

SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

Newsletter

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The recent gutting by fire of Caldecott Mill at Fritton and attempted break-in at Herringfleet mill serve as a reminder of the vulnerability of our drainage mills, many of which are in isolated spots well away from any habitation. It is hard for us to understand why people do these things, but in truth there is probably no reasoning involved - they are simply acts of mindless vandalism usually committed by juveniles who are old enough to be mobile but young enough to lack any sense of social responsibility. Although nothing new - Walberswick mill was gutted by two youths in 1960 - the problem seems to be increasing. It is our duty to ensure that those responsible for such mills take proper measures to minimise the risk of deliberate damage.

On a happier note, our recent events have all been successful - the February public meeting in Ipswich with Ken Major, the visit to Rattlesden mills with John Jordan and David Blackburn as guides, and the National Mills Day opening of Herringfleet, which attracted around 200 visitors. We now look forward to our A.G.M. on June 16th and the opportunity to join in work at Wicken, Drinkstone and Thorington Street. Details inside!

This newsletter has a more local flavour, which it would be nice to continue in future issues. May I make yet another plea for new material, especially of a historical or technical nature.

Mark Barnard

SUFFOLK MILLWRIGHTS PETER DOLMAN

This article consists in the main of a brief list of persons or firms who styled themselves 'millwright(s)' at some time and is largely derived from 19th and 20th century trades directories plus other documentary sources. It is obviously not exhaustive and while it includes the millwrights of Ballingdon (which can't decide whether it is in Essex or Suffolk!) since they were very active within the county it does not include millwrights based in neighbouring counties, some of whom were also extremely active in Suffolk.

Many of the names listed would have been virtually one-man establishments, perhaps with hired help when necessary for big jobs. Certainly one often finds millwrights advertising for journeymen in the early and mid 19th century - I wonder how long they kept their jobs after completion of whichever project they were employed on! Some firms were not millwrights as such but larger engineering concerns who might have done a bit of small-scale millwrighting from time to time but whose bread and butter was agricultural / mechanical engineering or

foundry work. Some large ironworks produced mills as part of their range of machinery, such as Garretts of Leiston, but never styled themselves as millwrights. Similarly many people have carried out millwright's work without actually calling themselves one.

The 'golden age' seems to have been from the late 18th century up to about 1870 when several large firms were in existence and many smaller ones. Principal amongst these were the millwright dynasties of Wright (Ipswich), Collins (Melton and elsewhere), Robinson and Bear (Ballingdon), Whitmore (Wickham Market) and Martin (Beccles area). The last great windmill builder was William Bear; his late mills at Buxhall (1860) and Sudbury (1855) were well proportioned, well equiped and very powerful. Other firms building windmills after about 1850 seem to have lost the art of graceful design, going for a more utilitarian appearance. The last smock mill in the county at Ipswich (1879), probably by H. & C. Collins, was tall and skinny with virtually no batter, clad in tarred felt. The late post mills at Wetheringsett (1882-3, Whitmore & Binyon) and Pettaugh (1865, Collins) were rather plain, if fairly well proportioned. The last windmill to be built, at Cockfield (1892, Henry Brewer) was very small, again with little batter and seemed almost apologetic. What a contrast with Norfolk and Lincolnshire, where beautiful tower mills continued to be built up to the 1890's.

Millwrighting work could be dangerous; several names got into my lists through reports of accidents: one of the Eversons of Bungay fell off a mill; John Pepper fell off Waterloo Mill, Bramfield and died in 1815; Robert Wright fell off Kirkley tower mill in 1832 and died; William Bowers fell off a post mill at Sudbury and survived, although badly injured. A more remarkable escape was at Hadleigh smock mill in 1835 when two workmen building the mill (an un-named firm, unfortunately) fell 30 feet onto another person standing below them - all three survived with a few bruises!

Several of the late 19th century establishments changed with the times, becoming general or sometimes marine engineers. Thus Barton & Co. became Bruntons, still in business today as propellor makers. Other firms still trading are Ransomes, Sims & Jefferies and Suffolk Lawn Mowers (Atco) (successors to Woods & Co.), both making gardening machinery; Atterton & Ellis as engineers; Thurlow Nunn as car dealers at Stowmarket and agricultural engineers at Elmswell; and the only remaining company still loyal to its (albeit ultra modern) roots, E.R. & F. Turner who continue as Bull Motors and as a separate small company of milling engineers specialising in refurbishment of milling equipment and food processing machinery.

Of the older firms, examples of their work can be found throughout the area. Iron castings survive carrying the names of Whitmore, Collins, Page, Barton, Peck and Young; un-named castings survive from Bear and other unknown sources.

Millstones can be found with Peck, Collins, Bear and Tinsley nameplates. Some surviving mills contain inscriptions; thus 'Walter Woods' and 'John Bloomfield' can be seen at Thelnetham and 'G. Bullock & Son' can be seen at Cavenham water-mill and Stanton post mill. Physical remains of firms' premises can be found; Whitmore & Binyon's front shop, house and offices survive; Atterton & Ellis still occupy picturesque workshops in Haverhill; parts of Collins' premises at Melton and Woodbridge survive and Brewer & Sillitoe's workshop at Long Melford has been converted to a residence. Other small firms' houses and workshops also probably survive, scattered throughout the county.

