

# SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

## Newsletter

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The main 'mill happening' in Suffolk since the last newsletter was the tour by the S.P.A.B. Wind and Watermill Section in early September, ably organised by S.M.G. secretary Peter Dolman. These tours are usually most enjoyable, and I understand this year's was by all accounts one of the best ever. A resumé of the mills visited is given in the News section below.

Our own visit, on a rather damp August evening, to the roller mill at Felixstowe dock also passed off successfully, mill manager David Ferns and his staff who gave up their time to show us round being most helpful and knowledgeable. The photographic record of the mill's construction (to a very high standard) in 1905-7 was fascinating. Yet, even with its computer-controlled machinery, I wonder whether the mill will still be operating in ten year's time. News of the planned closure of Cranfield's roller mill in Ipswich makes one realise the economic pressures on even quite large and modern commercial mills, especially those in old, multi-floored buildings. Maybe by 2005 the only flour milling in Suffolk will be small-scale, in windmills and watermills!

I would like to accompany this our 60th newsletter with yet another appeal for material for future issues. My reservoir of articles is now almost exhausted, yet I'm sure many of you could pen a few lines on a mill-related topic, or complete a half-finished piece of research which would be of interest to fellow members. Please do try to come up with some new material and so maintain the high standard of past S.M.G. newsletters.

Finally, just a reminder that our social evening is at Stanton post mill on Saturday December 3rd. See you there!

Mark Barnard

## MARSH DRAINAGE ON THE BROADS Bob Malster

In his *General View of the Agriculture of Norfolk*, published in 1796, Nathaniel Kent referred to the marshes lying between Norwich and Yarmouth as being largely under water for much of the winter. They were drained mainly by windmills in the Spring so that cattle could spend the summer on them. He wrote "There are many large tracts of swampy ground, particularly in the neighbourhood of Ludham, which produce little more at present than sedge and reed. Perhaps the intermixed state of these lands may be the principal cause of their drainage being neglected; but their loss to the public is very much to be lamented, as there is no doubt but they would very well answer the expence of improvement."

Some of these tracts of swampy ground were drained and improved as a result of Parliamentary enclosures during the first half of the 19th century, though in some parts of the area

embanking and draining had been attempted long before the passing of the Enclosure Acts. In a number of parishes drainage commissions were set up to embank the rivers and to pump water off the marshes, usually either by horsemills or by windmills. One of the last of the horsemills, built of timber and with a steep pyramidal reed-thatched roof, stood until the 1930's at Woodbastwick. It was said to have been one of three built by a member of the Cator family in the late 18th century in an endeavour to drain a tract of marsh, an attempt that failed because the earth and clay banks proved ineffective in keeping out the water which seeped back through the underlying peat. In this mill two horses operated a scoopwheel similar to those used in the windmills and in some of the later steam drainage pumping stations.

It is impossible to say when the first drainage windmills were constructed in the Broads region, but "engines to drawe waters above their naturall Levill and to drayne waterishe and moorishe grounds" had certainly been in use in the Cambridgeshire Fens by the end of the 16th century. William Faden's map of Norfolk of 1797 shows some 15 drainage windmills on the Acle, Tunstall, Halvergate and Wickhampton marshes, confirming the evidence of paintings by members of the Norwich School portraying rather rickety windmills that had apparently been in existence for many years.

Advertisements in the *Norwich Mercury* in the 1830's indicate that a new generation of windmills was at that time being built and that the drainage was being greatly improved in some places. In 1832 an advertisement for the letting of "A Level of Marshes, of about 200 acres, situate in the parish of Fritton, Suffolk" mentioned that "A New Mill, capable of draining double that quantity, having been recently erected upon this Level, and a new embankment raised round it, it is capable of being kept dry all the year."

