

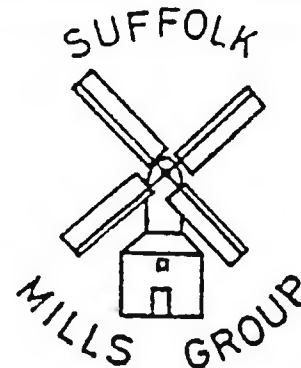
# SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

## Newsletter

No. 52  
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As usual we have organised, or publicised and supported, an excellent range of events over the summer months. Details of some of these were given in the last Newsletter, and two other specials, the Herringfleet open day and flying display on August 4th and the boat trip to Norwich a week later, were advertised in a letter sent to all members in July. We found it a little disappointing that there was not more interest shown in some of these activities, especially the boat trip (see inside). Attendance at the A.G.M. was also lower than usual. Of course we can't make you all come along, and many members do live outside Suffolk, but are we giving you what you want? Do write and say if you feel we should be doing anything differently!

Like the S.P.A.B., we tend to stick to a tried and trusted programme, so we've arranged the usual (and popular) member's evening and fixed a date for the 1992 public meeting. Put the dates in your diary now!

Sun. October 13th	Herringfleet mill open day
Sat. November 16th	S.P.A.B. watermill meeting, London
Sat. December 7th	S.M.G. member's social evening, Stowmarket
Sat. February 22nd	S.M.G. public meeting, Ipswich

I would like to thank those of you who have sent in material for the newsletter. Further items would as always be welcomed.

Mark Barnard

## STEAM MILLS IN SUFFOLK (1) PETER DOLMAN

With the development of reliable and powerful rotative steam engines at the end of the eighteenth century it is surprising that the more enterprising local millers did not adopt steam power sooner than they did. However as most East Anglian millers were conservative they clung onto water and wind power well into the nineteenth century. The earliest steam mills I know of in Suffolk date from about 1820, often run in conjunction with existing wind or watermills. They gradually became more commonplace until by the early twentieth century there were dozens, in all parts of the county, ranging from large roller mills down to small farm mills with only one pair of stones. Most of these farm mills were not trading mills and were therefore not recorded by directories. Many will therefore have escaped notice. My notes on steam mills are rather incomplete, as I have only made note of references to steam mills while researching wind or watermills, but I think the following lists will give a reasonable coverage of those known to have stood during the last 170 years, certainly those that traded as

millers. Grid references are given where known.

Independent Steam Mills (i.e. those not built next to a pre-existing wind or watermill)

Barsham (395895 ?) Barsham Hall. 1900-12 directories.

Barton Mills (708742) In 1858 'Peachey's Steam Mill'. Later called 'Barton Steam Mill' and eventually run with nearby Lark Mills at Mildenhall. Now converted to housing.

Beccles 1. Fen Lane. In 1853 'new ... with 2 pairs of stones'. Worked until 1933 at least.

2. Waveney Mill, Northgate Street. Run with a brewery from at least 1853-1874.

3. 21, Smallgate. A sole directory reference to an oil engine-powered grist mill in 1916.

4. Castle Mill (424896). Built 1880 to replace windmill. Demolished mid 1970's.

Bedingfield Park Farm. 1896-1900 directories.

Beyton (936634) Built 1852, extended 1888, ceased work c. 1918. Had 12 h.p. engine driving three pairs of stones. Building survives, disused at present.

Botesdale (047756) Botesdale maltings. Established before Great War (?) and dismantled 1935-6 when machinery taken to Norton.

Brandon High Street. 1864-1904 directories. (Possibly earlier as well)

Brent Eleigh (944477) Built 1895 to replace windmill on another site. Worked until c.1930. Has planning consent for residential conversion.

Bury St. Edmunds 1. Southgate Mill (859636). Working by 1841; probably rebuilt as roller mills in late 19th century. Ceased work 1939 and in 1980's converted to flats.

2. Railway Mills (852650). Only listed 1868, probably used as seed warehouse later. A large brick building remains, still used as a warehouse.

3. St. Andrews Mill (852642 ?). 1896-1925 (and later?).

4. Northgate Street. 1868-1885 directories.

5. Bloomfield Street. A single directory reference in 1900.

Cavendish (805466) Built 1841 and run with Pentlow watermill until 1930's (or later). A handsome building, now converted to flats.

Chilton (near Sudbury) A single directory reference in 1883.

Cockfield Cross Green (896556). Converted from farm buildings in 1890's; worked until 1933 at least, in conjunction with Bradfield St. George windmill after 1908. Now converted to a house.

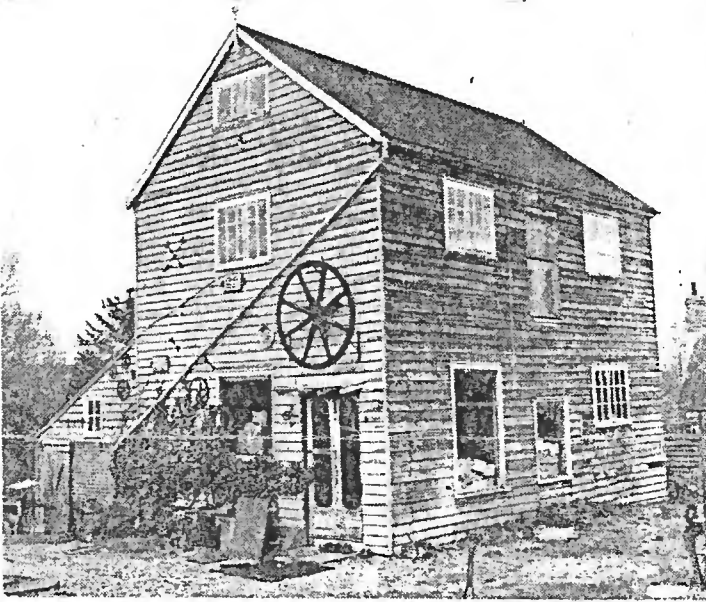
Coddenham Unknown site. Directory references 1896-1900.

Debenham In 1848 a 'newly built' steam mill with engine and 2 pairs of stones, all by Wright & Wilkins of Ipswich, was for sale. Nothing more is heard of it so it was presumably taken elsewhere.

