It has been argued that mills are machines and not buildings, but of course they are both.

The first statutory protection through listing covered buildings and in the case of a windmill and especially a watermill only the building structure was protected and the machinery could be scrapped and often was. The listing authorities did not appreciate that the machinery was a vital part of the mill and it took many years of frustration and hard work by the S.P.A.B. committee and its members to convince them that machinery was worth protecting.

The local authority officers responsible for listed buildings have learned a lot from us regarding mill machinery, its importance, and the correct repair, maintenance and working of mills. They are people who in their professional lives need a very broad base of knowledge of old buildings and antiquities ranging from tumuli to tanneries. Many of us who are mill enthusiasts would do well to reciprocate by learning more about the work of the main S.P.A.B. and its philosophy of practical repair of old buildings. We would also learn a great deal from those involved in restoring a wide range of machines and objects of the past. Their broad knowledge of conservation and indeed the different compromises involved when machines, furniture and whole houses are brought back into use could teach us much which would help us in the difficult decisions to make in mill restoration.

An interesting example can be found in old timber framed houses. In Suffolk there are two old houses quite close to each other. One is a lovely farmhouse, with rendered walls, neat windows and a roof covered with mellow clay peg tiles. It is set in a well-kept garden and everything is pretty as a picture. Is it listed? No. The timber frame has been mostly replaced and spoiled and the roof structure was completely rebuilt 30 years ago using imported softwood. It is now no longer of special architectural or historic value. Not far away is a semi-derelict house used as a farm store, set amongst nettles and elder bushes. The roof is covered with corrugated steel sheets and various roofless lean-to's slump against its walls. Inside, behind pallets and stacks of fertilizer is a fine timber frame and underneath the corrugated an early timber roof is virtually intact. It is very definitely of architectural and historic interest and is listed.

What can we learn from this that applies to mill repair? Clearly the structure - and in the case of a mill the structure and the machinery - is of far greater importance than the covering which has always been liable to periodic replacement. Even so it is of course far better if an old house can have a roof covering of quality tiles and a mill a traditional or traditional-looking covering.

An oft-neglected aspect of mill restoration is the appearance of the interior. Here again breadth of knowledge in restoration can help us see the problems clearly. Imagine you are responsible for the neglected contents of a National Trust house. There are paintings and furniture, both dirty and requiring attention. The oil paintings are sent to a cleaning specialist who skilfully removes layers of old varnish and dirt, thereby returning them to original condition. So why not now send those eighteenth century tables and chairs to have their grimy, patchy and bruised surfaces repolished; they would surely be returned looking as they did when they left the maker's workshop in 1760? Indeed they would but the character and value of the furniture would have been spoiled and dismissal of the curator would quickly follow. Why is it that the paintings are returned to original condition yet the furniture is not? Two hundred years of use and dirt has somehow added to their appearance, and unless the surface is totally spoiled then re-polishing is unthinkable. To those unfamiliar with the conservation of old things this seems puzzling or even downright silly. To understand it just look at properly restored pictures and furniture in a National Trust house or the houses of your friends and the difference of approach to these two classes of objects is seen to be correct.

The passage of time and wear sometimes adding to interest and appearance is nothing new. For instance, worn oak step treads add character to a building and unless the treads are worn too far then a discreet steel rod let in below each tread enables it to be kept and used safely. So a defect has become a feature worthy of preservation. Why? Because those worn steps may be some of the very last real evidence that most working people in the old days wore hobnail boots, never worn today except perhaps within the confines of Beamish or Ironbridge museums.

Many original treatments to mill interiors completely covered the beauty of the different woods used in construction. Neglect and failure to apply further treatment has enabled the character and quality of the timbers and joinery to be appreciated. The builders of a mill were making a factory for flour production which no-one in their right mind would enter unless they had business there. The idea that people would wish to visit or even examine the details of timbers and construction for pleasure would have been unbelievable. Not so today, as the primary purpose of mills is to serve our nostalgia for fine materials, craftsmanship, ingenuity and of course the old milling processes, but the milling process must not be so dominant that everything else is considered unimportant.

Let's draw another parallel, the treatment of objects which have survived incomplete. Fragments of Roman pots in a museum may be displayed set into a buff-coloured cast in the shape of the whole pot. There is no attempt at forgery, what is Roman and what is modern is plain to see. Yet a nearby eighteenth century chair with a missing leg has been so skilfully repaired that it is difficult to decide which is the new leg. Is one method honest and the other a

shameless forgery? Should the missing mahogany chair leg have been left unpolished or replaced in beech to make it clear it was a modern replacement? Both are correct. The pot fragment has been treated in a purer archaeological and academic way. Whole houses complete with furniture, paintings and carpets survive from the eighteenth century. In a fine eighteenth century room a mahogany chair with one beech leg would look horrendous and spoil the day of most who saw it. In this case it is important to consider good appearance and showmanship.

Thus in the repair of antiques there would appear to be many contradictions to those unfamiliar with this work either as professionals or hobbyists. To those with experience these are proper solutions based on the experience and expertise of clever people over many years.

What has this to do with wind and watermills? Quite a lot. Many statements on mill restoration are dogmatic, fail to appreciate the complexities and are not made from a broad base of knowledge but rather from specialist knowledge which can be very isolated. Thus we hear 'The mill should be restored to original condition' or 'The mill should be restored to how it was in its last working days' or 'Only traditional materials should be used'. Also the very dubious 'If this material had been available to the old millwrights they would have used it'. They all have some truth for some part of a mill at some time, but they are all oversimplifications. A rule or guideline can't be applied equally to a whole mill as, like a National Trust house and its contents, it is a large and complicated structure.

We are all asked at some time or other by colleagues at work, relatives and those puzzled by our interest, 'Why restore old mills, what do they do for us today?'. Certainly we don't need them for drainage, food processing or survival. For those of us actively repairing or working mills there is the satisfaction of craftsmanship and a job well done. A beautiful and spectacular mill to enjoy and demonstrate for others. For the great majority of people who may visit mills from time to time they are a contribution to the quality of life. If a mill can be worked and flour sold to visitors that is splendid but it is important that this is not made the sole aim at the expense of historical features and a pleasing appearance. Different types of wood, good joints and quality workmanship are features which mills share with other historic buildings and should not be sacrificed through the total dominance of the milling process.