SUFFOLK MILLWRIGHTS - A BRIEF LISTING

- Adams & Son (1874-96) Stowupland, later Creeting Road, Stowmarket
- Ager (or Agar) (1844-85) Absalom, Abner, John, Joseph, William, Walter; Clare.
- Algar, George (1883) Weybread. (In 1900 an engineer at Fressingfield)
- Ardley, John (1850-6) Boxford.
- Arnold, Henry (1851) Working at Tuddenham mill at time of census (not self-employed).
- Ashbey, Joseph (1791) Blythburgh.
- Atterton, John (1883-1908) Ironworks, Haverhill - later Atterton & Ellis (engineers).
- Ayres, Robert (1868) Pound Street, Halesworth, 'Mill Bill Maker'.
- Baldwin, William (1858-68) Hargrave, later Chevington.
- Balls, George (1858-74) Lower Olland Street, later Bardolph Road, Bungay (successor to Everson).
- Barnes, John (1817-23) Long Brackland, Bury St. Edmunds.
- Barnes, John (1817-68) Gazeley (possibly same as above?).
- Barnes, Richard (1858-81) Commercial Ironworks, Lowestoft; later Southtown Ironworks.
- Barton & Stearn, later Barton & Co. and Walter Stearn (1868-1925) Station Road and East Street Ironworks, Sudbury.
- Bear (or Bare), Thomas and William (1821-74) Ballingdon, branches at Stowupland and Ipswich. Also millstone builders.
- Bickers (1836-61) Charles (died 1836), later William and another Charles. Blythburgh.
- Blake, Frank (1912-mid 1950's) Dallinghoo.
- Bloomfield (1821-68) Thelnetham. Tollemache, later George with sons Tollemache, Joseph, Thomas and George. George (jun.) was at Ixworth in 1868.
- Bowers, William (1824) Sudbury - probably worked for someone else.
- Brewer, Henry (1853-1925) Long Melford. In 1908 Brewer & Sillitoe, in 1922 C. Sillitoe alone.
- Brook (or Brooks) (1868-1908) Palgrave. William, Robert, Henry.
- Brooke, Joseph (1908-25) Needham Market.
- Brown, John (died 1939) Leiston.
- Bullock, George (1871-1922) Ixworth. Later Bullock & Son. (Also bellhangers)
- Butcher, Thomas (1774-1810) Wickham Market. (Predecessor of Whitmore)
- Carter, Oswald (1896-1912) London Road, Brandon. (Also a baker)
- Case, William (1785) Ballingdon.

Catchpole, Robert Scase (1874-1896) Regent Street, Stowmarket. (Started with Bear)

Catchpole, William (1853-68) Kirkley.

Clark (or Clarke) (1853-1940's) Samuel; Weybread, later Debenham. George, lastly Amos, who moved to Ipswich eventually.

Clare (or Clears), William (1839-44) Chantry Croft, Haverhill.

Cobbold Bros. (1904) Great Blakenham.

Collins (1823-53) Dennington Road, Framlingham. Henry, later William.

Collins, John (1839-58) Woodbridge Road, Ipswich.

Collins (late 18th century-1896) Melton. Henry, later Thomas. Henry & Charles finally, at Hackney Works, Melton Road, Woodbridge.

Collins (1811-39) Needham Market. William, later Jonathan.

Constable (1835) Bury St. Edmunds.

Cornish, George (1853-1970's) Risbygate Foundry, Bury St. Edmunds. Later Cornish & Lloyds.

Crabtree, William F. (1892) Southtown Ironworks (successor to Barnes). (Later marine engineers only)

Death, Oliver (1868) Nethergate Street, Clare.

Dundas, Stuart & Sons (1925) Botesdale.

Earl (or Erle), Thomas (1860) Bungay - probably employed by someone else.

Everson, Robert & John (1828-47) Upper Olland Street, Bungay.

Friend, Edward (Ted) (early 20th century) Aldeburgh.

Gamble, W. (1858) 3, Prospect Place, Beccles Road, Lowestoft.

Gilbert, Robert (died 1840) Near Eastgate Bridge, Bury St. Edmunds. (Also brick-maker, malster and baker)

Girling (1834-51) Wickham Market. G. Girling, later William. (May have worked for Whitmore?)

Good, T. (1858) Market Weston.

Gosling, Jacob (1900-12) Bury Road, Stowmarket.

Hammond, James (1868-74) Blyburgate Street, Beccles.

Harrison, R. (1844-58) Westgate Road, Bury St. Edmunds.

Harvey, Charles (1844) New Road, Bungay.

Hindle & Pearse (1858) Commercial Road, Lowestoft (formerly partners of Richard Barnes).

Hurwood, William (1817) Bury St. Edmunds.

Hurwood (or Harwood), George (1837-49) College Street, Ipswich; later in partnership with Turner, to become E.R. & F. Turner.

Irving, William (1883) 7, Great Whip Street, Ipswich. Millstone maker (possibly worked for Tinsley?).

Jacob (1836) Gazeley.

Jameson Marshall Ltd. (1970's-1980) Hollesley, later Wickham Market.

Keymer, Henry J.C. (1883) Gorleston. Engineer, ironfounder, millwright, boiler & tank maker, steam launch & steam fishing boat builder.

Knight, Henry (1839) Debenham.