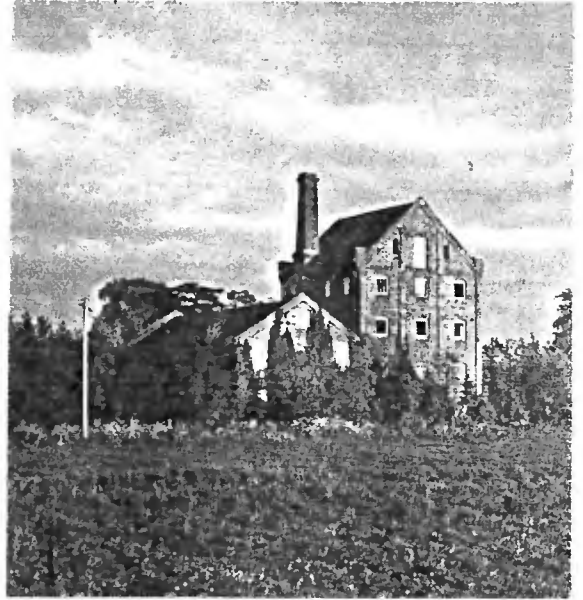
East Bergholt Flatford Steam Mill (076332). Converted from a barn in the late nineteenth century, this was near the well-known watermill and, according to directories, seems to have been run in competition with it from time to time. Indeed if directories are to be believed, the watermill ceased work first! (which I think is unlikely). The last directory entry is 1925 and the building was converted into a house in the 1970's.

Earl Soham (246644) Built c.1900 with parts of preceding post mill. Still standing, disused.

Elmswell 1. Baker's Mill (989639). Possibly working as early as 1868. By 1892 run in conjunction with Warren mill, Wetherden. Still standing, run by Bakers



Brent Eleigh



Mellis

(but not milling any more).

2. Crown Roller Mills (990639). Working by 1885; extensively rebuilt early 1900's as roller mill, run in conjunction with Rattlesden Mills.

3. Station (?) 1912-1925 directories. May have been just a warehouse for Great Ashfield mill.

Eye 1. Perseverance Steam Mills, Hoxne Road. Single reference in 1883.

2. Langton Grove & Abbey Farm. 1896-1900.

3. Station Road (may have been warehouse for Mellis mill). 1885-1925.

Felixstowe East Anglia Mills (281332). Built 1905-7 as a branch of Marriages Mill at Colchester. Refitted several times and still in operation, as a RHM flour mill.

Framlingham 1. Maulden's Mill (284636). Converted from part of a maltings by 1864. Mauldens had it by 1883 and set it up with Whitmore & Binyon roller plant. Ceased work in 1930's (?) and heavy gear removed. Still standing, some machinery remains, extremely derelict.

2. 'Steam Mill' (284634). Built 1855, dismantled c.1865 and converted to a meeting hall. Still standing, as Methodist church hall.

3. Station Road (284630). 1896-1900. What is probably this mill still stands, amongst other later buildings, used as a store.

Fressingfield Willow House. Single reference, 1933.

Gorleston 1. Southtown Steam Mill (521075). 'Recently built' in 1845, refitted with Whitmore & Binyon roller machinery c.1890 and worked until 1920's, if not later.

2. Waveney Mill (522073). Despite its name, stands by River Yare! Working by 1883, still in use, but possibly not as mill.

Great Welnetham 1. Tutelina Mills (878599). Converted from malting 1856 but never completed. Reverted to malting. The building survives, part dated 1868.

2. Station. Directory entries for Cockfield steam mill (see above) list 'also at Welnetham Station', although this may have only been a warehouse.

Haughley (026622) Built between 1844 and 1848. Also a sash cord factory. Had two pairs of stones and two engines in 1848, one of 6 h.p. with two cylinders and one of 2 h.p.. Ran until 1930's or later. Still standing, but gutted and converted.



Haverhill (672457). Originally a weatherboarded mill c.1870. Refitted in 1890 with Whitmore & Binyon roller plant. Hovis bought it in 1915 and installed a Garrett semi-portable engine (now preserved at the Long Shop museum, Leiston). It was rebuilt and refitted in 1936, ceased flour production in 1947 and finished in 1977 as a feed mill. It is now used as a builder's merchants and is a stunning building, in 1930's Art Deco style, and looking more like a cinema than a mill! (see recent photograph above).

Hessett 1908-16 directories.

Hopton (996793). Replaced two windmills c.1914 and ceased in 1930's. Now gone.

Ipswich 1. St. Clements Mill (approx.171433). Possibly the first in Suffolk, this was connected with Ridley's brewery at Mill Place and was running by May 1822. It is last listed in 1844. There were three pairs of stones.

2. Halifax Mill, Wherstead Road (163426). Built c.1850 near, or on the site of, one of a pair of windmills (which it presumably replaced). It had four pairs of stones driven by a 'Sims Patent 15 h.p. engine'. Last noted in 1885, it still stands, used as light industrial premises.

3. Smith's Mill, Woodbridge Road (186451). Built 1870, later joined by a windmill, which it outlived. Fitted with Tattersall 'Midget' roller plant in 1894. Ceased in 1940's or later, now used as retail premises.

4. West End Mills, Benezet Street (155450). Built to replace a nearby windmill burnt down in 1859, this was enlarged and developed in the 1870's. Ceased work in 1940's or later. Still stands, disused.