To quote Martin Watts again, 'It requires an aesthetic appreciation which is hard to define and even harder to find. Part of the delight in looking at mills surely comes from the textures of materials, real materials such as stone, wood, iron and leather, even dust and cobwebs'.

The aesthetic appreciation that Martin speaks of can be acquired, but not just in mills where, as in other fields, the work of restoration varies from superb to unbelievably bad. It is necessary to look at the wider world of

restoration and conservation of old things of all types, and if possible to speak with those as involved in their fields as we are with old mills. It won't give us all the answers but will help us to ask the right questions.

## EATING OUT IN SUFFOLK WATERMILLS PETER DOLMAN

Until recently my only experience of dining sumptuously in a watermill in Suffolk had been confined to eating sandwiches while drying out my clothes during some rain-sodden S.M.G. visit or 'work-in'. Last year, prompted by our member Ken Read's excursion into restauranting at Holbrook mill, and while still able to afford such extravagances, my wife Melanie and I decided to try out each of the mills in Suffolk used as restaurants, with the twofold purpose of treating ourselves to a meal, and in my case, to have a good look at the surviving millwork (if any). Two of the four mills have been converted for 20 years or so, one for about 10 years and Holbrook mill only a few months.

Molinologically, the best has to be Tuddenham mill near Mildenhall. The late 18th or early 19th century watermill has a mid 19th century steam mill attached, worked until the 1950's and is mostly weatherboarded under a tiled roof. Ugly casement windows spoil the elevations but a plus point is the surviving tall brick chimney. Inside the lounge bar, the waterwheel (which the owner proudly told me was designed by Smeaton himself!) is complete and in working order (if a bit frayed at the edges). It is an unexceptional iron low breastshot wheel on an iron shaft. The 'cog room' is a rather confined space round the back of a store room and special permission must be sought to crawl inside. This is worthwhile though for the iron pitwheel drove an iron wallower (lowered out of mesh) on a wooden upright shaft with a lovely old 6-arm compass-arm great spurwheel which has neat iron 'V'-shape brackets reinforcing the arms at the centre. The tenting and drive to two pairs of stones remain although one spindle has been taken down. Two other interesting features are that the main bridge beam has been replaced by an 'RSJ', apparently during the mill's active life, and the early 1970's generator set installed by a former owner and now abandoned as unworkable.

Upstairs in the restaurant proper one pair of French stones remains, the other having been taken out a few years ago. The upright shaft terminates with a 4-arm compass-arm crown wheel which appears to have had a belt drive off its rim. One bevel wheel and a short length of layshaft also remain. Little else of interest survives except for a post which is preserved and has interesting 19th century graffiti about the mill and its neighbouring windmill (a smock mill). Despite the scheme having won a County Council conservation award in 1973 I didn't feel the mill had been very well treated structurally, with very small joists replacing sturdy originals in places where 'exposed beams' were called for.

A close second molinologically is Holbrook mill. This mill was emptied of almost all its Turner roller milling equipment in the 1920's and when Ken and

Jenny Read bought it in the early 1980's it was a huge, almost empty hulk. They have converted the top two floors into living accommodation and the upper ground floor, formerly a teashop, has been converted into the restaurant and bar. Within the public areas all that can be seen of the milling machinery is a small geared hand winch, used for lifting the runner stones off for dressing. Special permission from Ken will be needed to see the main surviving gear which is downstairs in the basement, or lower ground floor. The original structure is seventeenth century (or earlier), with Victorian additions. The original over-shot wheel was replaced by a 'Little Giant' turbine, currently undergoing restoration. It drove a lineshaft which powered the roller mills and dressers formerly occupying the upper floors, and a neat hurst frame, retained to do grist work. When the Turner machinery (still sought after) was removed this 'obsolete' millstone set was left and is in restorable condition with two pairs of composition stones, the runners of which have suffered from cracking up - a common failure of such stones. The standard of conversion is good with as much original structure as possible retained. The mill is obviously a shadow of its former self but still contains much to interest the molinologist.

Sudbury mill was a large water and steam mill of early 19th century date with late 19th century additions and worked until relatively recently as part of the Clover empire. It was converted into an hotel in the early 1970's and as an example of historic building conservation is truly grim with awful windows peppering the boarded walls and inside posts and beams often clad with 'mock' timber. The machinery has been almost entirely removed (at the time of conversion I believe four pairs of stones remained) leaving the fine Whitmore and Binyon iron low breastshot wheel alone in working order, with its complicated 'falling shut' with a second smaller shut at the top - I still haven't quite fathomed out how they worked. A pictorial display about the wheel and Whitmore and Binyon is mounted on boards nearby and in the hotel lobby are several old documents relating to the mill. There is also the famous mummified cat which was found buried in the structure as a good luck charm.

Barking mill, Needham Market (known incorrectly as Bosmere Mill) was gutted in the 1960's and converted to residential use in the early 1970's. Later on it was partially converted into a restaurant and more recently has been further converted, incorporating an art gallery and bar as well as the dining rooms. The large timber-framed building is of early 19th century date and is absolutely devoid of anything inside. Outside, the powerful breastshot iron wheel is preserved with its sluice and controls. Not all the buckets have been restored, giving it a rather more 'open' appearance than formerly but even so it is an impressive piece of millwork. It is not in working order and the head and tail races are choked with sediment.

So much for the mills, but what of the food? Well, Bosmere Mill and Mill Hotel, Sudbury have bars where a drink may be purchased while you measure

the length of the starts, etc.; reasonably inexpensive bar snacks can also be bought and Bosmere Mill also has a 'bistro' menu. The restaurants at Tuddenham mill, Bosmere Mill and Sudbury Mill Hotel all offer standard English dishes at average prices - Sudbury mill I felt was the least efficient in service and quality, possibly because of its large size compared to the other two. Expect to pay upwards of £10 each for a 3-course meal with coffee. Holbrook mill has the benefit of a chef expert in French cuisine so the standard of food is perhaps above that of the other three (if you like French cooking) but so is the price! So you pay your money and take your choice. My personal favourites were Holbrook and Bosmere, both of which offered good value and service.