A meeting was held at the Hare and Hound at Halvergate one day in June 1833 to consider the best means of improving the drainage of marshes known as Crowe's Level, Fisher's Level, Howard's Level, Shuckford's Level, Hewitt's Level and Walpole's Level, and at the same time and place a brick tower drainage mill "with all its Going Gears, Water Works, and Appurtenances" was being advertised to be sold by auction. Quite clearly changes were being made that would in time alter the appearance of the area.

The earliest of the drainage windmills were almost certainly those wooden towers known in the 19th century as 'Dutch mills', which might or might not be an indication of their origin, and more generally known today as smock mills. Some of this type were built quite late in the 19th century, and the little windpump at St. Olaves could be described as a smock mill, though little more than a skeleton mill covered with boarding.

The only surviving complete smock mill is the little black-boarded mill at Herringfleet, with four canvas-covered common sails and a winch on the tailpole from which a chain is run out to one of a circle of posts to wind the cap and sails into the wind. Built in about 1830 by Barnes, a Yarmouth millwright, this mill is fortunately preserved by Suffolk County Council. Another smock

mill stood near Horning Ferry until it was converted into a decorative holiday cottage between the wars. Few people seeing it today realise that it was at one time a genuine windmill, for it has been so changed that it appears entirely false. More common today are the brick tower mills whose remains can still be seen scattered across the marshes. It is said that when building these towers the bricklayers confined their day's work to no more than four or five courses so as to avoid undue distortion of the tower resulting from settlement, yet some of the mills developed a distinct lean. In some cases the mill towers were built on piles; Rex Wailes records that Stracey Arms Mill, beside the Acle New Road at Tunstall, was founded on 40ft piles topped with a pitchpine raft.



Smock mill on the River Yare (1846)  
*(from a painting by Alfred Stannard)*

The earlier mills were squat buildings, the sails reaching down to the ground so that the millman could easily set the canvas on the common sails. After the invention in 1807 of the patent self-regulating sail by William Cubitt, engineer son of a Norfolk miller, many of the old towers were 'hained' by the addition of a vertical section to the top of the tapering tower to accommodate the longer sails, and new tower mills were built taller. With the patent sails many drainage mills adopted the fantail, greatly reducing the work of the millman who previously had had to attend to the mill whenever the wind direction changed.

The last of these mills to be erected was at Horsey, built of Martham bricks in 1912 by Ludham millwright Daniel England on the foundations of an earlier mill. Horsey mill worked until 1943, when it was struck by lightning which split the sail stocks from end to end. The task of draining the extensive level of marshes was then taken over by a diesel pump which had in 1939 superseded the earlier steam pump that worked hand-in-hand with the windmill. The mill was taken over by the National Trust when it acquired the Horsey estate in 1948, and it was eventually restored to working order, though it has not resumed work. The last drainage mill to work by wind was that on Ash Tree Level, north of the Acle New Road about a mile out of Yarmouth. Built by Thomas Smithdale and Sons for the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1910, it survived intact until tail-winded by the great gale of 31st January and

1st February 1953, when the sails were torn off and smashed on the marsh below. The mill is featured in Rex Wailes' classic book *The English Windmill*.

Most of the drainage mills drove a scoopwheel having a diameter of anything from 10ft to 24ft and a width of 5ins to 18ins working in a narrow brick culvert to raise water from one drain to another or from a drain into the river. It was reckoned that wheels had a lift of three-eighths of their diameter; a 6ft scoopwheel would be able to lift water 6ft, while the smaller wheels would have a lift of less than 4ft. A hinged flap prevented water returning to the lower level when the wheel was not working or when it slowed down owing to a lull in the wind. The majority of mills had a single scoopwheel outside the tower working inside a wooden casing or hoodway, though Turf Fen mill on the How Hill estate had two scoopwheels on opposite sides of the tower. A few had internal wheels with the culvert running beneath the mill tower.

Some of the later mills had turbine pumps instead of scoopwheels, two well-known examples being Horsey Mill and Thurne White Mill. A turbine pump, with the impeller on the bottom of a vertical shaft, would raise half as much water again as a scoopwheel in a steady wind. Thurne mill was acquired in 1949 by Mr R.D. Morse, of Repps, who maintained it until restoration was carried out in 1969 with the aid of Hoseason's and other contributors.