5. Dock Roller Mills (166441). Built 1884, enlarged and modernised many times. Still working, under Allied Mills.

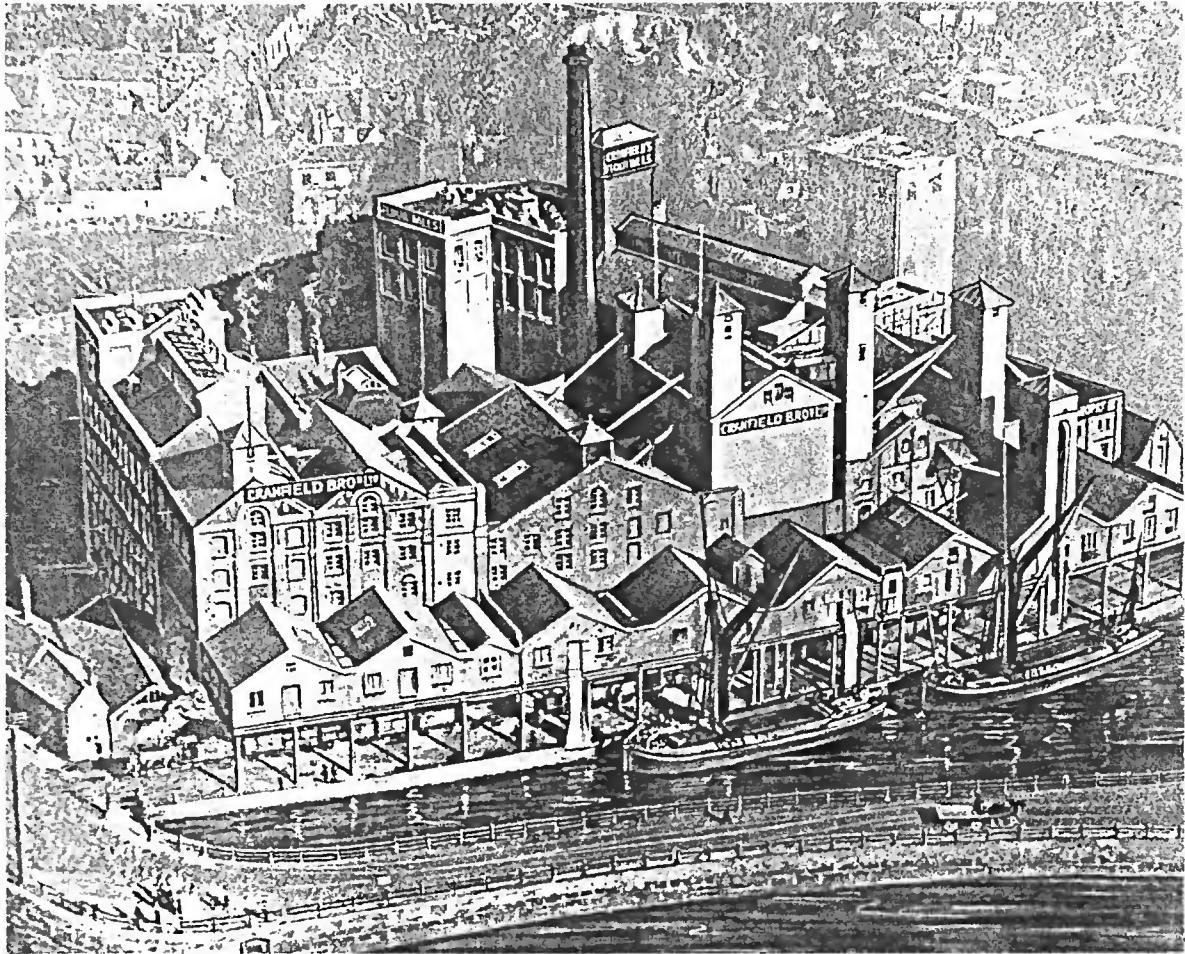
6. St. Nicholas Street. For sale in 1852. 4 h.p. engine driving one pair of stones. (Nothing more heard of it.)

7. Eastern Union Mills (163440). Built 1848, incorporating the carcass of the former Stoke tide mill. Run by Fisons as flour mill until early 1920's, according to directories; probably converted to fertilizer factory, then taken over and converted to yeast factory in 1933, when the old tide mill was replaced by a concrete building. The whole site was cleared in the mid 1970's.

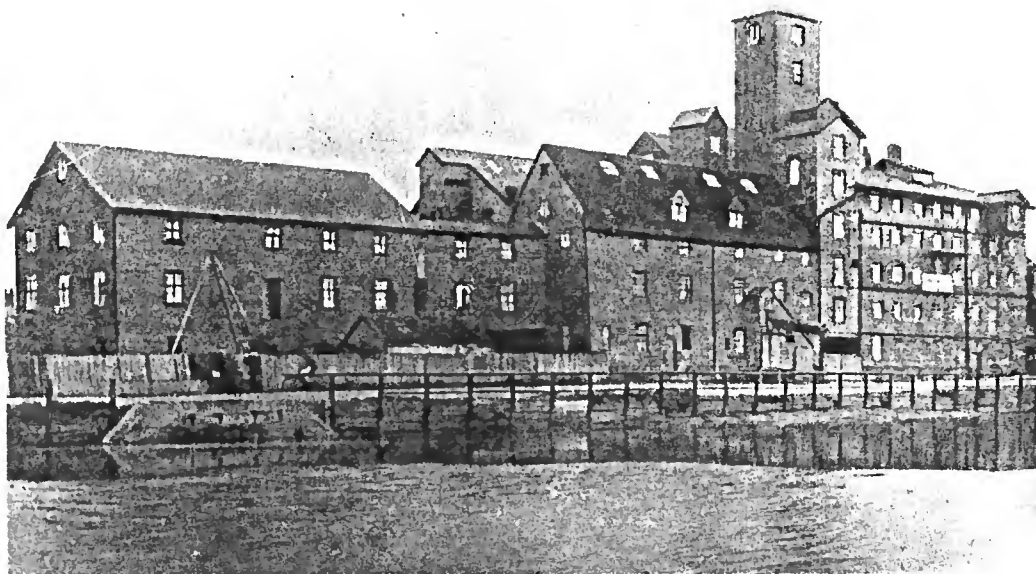
8. Westbourne Mill (147461). 1883-92. Later converted to other purposes.

9. Gymnasium Street. 1885-1900 directory entries.

10. Old Foundry Road (166446). 1864-1885. Building survives, converted to retail premises.



Cranfield's Dock Roller Mills, Ipswich, from a 1932 advert. The original mill building is the twin-gabled block on the left. Much of what is shown still stands.



Eastern Union Mills, Ipswich, at the end of Fison's time (c.1930). The former Stoke tide mill is right of centre.



11. Vernon Street (164438). 1874-1933 (and later).

12. Custom Mill, Key Street (169441). 1883-1900. Later converted to warehouse, now converted to office block.

Kenton Kenton Hall (187651). 1908-1933 (and later?).

Kirkley, Lowestoft Anchor Mill, St. Leonards Road (542918). 1883-1912.

Lavenham Prentice Street (917493). Built 1878 at maltings to replace one of the two tower mills on Mill Hill. Roller mill added 1898 with Turner machinery. Worked until 1930's or later, converted to flats 1986-7.

Leiston 1912-1933 or later. Stood in Carr Avenue. It was an offshoot of the Hayward business from Woodbridge.

Little Wrattling (698472). Originally worked with windmill at Kedington c.1860 (?), but soon changed to independent existence. Worked until 1950's, converted to a house 1968.

Lowestoft Arnold Street (550936). 1858-1933 (and later?). Still stands, as builder's merchants. Two buildings, each with lucams; the smaller one presumably the original mill (both standing by 1883).

Marlesford (327576). 1908-1916. A scruffy mill adjacent to railway station, still standing and used for other purposes.

Mellis Two mills here. A fine brick mill reminiscent of a Cornish engine house of c.1870, disused for many years (099744), and a rather less impressive structure of c.1880, also now disused (100746).

North Cove 1900-4 directories.

Occold A single reference in 1908 to a two-pair steam mill being sold.

Santon Downham In 1874 listed as a mill, subsequently only for estate use.