Lepard, Thomas (1874-1912) Cobholm Works, Southtown. (After 1900 only engineer)

Martin (1839-1970's) Robert - Ingate Street, Beccles; later Peddars Lane, Beccles. Son, also Robert, at Barsham, later Shadingfield. Then his son, another Robert, at Ravensmere, Beccles. Lastly Neville.

Mason, William (1797) Ixworth.

Mayse (or Mays), Edward (1819-44) Bury Street, Stowmarket.

Miles, H.D. (1908) Creeting Road, Stowmarket.

Mills & Baxter (1883) Gorleston.

Nickerson, George (1874) Barningham.

Norman, W. (1868) Victoria Street, Bury St. Edmunds.

Nunn, Samuel (1839-49) Duke Street, Hadleigh, later Needham Market.

Nunn (1844-1916) Blackheath, Wenhaston. James, then another James, lastly Simon.

Overton, Benjamin (1841) Road Farm, Norton. (Aged 75 in 1841)

Page, William (1874-96) Needham Market. Also 'Silk Mill Manufacturer'.

Palmer, Edward or Edwin (1874-83) London Road, Thetford (formerly part of Suffolk).

Pechey (1824) Bury St. Edmunds. Invented an automatic windmill in 1824.

Peck (late 19th century) Bury St. Edmunds.

Pepper, John (1779-1815) Halesworth. Died while building Waterloo Mill, Bramfield.

Philpott, David (died 1842) Brundish. (Also a miller)

Popplewell, John (1868) 34, Woodbridge Road, Ipswich. (Successor to Collins; later became mechanical engineers into 20th century)

Ransome & Son (1812-present) Orwell Works, Ipswich. Later Ransomes & May, Ransomes & Sims, and lastly Ransomes, Sims & Jefferies. William Cubitt worked for them from 1812 for several years.

Robinson (1826-53) Ballingdon. George (died 1826). Later Ling Robinson (son).

Saunders, James (1844-8) Mendlesham. Died 1848. Also 'machine maker'.

Scotchmer, John (1819-44) Was in partnership with Edward Mayse. Later at 50, Westgate Street, Bury St. Edmunds.

Sheldrake (or Sheldrick), John (1853-58) Grosvenor Place, Needham Market.

Syer, Abraham (1850-58) High Street, Hadleigh. (Also miller)

Syrett, William (1858) 'Vulcan Ironworks', Risbygate Street, Bury St. Edmunds.

Thurlow, George & Sons (1896-mid 20th century?) 'Mill Furnishers', Stowmarket.

Tinsley & Co. (Mrs. Ann) (1881-3) Dock Street, Ipswich. Millstone makers.

Turner (1853-present) In 1853 E.R. Turner & Co., St. Peters Works, Ipswich. 1858 E.R. & F. Turner. By 1896 Greyfriars Works added plus office at Mark Lane, London. In late 1930's moved to works in Foxhall Road, Ipswich (now Bull Motors). E.R. & F. Turner Ltd. now in Knightsdale Road, Ipswich, as 'Milling Engineers', carrying on a proud name.

Twinn, Jephtha (1844) Glemsford.

Vincent, A. Neville (1922) Blo' Norton (Norfolk) and Thelnetham.

Vulcan Ironworks (Philip Grice, propr.) (1896) Peddars Lane, Beccles (Martin's old premises).

Weasy, James (1824) Bures. Died 1824.

Webb (1868-mid 20th century) Exning Foundry, Newmarket. James Aves Webb, then Executors, then Ernest Aves Webb.

Webber, Arthur (1892-1922) Southtown.

Whitmore (1780(?)-1901) Ironworks, Wickham Market. Nathaniel, later his widow Elizabeth. John took over in 1820's. 1864 Whitmore & Sons, with office in Gracechurch Street, London. Later Whitmore & Son. In 1868 George Binyon in partnership. Limited Company 1899. Liquidated 1901.

Whittome, William (1841-51) Lakenheath. (Another at Undley, Norfolk)

Wilkin, Henry (1844) Angel Street, Hadleigh. Also Machine Maker.

Wilkins, William Pickford (1847-64) St. Helens Street, Ipswich. In 1847-8 in partnership with Samuel Wright. In 1861 a 'brewers' engineer'.

Woods, Cocksedge & Co. (later Woods & Long, later Woods & Co. (1874-1913)) Bury Street, Stowmarket, also Bury St. Edmunds, Ipswich, Newmarket & Norwich. Liquidation in 1913. Eventually became Suffolk Iron Foundry - still in business making lawn mowers.

Woods, Walter (1855-1883) Market Weston & Hopton. Succeeded by sons Josephus and Walter. Moved to Thetford later as machine maker.

Wright, Robert (1817-32) Bungay. Killed falling from mill at Kirkley 1832.