As well as the smock and tower mills there were many smaller windmills erected for draining the marshes, some of them driving plunger pumps rather than scoopwheels or turbines. A number of trestle mills were erected by Daniel England, a survivor of this type being Boardman's Mill at How Hill. Another of England's trestle mills stood at Barton Turf, but it was burnt down in a marsh fire about 1949. I still have the cast-iron plate from this mill bearing the inscription 'E.W.D. England millwright & engineer Ludham'; when I found the remains of the mill collapsed into the dyke soon after the fire the plate hung loosely from a single screw.

Old photographs show quite primitive hollow post mills driving either small scoopwheels or reciprocating pumps in various parts of the Broads area. Some of these, like Palmer's Mill at Acle, salvaged by Richard Seago some years ago, were turned into wind by simple wooden tails, others were fitted with fantails. A small hollow post mill from Ranworth Dam has been rebuilt by Richard Seago beside the River Ant at How Hill. Known as Clayrack Windpump, it is in full working order, and in a strong breeze its scoopwheel will send the water creaming through the culvert, a heady reminder of days when dozens of mills were at work draining floodwater from the marsh dykes.

## **PUTTING MILLS IN THE PICTURE Peter Steggall**

I suppose that most people in England, whether or not they are specifically interested, have one or two pictures of mills hanging on their walls. In our own living room we have large prints of

Dedham and Flatford watermills by John Constable. In the hall are prints of pictures by twentieth century artists - windmills at Cley (Shirley Carnt) and Burnham Overy (Edward Seago), and a small oil original of Baylham watermill by F.J. Savage. Elsewhere we have a print of John Western's picture of the watermill at Alton on its original site near Tattingstone, and my own fairly primitive painting of Woodbridge tide mill, seen from way down the river, long before restoration replaced the rusty red corrugated iron cladding with white weatherboarding. This little 'collection' is a reminder of the fact that, for hundreds of years, mills have been popular subjects for artists both professional and amateur. Go now to any exhibition by living local landscape artists and you are sure to find some pictures in which they appear either as main features or as distant but distinctive landmarks.

During the 1994 August Bank Holiday weekend we went to such an exhibition at Brandeston Hall. About one in twenty of the four hundred pictures included mills, a proportion which might well be lower in most other regions of England. There were several studies of the tide mill at Woodbridge, seen from different viewpoints, and with various foreground settings of boats and boatyards. All showed the mill in the gleaming white paint which has covered it since its restoration. In some of the pictures the neighbouring granary, restored more recently and also brilliant white, seemed, by its size and prominence, to reduce the impressiveness and significance of the mill itself. Woodbridge tide mill, like Pin Mill, continues to attract artists, both for its intrinsic form and interest, and as a focal point as one looks up the river from Kyson Point; the exhibition included one such picture.

Flatford Mill appeared only once; it must be tempting but daunting to follow in the master's footsteps. Two attractive paintings of Sproughton watermill gave no indication of the current problems of subsidence, but one of Syleham post mill was a remarkably detailed study of advanced dereliction. Pictures of Framsdon and Friston windmills showed them as features in wide rural landscapes. Cley mill on the Norfolk coast, and drainage mills in Broadland also appeared in the exhibition.

*This is the first in an occasional series of short articles on aspects of mills and milling by Peter Steggall, the Suffolk author and long-time S.M.G. member. - Ed.*

## **VANISHED MILLS    Peter Dolman**

### **PETTAUGH POST MILL**

Pettaugh mill stood (at Grid Ref. 167595) on what was probably an old-established site. Hodkinson's map of 1778-80 marks it as do all subsequent maps right up to the 1950's O.S. maps. In August 1824 it was described as a leasehold mill, with 13 years' lease to run. It had one pair of French stones and a flour dresser as well as a house, granary and 'Horse flour dressing mill'. The tenant was probably S. Sherman, who also had mills in Ipswich. In 1828 John Driver was miller. By 1844 Lionel Pepper was miller and he remained until at least 1853. In 1855 John Woods was listed as 'corn miller and seedsman'. This possibly means that the mill was

used for seed dressing; there was a seed dressing post mill at Stowmarket which in 1838 was occupied by James Woods. In 1858 W. Copping was listed as miller. Soon after this the mill was taken over by William Cooper, listed in 1864 as 'shopkeeper, wheelwright, blacksmith, miller and farmer'. Quite an entrepreneur!