Southwold (506764). Built 1894 with Whitmore & Binyon plant, it went bust in 1901 and was converted to other use. Now converted to flats.

Sproughton (123449). 1874 directory only. Converted from part of maltings, probably later run with watermill. Now disused.

Stoke Ash 1883-1916. Possibly replaced windmill burnt c.1880.

Stonham Aspal Dove Farm. 1916 directory.

Stowmarket 1. Albert Mill (048591). 1874-1933 (and later). A pleasant building, with lucam; disused at present but planning consent for residential conversion granted in 1987.

2. Victoria Mill (061590). 1883-1908 (and later?). A large roller mill; only the lower two floors survive as stores.

3, 4 & 5. There were three mills, in Bury Street, Stowupland Street and Ipswich Street, all probably connected with the maltings in these streets. I have not managed to identify them yet.

6. Finborough Road (042585). Built on site of smock mill destroyed c.1880. Worked until 1970's (or later). Converted to flats in 1980's.

Sudbury North Street (872416). 1850-1900. Small brick mill, now converted to offices. Probably stands on site of smock mill damaged in 1836. Directories list a second mill in North Street from at least 1858-1883 but I have not established whether this was a steam mill or one of the two smock mills damaged in 1836. Other millers are listed but I think these were shops for millers in neighbouring parishes.

Thurston (918651). Run by the millers at the windmill (but probably the main part of their business) from at least 1868 (?) until the 1920's or later. Now converted to small business units.

Tuddenham St. Martin (194486). Replaced windmill at another site c.1896. Worked until 1970's, demolished 1982.

Weston Old Farm & Hill Farm. 1925 directory.

Witnesham (183501). Converted from part of maltings by 1883; worked with windmill nearby until it burnt down in 1908. The steam mill was still working in 1925. It has now gone.

Woodbridge 1. Sun Wharf. 1916 directory reference.

2. Hayward's Mill (274488). Built c.1875 and run with tide mill (and other mills). Burnt down in 1920's but parts remain, built into a modern feed mill.

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#### ADDENDUM TO MILLWRIGHTS ARTICLE (see last Newsletter)

One important omission was Jesse Wightman, who is now in his 80's and living at Chelmsford. Although apprenticed as a miller at Saxtead Green, he did repairs to it and subsequently to several other windmills in Suffolk, thus qualifying as a millwright in the terms of my article.

On a visit to Southtown, Yarmouth recently, I was surprised to see the premises of A.H. Webber still very much in business, as general engineers.

Brian Flint in his 'Suffolk Windmills' and Ken Farries in 'Essex Windmills' both mention further Suffolk-based millwrights:

Green & Browne Millwrights, Carr Street, Ipswich (1811).

Robert Balls Huntingfield, mid 19th century. Directories list him as a miller only but he was also reputedly a millwright.

William Hurwood Ballingdon, 1770's onwards. He employed 10 or 12 men, one of whom was Samuel Wright, later of Ipswich, in his own right. Hurwood could well have been the maker of the big smock mills of north Essex / south Suffolk, of which Dalham may be the last survivor.

William Farrow Ballingdon (sold up 1837)

Matthew & Alfred Mecklenburgh Set up at Chelmsford, in 1810, having previously lived at East Bergholt since c.1800, to where they had moved from New Buckenham, Norfolk.

## **A.G.M. REPORT**

The 1991 Annual General Meeting was held at Letheringham watermill on Sunday June 16th, by kind permission of Rod Allen. It was attended by 18 members and friends. Apologies were received from Chris Armour, Phil Bailey, June Baker, Len Ball, Roy and Penny Berry, Ed Goatcher, Barry Hall, Tom Loader, Chris Olley, Don Porter, Mr. Richman, John Snowdon and Bill Vincent.

Peter Dolman read out the minutes of the 1990 A.G.M., which were accepted as a true record (proposed Rod Allen, seconded Alan Wallis).

Treasurer Brian Flint introduced the year's accounts. Income from subscriptions had fallen but this was a one-year fluctuation. Donations were down as no collection had been taken after the February public meeting. The balance is around £3000 and our commitments are being easily met. A grant of £150 had just been made to Richard Seago towards the removal, for safekeeping intact and under cover, of the main post from Eye mill. Wicken and Thorington Street mills had also received small grants in recent years. Chris Hullcoop said the committee had debated at length whether to grant-aid work outside Suffolk. Wicken was

considered a special case - mill enthusiasts known to S.M.G., clubbing together to buy a mill which was not far across the Suffolk border. If these circumstances are repeated he would eat his beret! Marguerite Wells thanked S.M.G. on behalf of the Wicken group. Peter Dolman said his Thorington Street grant had been almost matched by the mill's owner and £500 was now available for the purchase of materials. Chris Hullcoop thanked Brian Flint for his work and the accounts were duly accepted (proposed Richard Duke, seconded Des Codd).

Mark Barnard, the editor, reported that four newsletters had appeared since the last A.G.M., although the annual average was still three. Average length was 17 sides of A4. There had been the usual range of interesting original material. The County Council's printing charges had recently increased yet again and it was now cheaper to use the firm who already printed the photo pages. No changes in the format of the newsletter were envisaged. Chris Hullcoop congratulated the editor on his work. A recent new member had requested all the back numbers of our newsletter, which we were able to provide as all the masters are retained. It would be nice to inject some humour, such as a cartoon, if someone could be found to work on ideas. Annie Duke offered to investigate.

Secretary Peter Dolman said the number of members was 146, more or less the same as last year. Turnover of members was quite small. We exchange newsletters with most of the other mills groups, with the National Association of Water Power Users, S.P.A.B. and the editor of their newsletter. We have no Junior members at present. Membership records are held on a word processor, and a copy of the print-out could be inspected. S.M.G. will participate in the local history fair at Abbott's Hall museum in July. Subscription could remain at £5 for another year. Commenting on the turnover of members, Chris Hullcoop mentioned the recent death of Reg Clover.

Peter Dolman read out the names of committee members. Apart from the four officers the constitution allows for others and there are vacancies. Brian Flint said he was in his 12th year as treasurer and would be pleased if, in a year's time, someone else would take over. Some groups swap committee jobs but the S.M.G. officers seem reasonably well fitted to their jobs. The committee members were all available for re-election and were duly re-elected (proposed Alan Wallis, seconded Richard Duke).

The 1991 crossword competition was then drawn (see news item below).

Our relationship with Suffolk Preservation Society was raised under Any Other Business. We are members, and in general enjoy good relations with them. We recently wrote saying we could offer advice on Pakenham watermill, but received no reply from the Suffolk Building Preservation Trust (which holds the mill on behalf of S.P.S.). It was disappointing, bearing in mind all our past work at the mill, that we were not approached when problems were first diagnosed at the mill a year or two back.