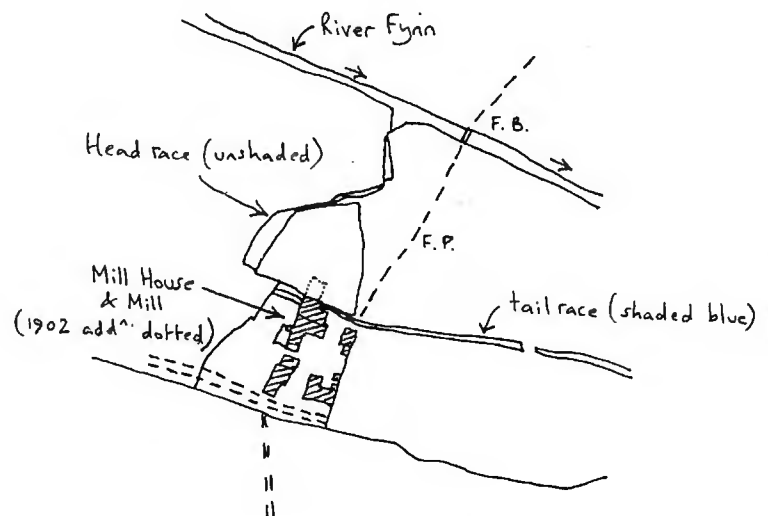
Wright (1784-1849) St. Margarets, Ipswich. Samuel Wright, later Samuel Wright & Son (also Samuel). Samuel John Wright moved to St. Helens Street 1846, partnership with W.P. Wilkins 1847-8, and with Thomas Banks at Cox Lane 1848-9. Sold out to Hurwood & Turner 1849.

Young, Elijah & Co. (1908) Back Lane, Eye. (Presumably a branch of the Diss firm)

PLAYFORD WATERMILL IN THE 1840'S MARK BARNARD

Playford watermill stands on the River Fynn (no more than a stream really), just south of the village (Grid Ref. 217475). The mill and mill house form one continuous $2\frac{1}{2}$ -storey timber framed range, which one former owner thought dated back to c.1690. It ceased work around 1875 when a fallen tree blocked the leat and a dispute ensued as to who was responsible for its removal! The mill is clearly shown on the 1881 25-inch O.S. map, shaded in grey (i.e. a timber building), but is not identified as a mill; the mill house is coloured pink (denoting brick) so the present brick facade must have been added by then. Around 1900 the mill and house were converted into cottages; the 1902 O.S. map no longer shows the head race

but shows an addition to the north of the mill which still survives. The waterwheel is said to have survived until at least the 1930's and photographs of 1961 show that the mill building was still largely clad in wide black boarding. The present appearance of the mill largely results from alterations of 1963-4 when the cottages were knocked into one and render replaced the boarding.



Playford mill as shown on the 25-inch O.S. map (1881 survey)

As can be imagined, very little of interest survives inside. There is some exposed framing and floor structure which may well date from the 18th century and part of a first floor boarded partition with a rounded corner, although this may be part of the cottages conversion. Two pairs of Peak stones noted on the site in 1975 are unlikely to have come from the mill.



Playford mill (left) & mill house today. The wheel was to the left of the main building

Playford mill was advertised for sale in the Suffolk Chronicle of 28th April 1827, enquiries to be directed to Mr. A. Biddell of Playford. It is possible that the purchaser was the Marquis of Bristol, as he certainly owned the mill before 1840, together with a large part of the parish. Mr. Biddell advertised for an apprentice in 1834, and two years later a John Hearn was at the mill. By the late 1830's John Hearn had been succeeded by Frederick Kindred, whose bankruptcy in 1841 gives us a unique insight into the state of the mill at that time and how it must have ranked with others as a business proposition.

Among the Bristol Estate documents preserved at the West Suffolk Record Office are two letters from prospective tenants early in 1841. Joseph Button of Bentley watermill had looked over Playford mill and house with his father and found them '... in a most dilapidated state; the house is nothing like habitable, the floors and ceiling are much damaged by rats... Respecting the Mill, I find all and every thing belong to the tenant, which certainly is not customary, for in no instance can I hear but what the two first motions (viz, the Water and pit wheels) should be Landlords property; at all events the former should, without any exception. The flood gate which belongs to the Landlord is in such a state as to be past any repairing. ...still I should have no objection to become a tenant, provided we can come to terms...'

A month later William Boby of Walton near Ipswich also found the mill

'... in a very dilapidated state... before I can say whether I should like it for my Nephew I beg to ask in what way you propose letting it, whether the Marquis will put it into a going state as the inside will require to be almost all new.'

So what did this run-down mill contain? The answer lies in two inventories prepared by millwright John Whitmore in April 1841, for the benefit of Frederick

Kindred's creditors, the main one being his landlord. The first inventory is of machinery and fixtures in the watermill and house, which were valued at £63 11s 4d. In the mill the following are itemised:

'A Six feet Sack Barrel - 2 Gudgeons & Hoops - 27in. Elm Rigger Cast Iron Swivel Pulley & Irons - 29 feet of 2 inch single Strap Cast Iron laying Shaft bolts & brasses - 3 Wood Riggers - Flour Mill nut & Cogs - 3 ft. 3 in. Wood fly Wheel with Cogs & bolts - 6 feet deal Spout leading from Wheat-bin - Main upright Shaft Gudgeons Hoops Bridging Box Bolts & Brasses - Flour Mill with Reel beaters - Flour Mill hopper Cords & pulleys as fixed - 7½ feet Jumper with 3 Wires - 25 feet of poppitts Brays & Braces Sack Jigger with Hoops Chains and Bearers as fixed Rubbing stone - 2 eye Tins - 3 Bill handles & 15 feet of Stone Rope. 6 feet Wood Spur Wheel Arms bolts & Cogs - 8½ feet Pit Wheel with Arms bolts & Cogs - Water Wheel Shaft Gudgeons Hoops Grapples & Brasses 2 Oak bearers and Pillar Blocks at each end of the Water Wheel Shaft - About 400 feet of Old float & Drum boards and Old Rims arising from the Old Water Wheel 4 cwt. 2 qrs. 0 lb. of old Iron Ties Bolts & Gudgeons - 2 Oak Bridgetrees Bridging Box Bolts & Brasses - 2 small corn hoppers with Lips Hooks Cords & pulleys - 1 Bag - 1 Mill Bill - Old eye Rope & 24 inch old Rigger - 1 Sett of old Vatts - Pieces of Oak Boarding Spouts and old pieces - Wire Seive - Iron hand Gigger - 4 Iron Spanners 1 Punch - 2 Cast Iron Racks attached to Old Water Wheel Gate 2 Stone Rolls Iron Crome and Sack Brand -'