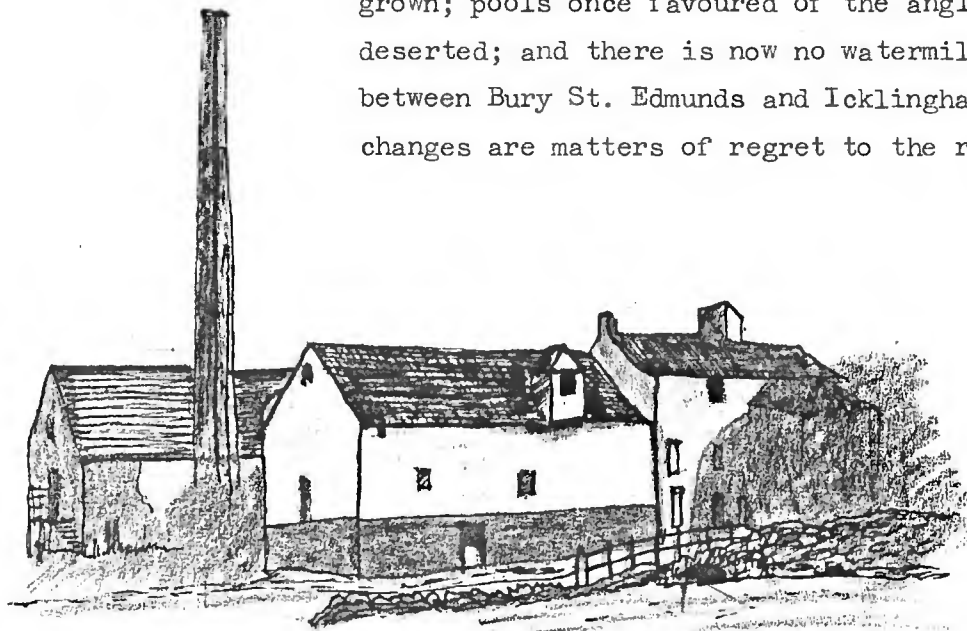
Bosmere Mill, Needham Market	Telephone	Needham Market (0449) 721581
Mill Hotel, Sudbury	"	Sudbury (0787) 75544
Tuddenham mill	"	Mildenhall (0638) 713552
Holbrook mill	"	Ipswich (0473) 327127

## CHIMNEY MILLS, WEST STOW MARK EARNARD

The loss of a familiar wind or watermill was a fairly common occurrence in the inter-war period, and would be unlikely to merit more than a cursory mention in the local Press. The feature on Chimney Mills, West Stow, published in the Bury Free Press and Post on 12th March 1932 is therefore unusual. It seems to have used the demise of the mill as an excuse to mourn the loss of a whole way of life which centred around the river. However, there are several useful nuggets of information about the mill's history and I have printed the gist of the article below, together with an illustration derived from the photograph which accompanied it.

### THE OLD MILL COMES DOWN

There have been big changes on the upper reaches of the River Lark - between Mildenhall and Bury St. Edmunds - during the last half-century. The once important commercial navigation has come to a complete standstill, and coal barges are but a distant memory; locks are no longer what they were; the towing-paths are overgrown; pools once favoured of the angler are now deserted; and there is now no watermill working between Bury St. Edmunds and Icklingham. All these changes are matters of regret to the river lover.



Chimney Mills in its heyday. At the rear of the watermill was an attic level walkway link to the steam mill.



The latest blow to the river's old prestige has been struck at Chimney Mills, where the mill has recently been demolished, only the waterwheel, the smoke stack, the mill house and a few walls remaining today. Thus a well-known and long-established landmark vanishes, and becomes, like many another feature of the Lark's pleasant banks, a mere memory.

This little place lies in wild, heathy and wooded country about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles north west of Bury St. Edmunds. At one time it was an extra-parochial area of 20 acres, the only buildings being the mill and adjacent house, with a population averaging about eight! During the last century the place was annexed to West Stow, and later to Culford, and it now forms part of Lord Cadogan's estate, of which it lies on the southern edge.

The mill appears to have been about 100 or 150 years old, but there were mills on this site before that date. Possibly the mill here was owned by the monks of Bury St. Edmunds, who certainly, as old records prove, had such a building in the parish of West Stow. Chimney Mills was in existence in 1759, for in that year West Stow parish registers mention the baptism of 'George, son of George and Jane Steel, of Chimney Mills'. The Steel family occupied the property for some years, and about 54 years ago it was taken by Mr. Abraham Bell, who had a baker's shop in Bishop's Road, Bury St. Edmunds for many years. Mr. Bell carried on business as a miller, baker and farmer at the Mills, and was a familiar figure in the neighbourhood. At one time he made his own flour but with the introduction of roller flour, Mr. Bell had to relinquish this side of the business.

At one time there was a wooden waterwheel, but this gave place, some 30 or 40 years ago, to a steel wheel, measuring about 20 feet in diameter, understood to have been the biggest on this section of the river. This wheel was standing at the time of my visit a few days ago, but no doubt it will shortly be removed. Some of the smaller wooden wheels, worm-eaten and evidently of considerable age, were still to be seen. The steel waterwheel was made and put into place by Messrs. Woods and Cocksedge, of Stowmarket, and was brought to the mill by road - a feat of some note in the days when giant motor lorries had not been heard of. There were four pairs of stones, three for wheat and one for barley. The work of demolition was done by workmen from the Culford Estate.

And what of the hamlet of Chimney Mills today? The population has recently fallen to six - Mr. Harry Bell and his two sons Stanley and Cecil, Mr. and Mrs. H. Hunt and Kenneth Hunt, aged seven months. A happy community in what is quite a lonely outpost!

Mr. Bell, assisted by his brother and his two sons, carries on the bakery business under the shadow of the old 75-foot smoke stack, which once served the engine house and now carries the smoke from the baker's oven.

At one time, Mr. Bell recalled, the mill was so busy that it was worked



day and night, and a little door led from the house to the works in order that the miller might tend the machinery during the night. Mr. Bell could also remember a barge passing through the lock-gates on the south side of the house. In his father's time many barges, and an occasional steam-tug, came through on their way to Bury St. Edmunds, or, in the other direction, to King's Lynn, and coal was sometimes unloaded onto the side of the lock for use at the mill.