Progress at Bardwell windmill was also raised. Leadership is needed. Annie Duke asked why it was that Bardwell was damaged in the 1987 storm when Thelnetham and Stanton mills were O.K.? Chris Hullcoop said in his opinion it was a combination of factors. The new owners didn't understand the mill fully, and the restoration work had not been finished off properly. Also, when no-one lives on site (as at Thelnetham) you tend to take greater care to secure the mill properly. Peter Dolman stressed the importance of leaving mills safe. On a recent visit to Thorpeness he had found the mill left with the shutters 'open' but at only 45°, as the striking mechanism had not been set up properly.

Mrs. Vincent told the meeting that the Mills Research Group was meeting at her roundhouse at Earl Soham in October.

Chris Hullcoop then gave an illustrated talk on Suffolk mill news during 1990-1, concluding the meeting at 1.18 pm..

After admiring the restoration work at Letheringham, and in particular the new waterwheel (which was turning), several members travelled up to Wilby where a visit to an engine-driven hurst frame had been arranged for the afternoon.

## **NEW BOOKS** Reviewed by PETER DOLMAN 'Two Horse Power' by John Hewitt (£9.95; Terence Dalton)

John Hewitt, now in his 80's, was born into the milling and farming family at Butley, near Orford. This autobiography rambles from subject to subject, mostly connected with farming. Mills occasionally feature; not as much as I would have liked, but the watermill and windmills at Butley are mentioned; also Tunstall post mill, which Hewitt's father bought from Mr. Ford just before its demolition. John Hewitt worked the windmill at the end; he doesn't seem to have enjoyed the experience much though, complaining of the slow rate of work! An interesting insight into farming and milling in the Suffolk Sandlings.

## 'The Beloved Coast and Suffolk Sandlings' by R.A. Whitehead (£19.95; Terence Dalton)

More on the Sandlings (the coastal strip north of Felixstowe up to Dunwich) - one of two books on them to appear this year, this rates a mention here as it devotes a chapter to the mills of the area. Bob Whitehead has done a good job gathering documentary and oral history and has some interesting observations to make which perhaps he can as someone new to mills. One or two eccentricities crept through into the finished text but the overall effect is good. Although not worth £20 for the mills alone, the book's other chapters are equally interesting, covering various aspects of local social and industrial history. Worth a look.

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The last couple of years has seen a batch of collections of old photographs published. These frequently contain mills; not usually particularly exciting views or unknown ones; frequently the captions are inaccurate or poorly researched. Treat with care!

## LETTER

Frank Mann of Lower Lodge, Brook Lane, Playford writes:

'I was very interested in the article in the last newsletter on Playford Mill. When I was a child in the early 1930's there were still people around who could remember the mill working. I was puzzled as to how the mill was able to work as the mill stood so high from the river. I was told the river was diverted nearly a mile upstream (the waterway can still be seen), then through Playford Hall moat and through the gardens, under the road and across the road towards the mill. The last remains of the bridge was demolished some 30 years ago and the watercourse levelled although it can still be seen. There is no trace of it in the Hall property.

About 30 years ago there was a semi-circle in the brickwork where I was told the wheel was housed. I was told there were some corn bins in the attic. I think it unlikely the mill wheel was there in the 1930's.

I have always thought the mill ceased to work about 1870. My great-uncle born in 1862 had some recollection of it but an aunt born 1868 said 'it was finished before my time'.

It was said that the people living at the Hall had some hand in the demise of the mill.

I have heard that there was a windmill on top of the hill near the junction of the back entrance to Lux Farm. Perhaps something will come up about that one day.'

## A TRIP TO NORWICH - BY SEA CHRIS HULLCOOP

Unlike most journeys our voyage from Pin Mill to Norwich did not start early as the high tide required to float the Annie D was not until midday. So we arrived at Pin Mill around 9.30 on a sunny Friday morning (August 9th) and had plenty of time to load our gear aboard and admire the picturesque surroundings. Beautifully kept ships and barges contrasted with tidal hulks and nearby a long-abandoned large yacht was being prepared for removal and restoration. We watched the tide creep higher until at 11 o'clock Richard Duke decided there was just enough water to float off.

Heading down the Orwell estuary we passed the Scottish fishing drifter Adax formerly owned by Richard, in which he took a party of S.M.G. members to Holland in 1984. Although much smaller than the Adax at 36ft., Annie D is a fine vessel, originally built as a launch for the admiralty at the end of the last war and then converted to a fishing boat. Just past the docks at Felixstowe the water became quite choppy and Mark Barnard and I were pleased we had taken anti-seasickness tablets. Men of the sea Richard and Cliff Lovett viewed such medication with disdain and hinted at side effects. Fortunately once at sea the water was calmer. We soon left Felixstowe and the Deben estuary behind us and shortly afterwards the red and white banded Orfordness lighthouse came into view. As we had a following wind we were able to hoist the new red ochre coloured sail. This together with the tidal flow gave us an extra 1-2 knots. There are numerous shingle banks off the Suffolk coast and great care must be taken to keep to the channels marked with buoys and identified on the sea charts. Off Aldeburgh we noticed how quickly the mood of the sea could change. Wind was only Force 3-4 but there were areas of quite rough water and we often

observed white water breaking over those treacherous banks. We could make out the unique quatrefoil Martello tower at Slaughden and further along the windmill tower, an early house conversion which aroused an equally early condemnation in a book on windmills by Brangwyn and Preston published in 1923. A little further on the House in the Clouds and post mill at Thorpeness could be seen, with the great bulk of the Sizewell nuclear power stations in the distance.

Just past Southwold the sea defences stop and the recent coastal erosion has cost the homes of several people. One unfortunate couple who bought a house only three years ago for £74,000 were told the sea would not reach it in their lifetime. It was at the door last December. Roads come to an abrupt end at the cliff edge and footpaths move inland by several feet each year as the sea relentlessly gains land. Lowestoft looked better from a distant sea viewpoint than close to and Mark pointed out the original old part of the town and the 'new' Victorian seaside front.