The second inventory covers various items of machinery stated as having been 'taken from the Water Mill', including the three pairs of stones and their final drive:

'3 Small Cast Iron Pinions - purchase Wheel 2 Spindles and Crank - 1 Old flour mill reel Sack Barrow Cucumber frame & light, Small Chickens'-coop - Iron Oven-lid 2 Feeding Irons - 3 Necks Collars & bolts - 2 Stone Boxes - 1 Neck brass 1 Bushel Skep - Cross-cut Saw - Painted fender - 2 Old Sett of Vatts Covers and Hopper - pair of Wood pulleys with 4 Wood Shives and Rope - Smutt Machine rigger & spindle - 2 Flour Cloths 2ft 9in. Kitchen Range trevel & Crane - Old Wood Crown Nut 2 Old Rope Riggers Deal Dresser - 2 Swing Brackets 3 Tubs Covers & Tin Iron Crowbar - two Iron Weights, broadstave Ladder, Old Set of Harrows, Grindstone with Spindle & Crank Cast Iron Crown Nut with Iron Cogs, 3 Stone Nuts and 3 lower Tap Spindles - Meal Trough - ½ Peck Measure Deal Table and Writing Desk, 23 Millbills Wt. 51lbs. 2 Chains Wt. 56lbs. - 33 feet of 3 inch Single Strap 1 pair of 3ft. 6in. French Stones - 2 pair of 3ft. 9in. Do.'

The value of these was £61 19s 0d, a large part of which must have been accounted for by the millstones.

Later in 1841 the Estate paid for structural work to the mill and house, work on the mill costing £24 19s 2d. This still left the repair or renewal of the machinery, and in particular the waterwheel and floodgates, both expensive items.

By June 1842 new tenants had been found, George Baker, a miller from Combs, and Samuel (or Stephen) Denny, a farmer, also from Combs. The tenancy was to run for 12 years at £50 p.a.. The Estate undertook to first put the premises 'into good tenantable repair forthwith' whereupon Baker and Denny were to be responsible for maintenance (although they were allowed materials according to the custom of the Estate). Baker and Denny had to buy all the machinery and articles included in the above inventories for an agreed sum, the Estate undertaking to buy it all back at the end of the term provided the rest of

the agreement was honoured. The only exception was the waterwheel which, although it was maintained by the tenants, was retained by the Estate. An interesting footnote to the agreement states that the tenants were to pay half the difference between the cost of an iron over a wooden waterwheel, amounting to £5.

Immediately after this agreement was drafted, John Whitmore submitted the following estimate for work to the mill:

'Estimate for Repairing the Building, the Foundation and Floors New Water Wheel Shaft, Water Wheel and leading trough & c. for the Waterwheel - Situated at Playford...

To find about 1 Square of Weather Board for the Front of the Mill, 3 new Doors & Irons, and repairing 4 Windows, About 30 Yds. of Brickwork filled in between Studding Or new Weather Board on the Present Studds - New Bottom floor with Brick pinning, Oak Joists, and Bearers, and laid with $1\frac{1}{4}$ in Deal Batten, or paved with Oak and Concrete - About $1\frac{1}{2}$ Rod of Brickwork laid with Cement for the Outside and inside Water Walls, 9 Oak Sills 9x7 for Hearse and Pillarblocks 4 New Staple Posts, 3 New Bridgetrees, and Brays, and Bearers for the Upright Shaft, and all new floor over the same - New Iron Water Wheel Shaft, with 2 new Oak Pillar Blocks and Cast Iron Carriages fitted with 2 Brasses, Shifting Screws and raising Wedges, New Overshot Water Wheel about $10\frac{1}{2}$ feet diameter, and 6 feet Wide, fitted with Cast Iron Rims, Oak floor Boards, Oak Drum boards and Risers - 2 Set of Cast Iron Arms hung and fitted with Iron Keys to Shaft, and Attached to Water Wheel with proper flanches and Bolts - New Trough about 11 feet (long) and 6 feet wide fitted with Cast Iron Gate and Rovers, 2 Cast Iron Rack, Purchase Wheel Spindle and Crank for Raising the same - The Whole of the above named work to be Completed with the Best Materials and Workmanship for the Sum of Two hundred and eleven pounds.'