In 1865 he had the mill completely rebuilt by H. & C. Collins, millwrights, of Melton. Unusually for a Suffolk mill, this was recorded for posterity on the windshaft. The mill continued under William Cooper until at least 1885. In 1888 George and James Cutting are listed and they continued to operate the mill, joined (and eventually replaced) by a large steam mill, until late 1978 (by then in name only!) when the business was taken over by A-One Feeds, who continue to operate from the premises. In 1899 roller milling equipment was installed by Armfields in the steam mill, latterly driven by an Armstrong-Whitworth diesel engine of 94 h.p.. Flour milling ceased in the 1950's after which only feedstuffs were produced.

The windmill was used for gristwork and a little wholemeal flour until 1939. It was partly dismantled after being struck by lightning in October 1946. Although it retained four sails (less their shutters) to the end, it had no brakewheel for several years! Eventually the mill was deemed to be 'dangerous' and the buck was dismantled in late 1957. The roundhouse lingered on another ten years, eventually giving way to an extension to the feed mill. Nothing now remains although Cuttings did keep the stones and a small section of the brakewheel, mounted on the office wall!

Although quite tall, at 44ft, the buck was on the small side at only 15ft x 10ft in plan. It did have plenty of headroom on the stone floor though, and an unusual feature was that the stones were carried on a raised floor laid over the crown-tree. This avoided the crown-tree being cut to house the bedstones, which were set well back. Originally the stones (both French)



were 4ft 6ins on the right and 4ft 0ins on the left but in 1935 Jesse Wightman altered it to 4ft 0ins and 3ft 6ins respectively, the 3ft 6ins pair coming from Monk Soham composite mill. Each pair was separately governed, by belt from the lower stone spindles. Tentering was by separate timber bridgetrees pivoted at the centreline and carried by timber brayers at each side, pivoted at the head corner posts. The governors worked by two steelyards at right angles which allowed plenty of adjustment. No flour dresser remained by the 1930's but it had been across the tail, driven by belt from a cross shaft off the brakewheel via a 'skew' pinion.

The iron windshaft was mentioned above. The brakewheel was a four-cant clasp-arm wheel with 88 wooden cogs driving an iron wallower on the iron upright shaft. The great spur wheel was an iron mortise wheel and drove the stones through iron stone nuts, which were of different sizes to suit the different stone sizes. The sackhoist was belt-driven from a pulley behind the brakewheel.

The structure was unremarkable, typical of east Suffolk practice, and had the common failing of the roof being pulled forward by the weather studs under the weight of the windshaft. The buck windows were of slightly different sizes and their proportions differed from the usual ratio of about 2:1 which I think detracted from the mill's appearance. The roundhouse on the other hand had a substantial brick and tiled porch which added to its appeal.

Power came from four double-shuttered patent sails which although not especially large, appeared so compared to the small buck. They were typical Collins sails in that the whips were separated from the stock by a tapered 'extension stock' which dished the sails slightly. (Only Framsdon mill retains this feature now I believe.) They never ran well during the 1930's and this was reputedly because they were badly out of balance. The fantail, which was painted red, white and blue alternately, was also typical of Collins' practice in having vertical struts to brace the fly posts, which were mounted quite a long way up the ladder. The fan drove only one wheel of the carriage, unlike the better-designed Whitmore type which drives both wheels. The track was, uniquely, of cast iron.