What a contrast! Fifty years ago the busy mills hummed with activity, the water bubbling and chuckling over the big wheel and down the mill-race, and the great stones pursuing their well-worn track. From the river there came the cheerful shouts and songs of barge-hands and excursionists in pleasure-boats (which were never allowed through the lock, oarsmen having to carry their craft overland!). Today there is silence, broken only by the rush of water down the channel where the eel-traps were once fixed. Even the mill-race has been stopped.

The mill was last worked in 1916. Now it has gone the way of those at Fornham, Hengrave and Flempton - all of which mills have been 'pensioned off'.

## **WINDMILLS OF SOUTH EAST ENGLAND** GUY BLYTHMAN

Part Five : Kent (continued from Pt.4 in last issue)

### CHILLENDEEN (TR268543, O.S. Sheet 179)

A small white open-trestle post mill in pleasantly isolated rural surroundings. Although it may appear at first to be an old mill, it was not in fact erected until 1868, and was possibly the last post mill to be built in the country. The design was probably copied from the older mill, shown on Robert Morden's map of Kent printed in 1695, which it replaced. One of the timbers of the present mill bears a seventeenth century date, suggesting that it incorporated material from its predecessor. Last worked in 1949, the mill was acquired by the County Council in 1958 and subsequently restored. Sadly, some of the machinery, including tuns, hoppers, chutes, a dresser and a maize kibbler, was taken out and never replaced and an adjacent barn was demolished. The mill has four spring sails and is winded by a tailpole resting on a cartwheel which guides the mill body in its revolution. There are two pairs of underdriven stones.

Recently the Friends of Chillenden Windmill formed to administer the mill, and further repairs have been completed.

### EASTRY (Upper Mill) (TR304545, O.S. Sheet 179)

A tarred smock mill on a single-storey base, thought to be over 200 years old. It is the last of four windmills which stood close together in the village; another was pulled down in 1926. By 1913 the surviving mill had ceased work by wind and the sails and fantail had been removed, but it was power-driven until 1959. Repairs to the structure, including the fitting of a new cap, were carried out in the 1970's and the mill is now in good condition although it remains sailless. No machinery remains apart from the windshaft and brakewheel. The present owner has recently converted the mill to a house, at the same time carrying out further restoration work.

### NORTHBOURNE (New Mill) (TR331521, O.S. Sheet 179)

A tall black smock mill on a single-storey base which was enclosed by a 'roundel' similar to those at Margate and Sandwich. Built by Holmans in 1845, it worked by wind until the 1930's, and by engine until the 1950's. It then became derelict, losing its cap, sails and machinery, and in 1974 was threatened with demolition. However it survived and was later converted by a silversmith for use as a dwelling and workshop. The windshaft has been retained in its

original position. There was once another smock mill in the village, known as the Old Mill. It is interesting to note that both mills ran for the latter period of their working lives with only one pair of sails.

RIPPLE (TR362490, O.S. Sheet 179)

A tarred smock mill on a single-storey base, thought to have been moved to its present site from Drellingore, near Folkstone, between 1820 and 1840. It ceased work during the last war. In 1955 the cap, surviving sail and machinery were removed and the smock converted into a TV relay station. This use of the mill has since been discontinued and the present owner has obtained some new machinery and has commenced restoration work. A walled mound reaching halfway up the base served as a stage.

GUSTON (Swingate Mill) (TR334444, O.S. Sheet 179)

A mid-nineteenth century tower mill, last worked by wind in 1943 when two sails were damaged by enemy fire. It was then power-driven for a short period. Most of the machinery from the wallower downwards is thought to remain within the tower; however the unsafe state of the flooring makes a proper investigation impossible, although a flour-dresser is known to exist on the first floor.

ST. MARGARET'S BAY (TR363436, O.S. Sheet 179)

Situated on the cliffs above this secluded bay, near the old South Foreland lighthouse, this white smock mill is maintained in excellent condition. It was built as recently as 1928, by Holmans, as part of a new house for which it was to generate electricity. The idea behind its construction was that of Sir William Beardswell, for whose sister the house was built. Externally it resembles in every respect a conventional Kentish smock mill, apart from the shorter sails. It also has a conventional type windshaft and brakewheel. Although the dynamo has been removed the rest of the generating equipment survives. The mill had a very short working life, stopping in 1939, but as stated above is well maintained, and I believe the sails still turn occasionally.

STELLING MINNIS (TR146466, O.S. Sheet 179)

A tarred smock mill, built in 1866 by Holmans on the site of a post mill. It has a very shallow base, no more than a few feet high, a feature it shared with a number of other Kentish smock mills and which has caused quite a bit of trouble: being so close to the ground, the timber sill supporting the cant posts has tended to suffer from damp and rats. It had to be renewed in 1940 after rotting away from the base, and has since been soaked regularly with creosote and paraffin to protect it. There is a stage.

In 1907 the mill ceased to make flour, and in 1925 it stopped work by wind altogether. A Hornsby paraffin engine was installed and the sails shortened to clear the roof of the engine house. In 1935 the mill was restored to work by wind, on the initiative of Miss Hilda Laurie, in memory of her brother. It continued to grind commercially, latterly on two sails only, until the death of the miller, Mr. Davison, in November 1970. In 1975 the newly-formed East Kent Mills Group, in their first major project, carried out repairs which involved the replacement of the two missing sails. The mill, which retains all its machinery, including two pairs of stones with a set of wooden governors, is now owned by the County Council and staffed by the Group. It is open to the public and grinds for demonstration purposes, sometimes by wind but more often by the paraffin engine due to the large number of trees nearby which tend to cut off the wind.

STANFORD (TR128378, O.S. Sheet 179)

A tarred five-storey tower mill built in 1851 for John Hogben by Hill of Ashford. It ceased work by wind in the late 1940's but until 1969 was power-driven. In 1959 the sails were dismantled and a roof of corrugated iron and asbestos erected on the existing cap frame. The windshaft and brakewheel remain. Within the tower a fair amount of machinery survives, including two of the three pairs of stones. Of the surviving tower mills of Kent, this is the most complete and the best candidate for restoration.