'I find it almost impossible to make an Accurate Estimate of the Expencc for the new Flood Gates the old ones being in such a Delapidated State and the quantity of Earth washed away from them make it difficult to ascertain in what state the Foundations are - but in my Opinion they will cost about Fifty Pounds - and should you wish to pull the old Framing of the Mill down and Rebuild the Same with Bricks - and all new Floors, and about 7 feet higher with Slated Roof - it will make an Additional Outlay of about One Hundred Pounds.'

Pencil notes on the rear of the estimate, also in John Whitmore's hand, show that the Estate, far from contemplating a total rebuild, did not want to spend more than was absolutely necessary:

'A Saving of the expense may be made as follows

1st Weather Board for the back of the Mill instead of Brick	About	5	-	0	-	0
2nd the difference in the repairing of the Hearse instead						
of which the Pit Wheel to be repaired -		10	-	0	-	0
and I think the flood Gates will not cost so much by About		10	-	0	-	0
the floor over the Hearse to be the tenants		2	-	0	-	0
for joist for the bottom floor		2	-	0	-	0
the repairs to be began immediately and finished by September.'						

A further pencil note states 'afix a new wooden wheel in the same overshot form'. So despite the tenants sharing the extra cost of an iron waterwheel, it seems likely that the Estate went for a wooden one after all.

A letter from John Whitmore to the Estate in August 1842 states that the new hearse itself was to be erected by the tenant, on a new brick foundation.

Events are concluded by John Whitmore's letter to the Estate dated 31.10.1842:

'I take the liberty of informing you that the Playford Water Mill is now got to work driving 2 pair of stones with less than one third the water it use to take to drive one pair - (it have been at work driving one pair of stones some time).

I think I may say Mr Baker & Denny are both perfectly satisfied with the mill ... The only part that I can see defective will be the flood gates I am fearful from what I have seen by the water coming down so quick and the mill not using so much as she did that the iron (?) cylinder for the gates will not take away the water quick enough...'

This episode over, for the remainder of the mill's working life we must turn to trades directories and census returns. The 1851 census lists George Brown Baker, aged 31, as master miller, employing three men, including an apprentice miller, William Woods. By 1853 Kelly's directory gives Thomas Bixby as miller, who was there until at least 1858. William Howell had appeared on the scene by the 1861 census, aged 40, and with no less than nine children! Howell is listed in trades directories until 1875, after which no miller appears, and it is assumed the mill was out of use. The 1881 census return for Playford has no Howell or Bixby. 'Mill Houses' was occupied by one James Frost, who is given as the last miller in a short local magazine feature on the mill, although the census does not list him as a miller.

It is of course purely by chance that the documents relating to the refurbishment of the mill in 1841-2 survive, but it does tell us a great deal about a mill which stopped work well over a century ago. Almost as great a stroke of luck is that the mill building still stands.

I would like to thank Jim Gould, the present owner, and Peter Dolman for their help in compiling this article.

NEWS

REG CLOVER

Another link with the old days of milling has been lost with the death a few weeks ago of Reg Clover. He was brought up with his brothers and sisters at Drinkstone and helped his father Daniel to run the mills. The business was not large enough to provide a living for all of Daniel's children so they had to make their own way in the world. Reg stayed in milling, moving to a modern roller mill. One of his favourite stories was how one day his boss said to him 'You will make a good ornament for my office stool'. This meant he had learned the practical side of the processes and now had to be initiated into the mysteries of the office and management of the mill. He eventually became a wheat buyer and his experience and judgement in selecting when and what to buy and the price to offer could mean the difference between profit and loss to a mill.

In the late 1950's and 1960's he and his brother Wilfred produced a little stoneground flour at Drinkstone but they were too early as it was not until the 1970's that demand for wholemeal products really increased.

His many interests included local history and he wrote several books and many articles on his own area. He was an active supporter of his local church and was a member of S.M.G. since its foundation in 1977. He enjoyed our mill

visits and meetings and we have some good photographs of him working with us on repairs to the Drinkstone smock mill in 1979. (C.H.)

A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME A WIND-MILLER

Thelnetham windmill is looking for additional people to help with its opening, maintenance and running. Currently the mill is open Sundays and Bank Holidays from Easter to October plus Saturdays in July to September. Last year there were some 4,000 visitors and five tons of flour was milled.

Ideally the six existing trust members would like people to join them as equal partners for which a maximum payment of £3000 would be required (less if two or more join), with full ownership rights. But they would also consider a lesser sum for an 'associate' with proportionally reduced voting rights, or even (for the right person) no charge and a voluntary 'friend' arrangement. The mill is run on a non-profit making basis but payment of travelling expenses can be met and opportunities exist for selling flour away from the mill if desired.

The aim is to find active helpers to keep one of the very few real working windmills in East Anglia turning on a regular basis. If any S.M.G. member is interested please write to Thelnetham Windmill, near Diss, Norfolk IP22 1JZ or telephone Peter Dolman for a chat on 0473 742388.

THIS YEAR AT HERRINGFLEET

Our first visit to Herringfleet mill this year was in February when members of the 14th and 15th Lowestoft and 2nd Oulton Broad Venture Scout groups and their leaders Laurence Chapman, Richard Stone and Paul Hart spent a day digging out mud from the water channels leading to and from the mill. This can only be done in winter when the water level is kept very low by pumping. It is raised in summer for the cattle to be able to drink easily. Fortunately it was a mild day as our volunteers soon became very damp and muddy. They worked like demons, digging out several tons of evil smelling mud and bucketing it across to the other side of the river wall.