Between Lowestoft and Yarmouth we saw the tower of Corton mill which has been given planning permission for conversion to something the local people describe as more appropriate to the nearby Pleasurewood Hills American theme park. If Brangwyn and Preston could see the plans Sir Frank would be brushless and Hayter Preston wordless! Great Yarmouth was now in sight, with the power station and Nelson monument clearly visible and just before 6 pm. we turned into the narrow harbour entrance. Between here and the Haven Bridge are moored the oil and gas rig supply and maintenance ships, looking rather like giant tugs and mostly registered in Aberdeen. There is a fierce tidal stream through Yarmouth and



The Annie D and her captain at Reedham

careful mooring is essential so Richard chose a convenient place opposite the Town Hall. Only after mooring did we read an aggressive notice displayed by the owners of riverside premises, but as it was getting near dark we were sure they had all gone home. We peeled potatoes and Richard grilled some steak he had brought as a special treat and we dined handsomely. After supper we walked across town to the sea front which was alive with holidaymakers. Neon and extraordinary simulator-based games made a fairground atmosphere and even brightly-lit windmill sails turned but not by wind!

Next morning we were ready at 9 am. prompt for the raising of the Haven Bridge and shortly after the new Dutch-style counterweight bridge across the head of Breydon Water. Making our way across this large tidal lake a landscape full of windmills at all stages of repair and decay was before us. Dominating the scene in the distance was Berney Arms with the Sluice mill, capped in aluminium by Norfolk Windmills Trust, standing just over the bank to the right. More towers could be seen along the Bure, including the derelict Ashtree Farm mill, Mautby Marsh, now a house but with four sails, and the buck of Thrigby post mill just visible on the higher ground beyond. Berney Arms mill looked fine with fresh paint and tar and the group of three mills at Reedham, now sadly missing part of the engine house chimney, stood out well. Several more derelicts were seen as we rounded the numerous bends in the river which make it a long way from Yarmouth to Norwich. It had been quite cool on Breydon Water but by the time we stopped at Brundall around midday it was surprisingly warm ashore. We had to wait an hour or so for the railway bridge at Lakenham to be lifted but only a little way further on the traffic was stopped and the Carrow road bridge lifted as the river has right of way over the road. We passed Reed's flour mill and moored near Thorpe station in the heart of the city. We were puzzled to see that most people here were members of the police force but then realised that it was Saturday and there was a football match that afternoon! S.M.G. member Michael Roots joined us for a while and in the evening we walked along the river path to the cathedral close. Here we visited John Salmon, who has a magnificent room in the house nearest the cathedral. A retired schoolmaster, now over eighty, John belongs to that group of pre-war mill enthusiasts who founded the movement to study mills and preserve them whenever possible. Donald Smith wrote in the acknowledgements to his second volume on English windmills published in 1932, 'To Mr. J. Salmon for information and photographic views of mills in all parts of the county'. That was a long time ago!

Next morning we left Norwich and the bridges were again raised for us. We overtook a lighter carrying a vast section of the bridge which will take the new Norwich bypass. At Reedham, just upstream from the ferry, we moored near the mill owned by our old friend Mr. Haylett who helps us at the open days at Herringfleet. When he bought it it had no machinery or cap frame, only some



Mill spotting at Reedham

floors and a conical roof of steel sheets which later blew off in a gale. The present appearance of the mill roof is grim and a flag flies from the top denoting an impasse between Mr. Haylett and the Broadland planners! We hope a compromise can be reached soon and made some suggestions. We also met some people restoring a large German boat near the mill and they were soon talking the pros and cons of various rigs with Richard in those picturesque terms used by men of the sea! Next we called at Berney Arms which was turning for us. A splendid exhibition within told the history of the drainage mills and we noted a pre-war picture of Rex Wailes. From the top many mills could be seen with several under repair but nothing could ever equal that pre-war scene described by Rex in his 'The English Windmill' when, from the Acle New Road, 'nearly a score of mills could be seen in working order at all points of the compass ...'.

We moored for the night at a boatyard just below Reedham village. Next morning Chris Seago joined us for the day trip along the River Waveney to St. Olaves. There are several derelicts along this river including the recently burnt-out Caldecott mill. We moored at St. Olaves near the little smock mill. I recalled seeing the last working sails on this mill which fell off in 1965. We then walked to the tower at Fritton where Norfolk Windmills Trust hope soon to fit an aluminium cap to halt deterioration. With sails spanning around 45ft. it was just a bit smaller than Herringfleet, a neat little mill that Stanley Freese photographed at work in the 1930's. Through the afternoon we cruised slowly towards Breydon Water looking at several derelicts on the way. It was a beautiful summer's day with the scene dominated as always by Berney Arms mill. Then across Breydon



Water to be in good time for the bridge lifting on the by-pass over Breydon and the Haven Bridge in the centre of the town. Mooring just below the bridge was tricky as the tide was flowing out very quickly and it is a dozen feet or so up to the bollards on the quay. We moored just a little ahead of the Lydia Eva, a steam drifter now preserved and open to visitors. The centre of Yarmouth still has a very interesting range of buildings dominated by the late 19th century town hall. There are some fine houses along South Quay including a merchant's house opened by English Heritage in summer. The docks contain many interesting ships of all sizes and the Nelson monument is a match for the better-known one in Trafalgar Square. On the front and in the centre of the golden mile is a Victorian building housing a fine maritime museum. A sailing book stated rather pompously that there was nothing of interest in Yarmouth. The author did not use his eyes and I'm sure John Betjeman would have liked the place.

We set off extra early next morning - 6.20 am. - to catch the flow of the tide southwards from Yarmouth to Harwich and made good speed down the coast on a lovely sunny and mercifully calm day. Mark Barnard was astonished to see a channel marking buoy off Lowestoft with his name on it. Very little shipping was seen until we neared Felixstowe and there the ferries and great container ships dominated the sea. Once inside the harbour we had to circle around to avoid getting too close to a large ship being eased into her berth by tugs. Pin Mill came into sight with its forest of yacht masts now stretching a long way down the river. We moored at 1.30 pm. on a high tide and spent an hour or so clearing up and washing down the decks.

It was a pity more members didn't show an interest, for we could have taken two more. Perhaps they were put off by the North Sea passage from Harwich to Yarmouth. Richard is a real captain, a master mariner who has commanded ships of all types and sizes from great tankers to small sailing craft. All in all it was a lovely trip and we extend a hearty thanks to Richard and the Annie D.