(Continued on p.12)

# CROSSWORD Compiled by MARK BARNARD

Below is the 1991 crossword competition. Once again we are offering prizes of book tokens. First prize will be to the value of £20 and second prize, £10.

As usual all the clues are in some way relevant to mills and milling, with nothing especially difficult or obscure. Measured in terms of how many of the 225 squares contain a letter, this crossword is perhaps the best yet, with no less than 68% coverage. Not easy with such a restricted vocabulary!

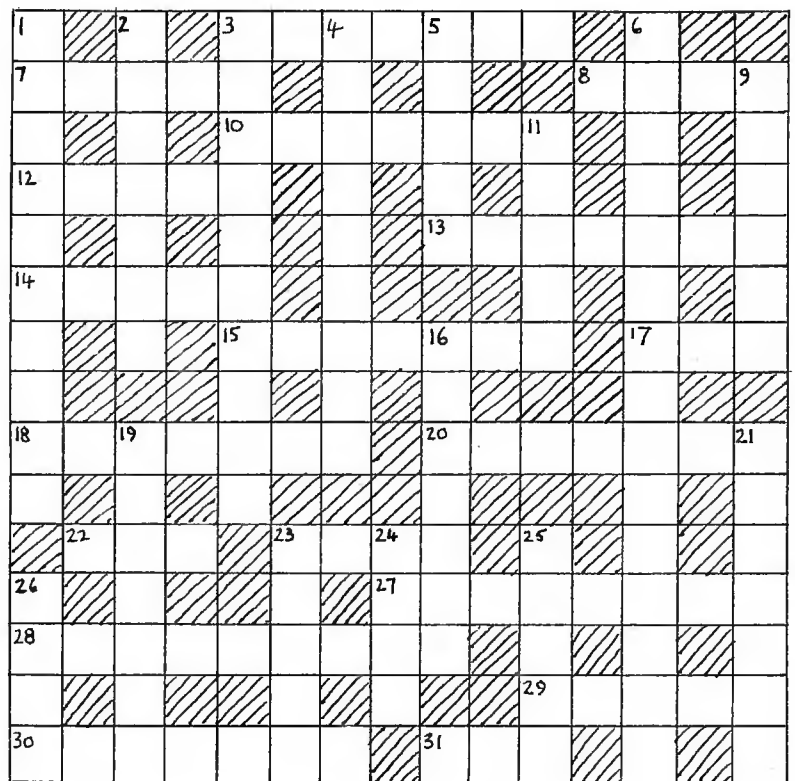
To enter, please complete the copy at the end of this Newsletter and post it to reach me by the post of Saturday June 15th 1991. The draw for the winners will be made at our A.G.M. on the following day. Past experience suggests you have a very good chance of becoming at least £10 richer, so do have a go!

## CLUES ACROSS

3. Part of a windmill sail (7)
7. North Suffolk watermill (5)
8. Stone dresser's cushion (4)
10. This city gave its name to a type of millstone (7)
12. Type of mill (5)
13. Milling family at Cranbrook (7)
14. Co-author of famous history of milling (5)
15. Type of bearing for an upright shaft (4,3)
17. Applied to some mill towers (3)
18. Seventeenth century post mill (7)
20. Sussex post mill near Ditchling (7)
22. May be domed, ogee or boat-shaped (3)
23. The meeting of two gear-wheels? (4)
27. Part of the frame of 22. Across (4,4)
28. Sussex post mill near Rye (9)
29. Found at either end of 27. Across (5)
30. The last Essex windmill to cease commercial work (7)
31. Hit by the damsel (3)

## CLUES DOWN

1. Warwickshire's most famous windmill (10)
2. Fine Suffolk watermill (7)
3. England's last eight-sailer (10)
4. Raised an early grinding machine (4,5)
5. If it doesn't move you it'll bore you! (5)
6. The County Millwright of 11. Down (7,8)



9. Lever to raise ladder of post mill (6)
11. 'Across the Stour' from Suffolk (5)
16. Small Oxfordshire post mill (7)
19. Primitive Dutch drainage mill, driving Archimedian screw (7)
21. Country visited by S.M.G. in 1982 (7)
23. Co-author of 'The Windmills of Surrey and Inner London' (5)
24. The --- wheel is at the centre of a fantail (4)
25. --- arm as opposed to compass-arm (5)
26. A large timber - in a post mill, perhaps (4)

WILLESBOROUGH (TQ032422, O.S. Sheet 189)

A large white smock mill standing on a square two-storey base which has been converted to form part of a house. It is situated close to the M20, from which it is easily seen. Built in 1869, it ceased work by wind in 1938 but continued for a short period under an electric motor. The machinery, which includes four pairs of stones, is intact; some has come from an earlier mill.

Since stopping work its history has been chequered and turbulent. In the early 1960's lengthy negotiations took place between the County Council, the then owner, and Ashford Urban District Council concerning possible restoration, but no agreement could be reached. In the late 1970's a further attempt was made but this too proved abortive. More recently a compulsory purchase order was served on Mr. Robins, the owner, by the District Council and confirmed by the Minister after a public inquiry. The decision was fought on a technicality all the way to the House of Lords, but without success. Ashford Borough Council has now acquired the mill and a major restoration to working order is well under way.

WOODCHURCH (Lower Mill) (TQ943353, O.S. Sheet 189)

A white smock mill on a single-storey base with a stage. Its exact age is unknown but the flour dresser is dated 1820. It was one of two smock mills to stand close together at this site: the other, known as the Upper Mill, disappeared in the 1930's. The Lower Mill ceased work in 1926, after which it was owned by Sir Sydney Nicholson who attempted to keep it in good condition. In 1946 urgent repairs were carried out, but the mill continued to need attention. After the death of Sir Sydney the mill was bequeathed to the parish and a Windmill Preservation Committee was formed to care for the mill. Unfortunately the cost of maintaining the mill became too great and by 1978 it was in a dangerous condition, with part of the cap gone and the smock leaning visibly. In the following year the Friends of Woodchurch Windmill were formed to care for the mill and raise funds for its restoration. Extensive repairs have since been carried out, involving the virtual renewal of the smock in new timber, the original machinery being retained. The mill now has four fully-shuttered sails and it is hoped to start grinding shortly. It is now owned by Ashford Borough Council.