Last winter we made two more signs, not only warning people to keep clear of the sails but also to keep dogs on leads as a tall dog could easily be struck by the sails.

The first of this year's open days was on May 12th and despite very still and unpromising weather there was sufficient breeze from time to time to turn the sails and even pump a little water. Throughout the afternoon about 200 people walked down to the mill including some of the Scouts who had helped us earlier. Our old friend Bob Hardwick took some video of the mill and Richard Seago the Norfolk millwright together with his wife and daughter came to see his handiwork in action.

We will be at Herringfleet a couple more times this year and on one of these occasions we hope John Jordan will bring his old biplane to the Waveney valley and perform some aerobatics over the mill. Do get there if you can. (C.H.)

CALDECOTT MILL, BELTON MARSHES

As mentioned recently in the local press, Caldecott Mill, Belton has been wantonly destroyed by fire. This is a great loss to the stock of Broads drainage mills, as it retained virtually all of its working machinery. In 1984 the mill was the subject of a Broads Authority protection scheme when doors and an aluminium-covered cap were fitted.

The mill has been completely gutted, only a portion of one floor beam and the upright shaft of the wooden components remaining. When intact the mill possessed its working cap frame in fair condition with all of its ironwork, a seven-foot elm clasp-arm headwheel mounted on a two-piece iron windshaft. The wallower and crown wheel are both iron, formerly mounted on a pitch pine upright shaft. One of the saddest losses is the destruction of the superb eight-foot diameter oak and elm pitwheel complete with the upright shaft / scoopwheel shaft hurst frame. All the iron machinery has survived although the crown wheel has been cracked.

The future of the mill is now under consideration with all the iron components having been taken into store.

Vandalism aimed at the Broads mills is an increasing problem. Recently Turf Fen mill at How Hill and Herringfleet mill have been attacked, fortunately only sustaining damage to doors, although the attempted entry at Herringfleet was very nearly successful. (Richard Seago)

TIDE MILL GRANARY CONVERTED

The long-delayed conversion of the granary adjacent to Woodbridge tide mill into luxury apartments and shop units is nearing completion. Despite reservations about the dividing-up of the fine internal spaces and the loss of much of the original studding during building work, the end result is not at all bad, with a restrained appearance appropriate to the building's character. The four windmill sail whips which were built into the lean-to roof in front of the building have been cut down and re-used as posts on the ground floor.

The tide mill itself is now open every day except Mondays from May until September. To help with opening during this time it is hoped to appoint an assistant warden. A new timber fire escape stair has recently been completed, similar to the old in appearance but painted white. (M.B.)

BARDWELL WATERMILL CONVERSION BID

Applications have been submitted by Suffolk County Council to convert Bardwell watermill to residential use, as an annexe to the adjoining mill house. The mill, which was part of a County Council farm, is empty of all its machinery with the exception of the breast-shot iron waterwheel, which survives minus about half its buckets. It is intended to reinstate the sash and centre-pivoting windows and white-painted boarding which were removed in a mid 1960's refurbishment by West Suffolk County Council. Other external alterations will



MILLS IN THE NEWS

Left: Bardwell watermill

Centre: Woodbridge tide mill granary conversion nears completion (April 13th)

Bottom: Venture Scouts digging out watercourses at Herringfleet mill on February 24th.



be minimal. It is also hoped that the water level of the Black Bourn can be raised to improve the setting of the mill and possibly allow a limited flow again through to the tail race. The mill is listed Grade II and the listed building application will be decided by the Secretary of State. (M.B.)

COPDOCK MILL REPAIRED

The watermill at Copdock, near Ipswich, has been repaired following serious fire damage in September 1988 (see Newsletter 43). The upper part of the brick walls have been carefully rebuilt, retaining details such as the sawtooth brick cornice, the cast iron windows refurbished and a new slated roof constructed. The lucam has also been rebuilt. The interior, already gutted of the original milling machinery, has been re-equipped with new plant. Unfortunately this has involved the removal of all the upper floors, which although fire-damaged were probably capable of repair. Still, at least the exterior of this attractive little mill building is preserved and the fact that the Belstead Brook still flows through it adds immeasurably to its character. (M.B.)

WICKEN WINDMILL PROGRESS

The restoration of this large Cambridgeshire smock mill by volunteers continues to proceed well. The Preservation Group wishes to thank all those helping over the past year for their much valued work. As usual there was a good S.M.G. representation, straying only slightly over their border. So, thanks again!

Work has been progressing on three main fronts: the smock frame and cladding, the curb and the cap. After a tremendous effort the final boards on the twelfth and last side of the smock tower were fitted last August. This means that we have completed four sides in each year of the smock cladding project.

After much heart-searching we decided to completely renew the wooden curb. The original was lightly constructed, and on dismantling was found to be too frail to re-use. The essence of the Wicken smock design and its long survival is that, although the structural components tend to be light, they are placed with a good deal of engineering subtlety. Despite this, because of the age of the mill and the intention to work it, the new wooden curb will be doubled in thickness. We feel this will not alter the essential lightness of the structure, while increasing the wooden curb's resistance to bending by up to eight times. (The curb proper is a composite of the wooden, and bolted to it, the iron curb. The mill will no longer be so dependent on the strength of the iron curb.)