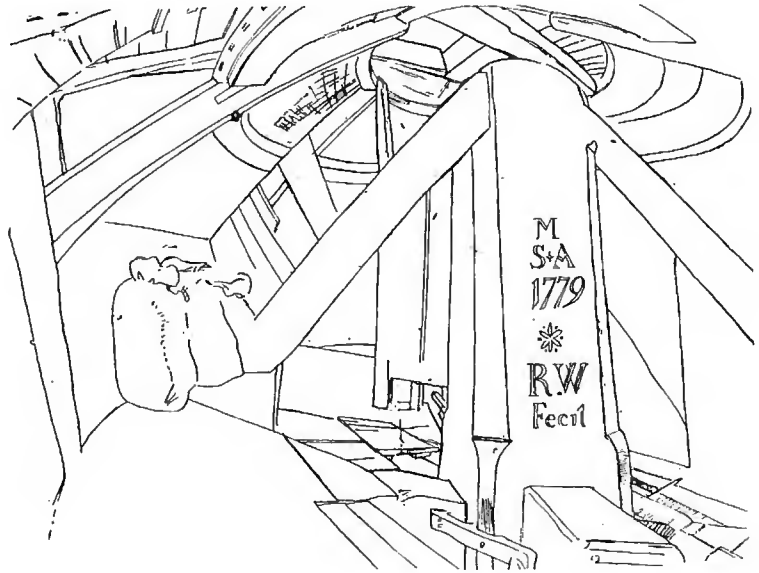
## **NEWS**

### MUSEUM OF EAST ANGLIAN LIFE

During the past year the museum has been employing Ian Clark, a restoration engineer from Sussex to give the windpump and watermill a thorough mechanical overhaul, and also to paint the windpump sails. The windpump is now in better condition than it has been for several years, although the curb continues to give trouble, due to poor original design. The watermill has been stripped right down, cleaned up and reassembled to working tolerances (the previous installation was not intended to work). The aim is to allow flour milling to be undertaken for sale to visitors. In this connection the museum would like to hear from any mill enthusiasts who might be able to help, either with practical work (done on week-day evenings by museum 'friends') or in demonstrating the mill on special open days. Contact Lesley Colsell at the museum (0449 612229). (P.D.)

### HEART TRANSPLANT FROM EYE

A mill enthusiast's place of pilgrimage for many years has been the remains of Mortimer's post mill at Eye which collapsed in 1955. Rex Wailes in his classic book 'The English Windmill' wrote of the many inscriptions he had seen in mills over the years and he saw more than any person before or since. He said of the inscription on the Eye



post '.. the finest of all was the inscription on Eye Mill, Suffolk, which the late Tom Hennell so beautifully recorded' (reproduced above).

I visited the site a number of times in the 1960's to salvage components to incorporate in the restoration of more fortunate mills. One of Mr. Mortimer's daughters lived in the old mill house and she was very keen that the pieces should find good homes in other mills and resisted the inevitable itinerant scrap dealers and those who would make garden ornaments from French burr millstones. The spider can now be seen on Framsdon mill, the fly spindle and star on Garboldisham and the truck wheels at Thrigby. Sadly she died a dozen years ago and her husband continued to live in the house until he died last year. The property today is very valuable as the 4-acre mill field adjoining the road is zoned for housing in the local plan.

Late last year Mrs. Browes, Mr. Mortimer's other daughter very kindly gave permission for the removal of the last of the re-useable pieces to be incorporated in a new post mill which Richard Seago is planning to build in Norfolk.

The first task Richard Seago and I had to tackle was the vast bramble bush that had engulfed the 30 cwt. windshaft where it fell. Using wheels, Tirfor winch and jacks we gradually drew the windshaft out of the bushes, up two planks and onto his trailer. The next job was the upright shaft with wallower and spur wheel wedged on and now with rust totally immovable on the shaft. The mill had one pair of stones overdriven in the head and two pairs in the tail underdriven via tail-wheel, wallower and spurwheel. This seems a very sensible arrangement as Eye was one of those eighteenth century mills constructed as a simple low-tech head and tail mill. In the nineteenth century along with many others it was brought up to date with heavy patent sails and extra stones. Instead of contributing further to the mill's imbalance by adding extra stones and drive as well as patent sails to the head, the extra stones and drive were put in the tail, thus helping the mill's balance.

The whole of the buck tail with stones and drive was in an amazing web of half-rotted timber, iron ties, elder bushes and ivy which had gradually descended to within a few feet of the ground. Great care and patience was needed to ease the shaft and its wheels to the door opening and thread it through. We loaded this together with a pair of stones, governor and tenting gear, stone nut and spindle to once again overload the trailer. This machinery will form the heart of Richard's new post mill.

There remained the post, quite a monster at 19ft 6ins long and 28ins square at the base, and weighing about 35 cwt.. The famous inscription was still intact and we felt it would be nice to preserve it in Suffolk. We contacted the Museum of East Anglian Life but due to lack of space they can now only accept complete objects. No-one came forward to take on the difficult and expensive task of removal, transport and storage of the post, so we felt its best chance would be with Richard Seago. Very early on Saturday August 10th he arrived with a crane to extricate it from the jumble of wreckage and place it on a lorry for transport to South Walsham.

The roundhouse (which is listed) stands in a corner of the 4-acre site and we hope the developer will repair the walls, fit a new roof and make a small public space around it, perhaps with a play area for children. Some 48 houses are planned for the site. Let's hope it's called Victoria or Mortimers Mill Gardens in memory of the fine post mill of which the builders were so proud when they inscribed the post in 1779. (C.H.)

#### TV CAMERAS AT THELNETHAM

In mid July a crew from Central Television spent a day at Thelnetham filming the mill at work for one of a new series of their successful children's educational programme, 'Stop! Look! Listen!'. The day went well, with plenty of wind and a couple of local children recruited as 'extras' to pose as mill visitors. It will be broadcast on the national network on Channel 4 at 11.17 am. on Monday November 11th.

A week-end for maintenance work at the mill will take place on 26th and 27th October. Any help from members would be appreciated.

#### STANTON MILL

During the summer Richard Duke and his 'geriatric brigade' have reboarded the left side of the mill, this having been left alone during the 1986-7 work-ins. The outside of the mill is now almost finished, only the tail retaining its original boarding, and looks very smart. (P.D.)

#### BARDWELL WINDMILL RESTORATION WORK-INS

Geoff Wheeler, the owner of Bardwell tower mill, is proposing to hold 'work-ins' next year to complete the gale damage repairs. S.M.G. will be helping with organisation of these, which will involve exciting jobs like replacing the wind-

shaft and building new sails. So if you fancy helping with these heavy mill-wrighting tasks let Geoff (tel. 0359 51331) or Peter Dolman (tel. 0473 742388) know. Further details in future newsletters. (P.D.)