WITTESHAM (Stocks Mill) (TQ913273, O.S. Sheet 189)

A large white post mill with a tarred brick roundhouse. It has four spring sails. Little machinery remains apart from the windshaft, brake and tail wheels, although a dummy stone casing has been erected beneath the tailwheel. There are three dates, 1781, 1785 and 1790, on the post and it is likely that the first is that of the mill's construction.

The mill ceased work in the 1900's but considerable local interest and the efforts of successive owners enabled it to be kept in good repair. In 1958 a Windmill Preservation Committee was formed, and this was recently superseded by the Friends of Stocks Mill. Major repairs, including the complete renewal of the breast, were carried out by the millwrights E. Hole & Son in 1980-81. The mill is now owned by the County Council, and the roundhouse is used as a museum. The only things which spoil this fine mill are the modern windows, somewhat out of place on a post mill, which in my view should be replaced as soon as possible.

ROLVENDEN (TQ838315, O.S. Sheet 188)

A tarred post mill with a single-storey brick roundhouse and four common sails. It stands on a slight mound in a pleasant rural setting. Although the mill is kept in good order it is not open to the public and the ladder is missing. Most of the machinery is present. There are two pairs of stones, one in the breast and one in the tail. A mill is shown here on Symonson's map of 1596 but this is not likely to be the present one, which bears the date 1772 on the side framing. The mill ceased work in about 1882 and by the 1950's was in a very poor state. Happily, in 1956 it was restored as a memorial to a local road accident victim, the work being carried out by Thompsons of Alford. The mill features briefly in the Tommy Steele film 'Half a Sixpence'.

BENINDEN (Beacon Mill) (TQ822325, O.S. Sheet 188)

A smock mill on a two-storey base, built in the early nineteenth century and last worked around 1914. It was formerly painted white and had a stage and some unusually large windows. A few years after it stopped the sails and fantail were removed, along with some of the machinery including the stones. The mill remained in good condition for some years, but by 1979 was in an advanced state of decay with its cap roof and much boarding gone. However in that year the owner decided to restore the mill. In August the East Kent Mills Group held a public meeting in the village to discuss the mill's future and a preservation society was formed. Restoration began in October 1980 with the removal by crane of the windshaft, brakewheel and cap frame, the last unfortunately breaking in two as it was lowered to the ground. The smock has been roofed over and weather-proofed but much has still to be done and the floors remain unsafe. The work seems to have come to a standstill, probably due to lack of funds, but it is still hoped to complete the restoration some day.

The wallower, upright shaft and great spur wheel remain.

CRANBROOK (Union Mill) (TQ779359, O.S. Sheet 188)

A fitting way to end this tour, with what is surely the finest and most impressive windmill in the country, if not the world. This tall white smock mill on its three-storey base towers above the attractive little town to a height of 72 feet, making it one of the largest windmills in England. It has four patent sails working three pairs of stones. It was built in 1814 by the millwright James Humphrey for Henry Dobell, a fact recorded on a stone let into the walls of the base. Dobell was a heavy drinker and eventually became bankrupt, whereupon his creditors formed a union to take over the mill, hence its name. It has also been known as 'The Peacock'. Originally it had common sails and was winded by hand, but in 1840 a millwright named Warren fitted patent sails and a fantail. In 1863 a steam engine was installed to provide supplementary power. This was replaced in 1919 by a gas engine and in 1954 by an electric motor, at which point the mill ceased working by wind. The mill was kept in splendid condition over the years by the careful attention of its late owner, John Russell. Between 1958 and 1960 much repair was carried out including the fitting of two steel stocks by the Dutch millwright Chris Bremer. It seems surprising that this was ever done, since it represents the compromise of the mill's character and identity no less than by the introduction of 'foreign' features. I am sure that this would not be allowed today. Fortunately the charm of the mill is such that this detracts less from its appeal than would be the case with many others. Until recently the mill, which is owned by the County Council, was leased to an animal feed business. When the lease expired the Cranbrook Windmill Association was formed to administer the mill and restore it to a working condition. After the replacement of various missing items such as bins, chutes and hoppers the mill is now grinding again.

Sources

Jenny West, The Windmills of Kent; Charles Skilton, 1972 & 1979

R.J. Brown, Windmills of England; Robert Hale, 1976

W. Coles Finch, Watermills and Windmills; C.W. Daniel, 1933; reprinted Cassell, 1976

## **VANISHED MILLS**

PETER DOLMAN

GISLINGHAM

Gislingham is a fairly large village off the beaten track in north Suffolk, between Stowmarket and Diss. In early times a mill stood near the centre of the village at a site recorded as 'Mill Mount' on the Tithe Map, at Grid Ref. 073714. Hodskinson's map of 1783 marks a mill at Allwood Green, a former common, which is the junction of five parishes, the mill being just in Gislingham at Grid Ref. 048717. It was a small post mill, reputedly dated 1615 and had been extended

at both head and tail to take two pairs of stones. The crosstrees were at ground level and were protected by a roundhouse with vertically boarded walls. The sails came low enough 'to hit a duck' according to a man who had known the mill. It was pulled down in the late 1890's.

The road leading to this old mill from the village is known as Mill Street and along it stood another three mills in the early nineteenth century. The tower mill, described below, is first shown on Greenwood's map of 1824 at Grid Ref. 067720. Bryant, two years later, shows a second mill at Grid Ref. 071719. The Ordnance Survey of 1837 and the Tithe Map of 1839 do not show it, but the Tithe Map marks 'Mill, yard and garden' occupied by John Sillett at another site, south of the tower mill

at Grid Ref. 067718. It is quite possible that the mill shown in 1826 could have been moved to the 1839 site; its omission from the Ordnance Survey is not to be taken too seriously. Nothing else is known of it unfortunately and it seems to have gone by the 1840's.