The need to rebuild the curb, combined with drying time for the timber, means that the cap is now planned to be lifted on in the first work-in of 1992. This delay should have little effect on the completion date of the whole project, in that we could proceed with other jobs while awaiting the cap lift. We will also be able to take the cap work further than originally planned in the relative comfort of the ground.

In 1990 the new cap circle was made and fitted, together with a considerable

amount of strengthening to the frame, which will be retained. Further, trial assembly of the 12ft. fantail was carried out.

The cap and curb will be the major tasks on the windmill this year. In the first work-in we will be concentrating on fitting the new cap runner plates, finial shaping and jointing of the full-length roof ribs, scarfing the shorter rib sections, completing the finial disc and preparing for the new curb. The existing cap roof put on by Chris Wilson as a holding operation in 1971 will be removed carefully for re-use elsewhere. The new main ribs and finial disc will then be erected, followed by the roof stiffening ring and minor ribs, together with the framing for the unusual gabled porch.

Work-ins this year will be July 20th - 28th and August 17th - 25th. I hope as many stalwarts as possible will turn out. It might be heavy and dirty work, but it is satisfying! For further information please contact Dave Pearce (0664 822751) or Alan Wallis (0634 710114). (D.P.)

S.M.G. VISIT TO RATTLESDEN MILLS

April can be a treacherous month and we were lucky to have a fine sunny and mild day for our visit. The little windmill tower has suffered greatly since its working days. The mill was decapitated and the curb and several feet of brickwork removed. Then concrete was poured onto the dust floor with a raised hatch to give access to the top. About 16 years ago a pair of stones, its drive and crane were removed to be used in the restoration of another mill. Today the concrete 'roof' has cracked, letting water pour into the tower and rotting the dust floor completely and threatening to project chunks of concrete down through the floors.

The roller mill is a large complex of buildings incorporating part of the base of the smock mill and the sheer trees from the smock mill cap as floor beams. An intriguing baulk of mill timber forms a prop, either an upright shaft or a windshaft cut off behind the neck. There is some interesting roller milling machinery in place and a lot stored ready to be incorporated if the mill were ever to be used again, but this seems increasingly unlikely.

John Jordan very kindly gave us some lengths of steel channel which we will fit horizontally below the windmill's dust floor, propped from below. The concrete secure, will can then seal the cracks, re-fit the hatch and the deterioration should be halted. (C.H.)

EVENTS

S.M.G. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: SUNDAY 16th JUNE at LETHERINGHAM WATERMILL, commencing 11 am.

The 1991 A.G.M. will be held at Letheringham by kind invitation of Mr. & Mrs. Rod Allen, who are S.M.G. members. The mill has recently been repaired and a new waterwheel fitted (see last Newsletter), and occupies delightful grounds beside the River Deben. In the afternoon there will be an opportunity to visit an engine-driven hurst frame set-up (disused) at Wilby. Full details are enclosed.

THIS YEAR'S WORK AT DRINKSTONE

We hope to do more work at Drinkstone mills this year, particularly to the smock tower. Our holding roof was fitted a dozen years ago now and the covering of pallet timber has deteriorated considerably although the structure is still good. We have at our disposal the good exterior quality plywood and aluminium sheets from the holding roof put onto Wicken mill by Chris Wilson 20 years ago and kindly given to us by the Wicken trust. This should enable us to make good the covering with an easily maintained and long-lasting material. We really need some help there and would anyone who can spare a little time at weekends please contact Chris Hullcoop on Felixstowe 671462.

FURTHER WORK AT THORINGTON STREET WATERMILL, STOKE BY NAYLAND

The early March weekend was again not very suitable for painting off high ladders so cleaning down the boarding to the side elevation was tackled instead. A start was made on repairing the worst of the hurst posts, and a delivery of new timber was cleaned down and stacked to dry out (having been 'tanalised') prior to use.

Three further weekends are planned: 6th-7th July, 3rd-4th August and 7th-8th September. In addition, if help is forthcoming, work may take place on weekday evenings and other weekends. The materials are being provided by the mill's owner, Tendring Hall Estate; all we need to supply is the volunteer labour. Please come along and help if you can. Contact Peter Dolman (0473 742388) or turn up on the day.

WORK-INS AT WICKEN MILL, CAMBS.: JULY 20th-28th & AUGUST 17th-25th

See above news item for details.

SUFFOLK HISTORY FAIR: SATURDAY 27th & SUNDAY 28th JULY, 10am-5pm, at MUSEUM OF EAST ANGLIAN LIFE, STOWMARKET

S.M.G. will have a stand at this weekend, which will include exhibitions by over 50 local societies, museums and other groups, as well as archive films, lectures and demonstrations. Pay us a visit and see the museum too!

S.M.G. VISIT TO DALHAM SMOCK MILL: SUNDAY 15th SEPTEMBER, from 2.30pm.

We are pleased to announce a visit to this fine late 18th century smock mill on the Suffolk - Cambridgeshire border, which was the subject of extensive restoration work in the late 1970's, although the sails, fantail and brakewheel are missing. The important machinery includes three pairs of stones on a hurst frame, the last example in a smock mill. The mill is now owned by Mr & Mrs Carr; Mrs Carr is the grand-daughter of the late Frank Farrow.

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