#### LOCAL HISTORY FAIR

This event was held on the weekend of July 27-28 at the Museum of East Anglian Life at Stowmarket. A good number of societies and local history groups were represented, housed in either the Boby building or a specially-erected marquee opposite, and a variety of entertainment was laid on, ranging from country music and craft displays to engines in steam. S.M.G. was lucky enough to secure a prime position in the Boby building (which was brighter and cooler than the marquee), and we set up our display boards, a millstone (!) and mill bill/thrift,



and files of historical notes and photographs to answer questions about bygone mills. The stand (photograph above) was manned by Peter Dolman, Mark Barnard, Duncan Breckels and Des Codd. There was a good response and we hope to have gained a few new members. The museum consider the event a success and will no doubt be repeating it in future years. (M.B.)

#### PROGRESS AT THORINGTON STREET WATERMILL

Blessed with fine weather for most of the summer work-ins we have made good progress in sprucing up the exterior appearance. The boarding really all needs to be replaced and much of the frame behind is rickety but as funds are not available for a proper rebuild we have had to do a 'holding' job. Even so it has been necessary to replace nearly 300 feet of weatherboard. All boards have now been repaired or replaced and one coat of paint has been applied. The front elevation has been 'flashbanded' at all corners and the rear elevation has been given a second coat of paint. Door frames and surrounds have been repaired and a start has been made on repairing windows.

Further work planned is to finish repairing the doors and windows and to 'flashband' the side elevation. Further painting will probably have to wait now unless we get a dry spell in the autumn (and I hope we don't as the river level

is very low). Even in an unfinished state the mill now looks much smarter although close examination reveals the true condition of much of the boarding!

Another series of week-end work-ins is planned; November 2-3, December 7-8, January 4-5, when further outside work will take place or, if weather precludes this, interior work to the hurst frame and machinery. Please telephone Peter Dolman if you are interested in helping (0473 742388). (P.D.)

#### RED BARON AT HERRINGFLEET

Our second open day at Herringfleet this year, on August 4th, was very special with not only the mill open and working but also a splendid display of aerobatics by John Jordan in his Stearman biplane.

The day started well with Bob Hardwick taking video of turning the cap to wind and setting the cloths on the sails.

Despite a forecast

giving low windspeeds, a good breeze materialised and away went the sails. We had hoped John would be able to land at a small private landing strip in Fritton but light sandy soil had blown onto it making it unsafe. He had to land at Seething airfield a dozen miles away where he was met by Roy Berry and brought to the mill for a picnic lunch. The sails turned continually and often gained sufficient speed to pump water. Through the afternoon some 150 people walked down to the mill and quite a number stayed to watch the Red Baron. He flew in from the south-west, circling the mill to drop a couple of dozen Jordan's crunchy bars on little parachutes which I had made the previous week. Some fell in the Waveney but were quickly retrieved by people in boats. John then gave us a fine display of aerobatics with loops, turns and dives and an amazing pass where the plane appears to fly sideways. The sails turned the whole time and the grazing marsh with the River Waveney made a splendid setting for the graceful old aeroplane.

The Stearman, made by Boeing in 1942, combines the splendid appearance of a pre-war biplane with a rugged airframe and a powerful nine cylinder 450 h.p. Pratt and Whitney Wasp radial engine. This fine engine has every detail exposed and adds a touch of rakishness to the elegant fabric-covered plane. They were made in large numbers and were trainers for the U.S.A.F. before being replaced





by the plane we know as the Harvard.

After the display John flew back to Seething airfield. We had hoped he would be able to join us for some tea in the gardens at Somerleyton Hall, but it was really too late if he was to fly back to his base near Biggleswade before dark. The wind was still quite strong when we stopped the sails, took down the cloths and set the mill in its resting position. One of the best days ever at Herringfleet. (C.H.)

#### PROBLEMS AT SPROUGHTON MILL

A recent survey of Sproughton watermill (right) by structural engineers has confirmed that parts of the building are suffering severe settlement. The cracks and deflection in the brick walls are obvious even to the casual observer, the courses in the front wall varying by up to 11 ins.! This seems to be a long-standing problem, for there are iron ties on each elevation and at each upper floor level, and probably results from the construction of a brick mill on the inadequate foundations of its timber-framed predecessor.

While the mill is in no immediate danger, it is empty and disused and in a generally run-down state. The structural problems will certainly need to be addressed fairly soon if



it is to survive. The likely cost of this work gives cause for real concern. (M.B.)

#### OTHER NEWS IN BRIEF

The S.M.G. crossword competition in Newsletter 50 attracted some 15 entries, all of which were correct. The draw was made at the A.G.M.. First prize went to John Pelling and second prize to Brian Flint. A copy of the solution is available on request to the Editor.

Buttrum's Mill, Woodbridge is receiving an overhaul. Among the work being tackled by Richard Seago is re-cladding the cap (in Belzona membrane, as at

Thelnetham), repairs to sail shutters and striking gear (including new triangles), a new fantail blade and complete re-decoration in lead paint. On summer weekends the mill was manned by Bryony Weaver, a sixth form student from Woodbridge School, while down at the tide mill another young lady, Rebecca Welland, was employed as an assistant to Geoff Gostling for the summer season and did a sterling job.

Shottisham watermill is on the market. A gutted 1980's conversion, it comes with adjoining mill cottage and  $\frac{1}{3}$  acre. The asking price is £119,950 and agents are Woolwich Property Services (Woodbridge office).

Drinkstone mills has been designated a Conservation Area by Mid Suffolk District Council, in recognition of the virtually complete survival of a range of buildings associated with country milling since the late C17. This will give protection to smaller, non-listed buildings on the site and increase the chance of grant aid when the opportunity eventually arrives for major repair work.

#### S.M.G. CONSTITUTION

Most of you will never have seen this; we do have one however! It was last issued in 1977 in our inaugural year and is now being sent to you as modified by A.G.M.'s and custom over the years. A copy will be sent to future new members when they receive their first newsletter. (P.D.)

## **EVENTS**

S.M.G. SOCIAL EVENING: SATURDAY DECEMBER 7th AT THE EDUCATION CENTRE, MUSEUM OF EAST ANGLIAN LIFE, STOWMARKET, FROM 8 pm.

We are returning to the museum's Education Centre for this year's social evening. As in past years there will be a free buffet with wine and beer. All members and their guests are welcome, especially if they bring some slides!

The venue is a room in the primary school at the end of Danescourt Avenue; from the town centre take the B1115 Finborough Road and bear left into Danescourt Avenue in about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile.

WORKING PARTIES: THELNETHAM - OCTOBER 26-27; THORINGTON STREET, STOKE BY NAYLAND - NOVEMBER 2-3, DECEMBER 7-8, JANUARY 4-5.

Just a reminder! See above news items for details.

Advance Notice S.M.G.'s 1992 public meeting will be held in Ipswich on Saturday February 22nd. The theme will be mills on film and video.

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