The building of Gislingham tower mill is chronicled by Thomas King, the Thelnetham carpenter, in his well-known diary - 'one (mill) at Gislingham was raised in Aug 1821'. It was probably built by the Thelnetham millwrights Tollemache and George Bloomfield, for whom Thomas King worked for a time. It may have been built for Edward Eaton, who was advertising for an assistant in 1837. In 1839 the Tithe Map and Apportionment names him as owner, with Ellis Finch as occupier. The census of 1841 records him as miller, aged 30, assisted by William Garrod. Ellis Finch remained as miller until Kelly's directory of 1883 which records Nathaniel Finch. 'Nat' Finch continued to run the mill until his death, in his 80's, in 1928. The mill and its adjacent steam mill, built in 1854, were bought by Mortimers of Finningham who pulled the windmill down within eight months for its materials. The steam mill continued for a few years before being sold as a store in the early 1930's.

Gislingham mill was a red brick tower mill about 30 feet high to the curb, with four floors. The cap was a slightly rounded boat shape with a deep vertically-boarded petticoat with scalloped edge. In shape it was more reminiscent of the caps seen in south east England than East Anglia and was a





local peculiarity, also seen at Hinderclay mill nearby (see Newsletter 23). Several of these small tower mills were built around 1820 by the Bloomfields and it is likely that they all looked like Gislingham mill. Thelnetham windmill would have looked like it in 1819, although without the fly and patent sails, of course. The long cap covered the hand winding gear at the back, eventually superseded by a fly tacked on the back and held upright by two flimsy iron tie rods.

Inside the machinery was almost all wooden, driving two pairs of 4ft 6ins French stones on the first floor. The great spur wheel was mounted above the stones, as that at Thelnetham had been at first, and drove with wooden cogs. Rex Wailes visited the mill in the late 1920's and remarked on how the gearing had run for 50 years and was almost silent in operation. The windshaft had been replaced in iron when the two patent sails were fitted and the mill worked like this until 1925, when a pair of patent sails from Hoxne post mill were acquired to replace the remaining common sails. When pulled down it was in perfect condition and its loss was greatly lamented, not least by Claude Aldridge, who would have bought it if he could have raised the £300 asked in 1928. The picture opposite shows it c.1900; the short man on the right is probably Nat Finch, the owner; the two flour-covered men his miller and carter. Visible in the picture are wooden shutters to the ground floor windows, an unusual feature, probably due to the mill being some way from the house - security was obviously a problem then, as now. Many of the panes in the windows are 'bull's eye' glass - a mill with real character!

## **NEWS**

### NEW WATERWHEEL AT LETHERINGHAM

During the past year Chris Olley has been constructing a new waterwheel at Letheringham watermill on the River Deben. The work was commissioned by owner Rod Allen who bought the mill, empty of machinery above the pitwheel, a few years ago and has since carried out major repairs to the structure.

The new wheel is 14ft 6ins in diameter and has 48 paddles. The spokes, felloes and starts are in oak, with elm paddles and baseboards. The timber components were kept in a polythene bath of water to ensure they did not start drying out, and a sprinkler system delivering a fine mist has been fitted to moisten the completed wheel.

Most of the ironwork from the old wheel was re-used; repair was needed to one of the cast iron spoke flanges on the wheelshaft and one flange for the felloes had to be renewed. All the new ironwork was made by Hector Moore, the well-known blacksmith from Brandeston.

A new oak wheelshaft was fitted at the same time: this is a hexagon of 21ins diameter. A new set of converting wedges was needed as the centre of the pitwheel is octagonal! An iron band holding one of the gudgeons of the old shaft was found to bear the date 1888. The work also included installation of a new shut,



controlling the flow of water onto the wheel. Chris Olley estimates the combined weight of waterwheel, wheelshaft and pitwheel at six tons.

The waterwheel was run for the first time just before Christmas, and should be turning on public open days from now on. Rod Allen is contemplating the reinstatement of millstones - after all, the wheel has got to be put to good use! The mill will be open on Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays from March 31st until September 23rd.

#### THORPENESS WINDMILL RESTORED AGAIN

Following the storm damage of January 1990 and the decay in the stocks which left this post mill in such a parlous state, owners Suffolk County Council have employed E. Hole & Son to re-fit the sails, make a new ladder and repair the fly tackle. The sails have been treated to a new set of shutters including new cleats and cranks. I wonder if they will last as long as the old ones, many of which went back to the days of Aldringham corn mill. The mill once again looks smart and will re-open to the public the the Spring. One hopes that the new stocks (which are now clamped) will do better than the ones they replaced, which only lasted 12 years (modern pitch-pine). (P.D.)

#### LITTLE GLEMHAM MILL SOLD

The derelict watermill and adjoining mill house at Little Glemham have been sold to someone who we understand intends to renovate the mill rather than convert it. S.M.G. will be writing to the new owner offering advice, and we hope to be able to report progress in future Newsletters. (P.D.)

#### LESS REMAINS REMAINING

The number of minor remains of Suffolk windmills, such as post mill roundhouses, is slowly being eroded, either because their useful life has ceased or (more often) because they stand in the middle of valuable building land. In the last 10 years or so those that have disappeared include All Saints South Elmham (tower mill stump), Badwell Ash (rebuilt post mill buck), Bedingfield, Chevington, Fressingfield (all roundhouses), Huntingfield (remains of roundhouse), Lakenheath (tower mill stump), Otley and St. Michael South Elmham (both roundhouses). The latest casualty is the roundhouse of Kent's Mill in the centre of Mendlesham which was demolished sometime in 1990. On a happier note repairs have recently been completed to the roof of the roundhouse at Earl Soham, where our A.G.M. was held last June. (M.B.)

#### FOOD HYGIENE ACT

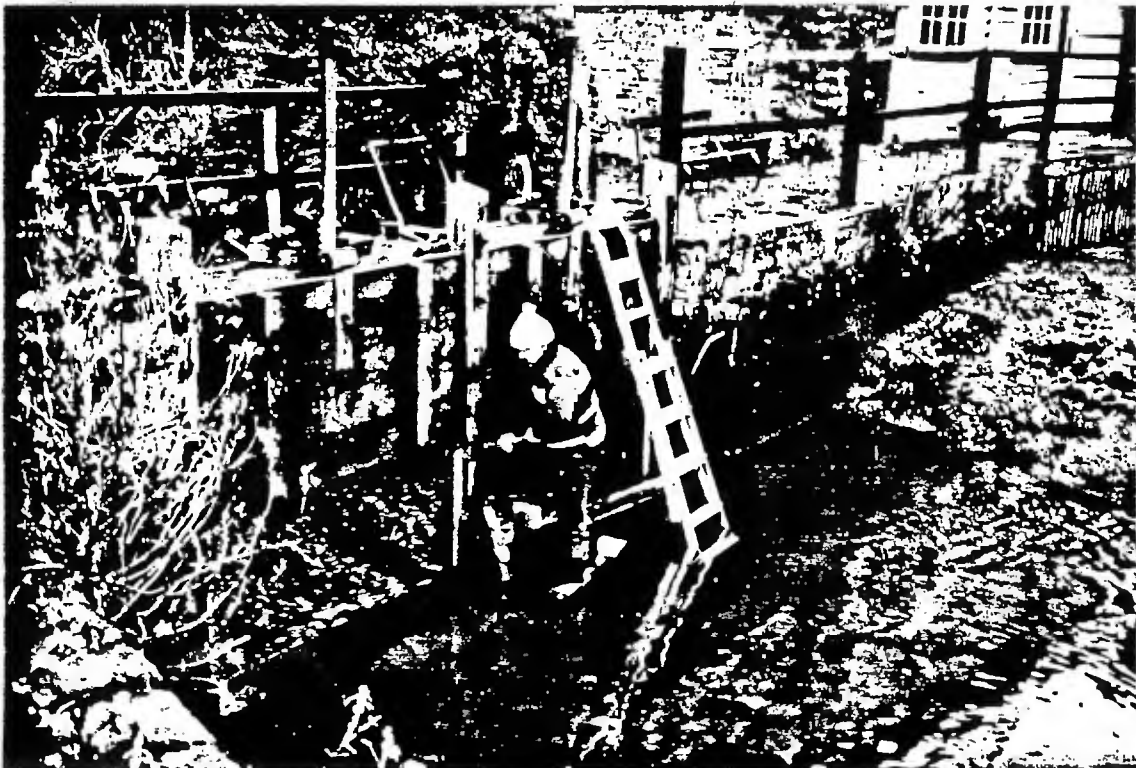
Members who are involved with mills producing flour for sale to the public should be aware of the new Food Acts which require premises to be registered and food hygiene training to be given to persons handling foodstuffs amongst other things. Environmental Health officers will have greater powers as well. A leaflet has been produced by the Government detailing the law and copies can

be obtained (free of charge) from your local Environmental Health department. Be prepared: ignorance of the law is no defence! (P.D.)

#### WORKING PARTIES AT THORINGTON STREET WATERMILL

The first week-end working party in December was blessed with dry weather so a start was made on cleaning down the front elevation and identifying how many boards would need to be replaced. This turned out to be 200 feet or so; one of the lucam braces was also condemned. Clearing out the tail pond and race was also done, with many of the fallen trees being cut up and removed. The January working party was cold, damp and very windy. Not the best day to be up a ladder painting, so we opted for investigating the condition of the hurst frame and its foundations. It became clear that a good deal of repair will be necessary, with one post rotted about half its length and one of the bridging beams supporting the upright shaft having broken right through, a rough prop having been inserted at some time. Further clearance was also made to the tail race which now runs very freely. The very cold February week-end saw the fitting of the guide channels for the sluice gates (see photograph below) and deepening of the tail race.

The next week-end on 2nd-3rd March will hopefully see new boards appearing on the mill and continuation of the painting, so do please come along and help. Watermills may not have the glamour of a windmill but they are equally fascinating to work on and just as worthy of support. Work will continue at other times through the Spring and Summer. (P.D.)



#### NEWS FROM NORFOLK

Adrian Colman's post mill at Garboldisham has been making gradual progress in recent months. The fantail has now been erected and is presumably winding the

mill once more. We hope Adrian will be able to press ahead with work to the sails and machinery in the future and wish him well.

Stow Mill, Paston now has four sails again. Owner Mike Newton writes 'John Lawn installed the new galvanised stock in late August, and made the job look remarkably easy! Three hours to remove existing, fit stock and two re-built sails! The appeal for the stock raised £1700, which considerably surpassed my expectations. I would like to thank all those who assisted in the raising of this sum. The sails are at last turning again. Next job is to sort the brakewheel gearing out.'

## EVENTS

S.M.G. PUBLIC MEETING: SATURDAY FEBRUARY 23rd at 7.30pm, at TALK ELECTRIC CENTRE, CONSTANTINE ROAD, IPSWICH

For this year's public meeting we are delighted to welcome Ken Major, a leading figure in mill preservation and research both in Britain and abroad. A member of the S.P.A.B. Wind and Watermill Section Committee since 1963, and a past Chairman, Ken is also a leading member of The International Molinological Society (TIMS). His talk is entitled 'Why Mills?'

Please note the new venue. The Talk Electric Centre is at the junction of Constantine Rd. and West End Rd., behind Ipswich Town F.C.'s ground. It is sign-posted off the local road system and there is ample parking adjacent.

VISIT TO RATTLESDEN MILLS: SUNDAY APRIL 28th, 2.30pm.

A chance to see the remains of two windmills and a roller mill in one visit! The tower mill is very derelict (take great care on rotting floors and ladders) but retains some of its Whitmore machinery. The roller mill incorporates the base of the 1818 smock mill plus some of the structure. It was dismantled in the 1960's or early 1970's by the Miller's Mutual. More recently Jordans of Biggleswade have acquired it and installed second-hand roller mills with a view to bringing it back into production; the depressed state of the flour trade has so far prevented the completion of this project. We thank S.M.G. members David Blackburn and John Jordan for allowing access; they hope to be on hand to show us round.

HERRINGFLEET MARSH MILL OPEN DAY: NATIONAL MILLS DAY, SUNDAY MAY 12th

As in previous years S.M.G. will be opening Herringfleet mill to the public on National Mills Day, when (wind permitting) she will be put to work. This will be the first of 3 or 4 open days during 1991.

S.M.G. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: SUNDAY JUNE 16th at LETHERINGHAM WATERMILL

Please make a note in your diary of this year's A.G.M., which will be held on the morning of June 16th at Letheringham watermill, by kind permission of S.M.G. member Rod Allen. Further details in the next Newsletter.