Fortunately for us the mill was photographed and measured quite thoroughly by East Suffolk County Council prior to demolition; it was also well described by various visiting mill enthusiasts in the 1930's and 40's. From the 1956 survey drawing and other information I have managed to draw up the mill in great detail. Pettaugh mill was probably the last 'good' post mill to be built in Suffolk (Gosbeck was of similar date but did not survive long and Wetheringsett (1882) was not well designed) so it is fitting that it should be so well recorded for posterity.

## **JESSE WIGHTMAN: AN APPRECIATION S. David Marriage**

The late Jesse Eugene Wightman, who died this summer, was probably the last of the millwrights who earned their living from the commercial use of wind and water power for old fashioned competitive business rather than for antiquarian or hobby

purposes. As an independent self-employed craftsman he had erected, renovated and modernised scores of windmills and watermills, mostly in Suffolk, and had an encyclopaedic knowledge of their owners, their products and technology. After his exemplary restoration of Saxtead Green post mill for the Ministry of Works (now English Heritage) he answered our advertisement for a millwright in 1962 and after taking up our references agreed to come to Chelmsford to look after our machinery.

A deeply religious man, his integrity and honesty found expression in the quality of his work. Machines, conveyors and structures had to do their job 100% - and from the word go! He would never overstate the potential, or on the other hand skimp his efforts to make anything yield its optimum performance. He had an intuitive understanding of all sorts of materials and equipment. For instance, an expensive mixer made by a famous national firm had never really blended correctly until Jesse cut two inches off its main part - whereupon it functioned perfectly. He would make spouts, elevators or worm conveyors tailored to the job with economy in power, materials and ease of maintenance. His knowledge of millstones, their dress and furrowing was unrivalled. He was not content solely with the mechanical perfections of their work but usually required a sieving analysis of the particle sizes of the flour and a loaf or two, probably baked at home, after any change in the dress or speed of the stone or the condition of the wheat being used.

He only gradually retired from work - always on a self-employed basis - and even in his eighties would come to the mill for an hour or two stone dressing or to give valuable advice on some old or new machine. He will be greatly missed and his carefully weighed comments long remembered.

*S. David Marriage is the retired chairman of W & H Marriage & Sons Ltd. of Chelmsford.*

## **BOOK REVIEW    Mark Barnard**

*The Story of Cornard Mills* by Hugh Baker. Privately published in 1994; price unknown. Available in Sudbury bookshops and direct from the author.

This is a comprehensive account of what was until 1989 a family business started in 1851 when Edward Baker, the author's great grandfather, purchased Cornard mill. The book charts the gradual development and enlargement of the mill, including the introduction of rollers in 1895, and erection of a large new roller mill in 1911. In the last few years the Cornard site has been used solely for the production of cooked petfood, flour milling having been transferred to Green's Mill at Maldon in 1968. The history of the Maldon premises has its own chapter, so there's something for Essex mill enthusiasts too. Being as much a company history as a mill history, there is an over-long and rather turgid account of Bulkmobile, a feedstuff transporter sideshoot, notes on the development of fish feed, and the Chairman's annual reviews from 1969 to 1988. Be warned: altogether these consume 93 of the book's 159 pages!



The historical account of the Cornard mill has much detailed information which could only be obtained from the Baker family. This is supplemented by a separate chapter on the recollections of the late Edward Geoffrey Baker (a brother of the author) and an account of the new E.R. & F. Turner roller mill reproduced from a 1912 issue of *Milling Magazine*. Among the photographs my favourite is Sydney Baker sitting proudly in his brand new Wolseley motor car in 1912. If I have a criticism it is that the story of the mill is not always made clear. One has to search out the date of the roller mill building, or when feed milling ceased, and the story behind the decision to demolish a vertical slice of the old mill building as a fire precaution is not related at all.

Despite these quibbles, Hugh Baker is to be congratulated for setting down the history of his family firm. The result, though, for the lover of mills is more a source of information than a volume to savour.

*A talk on the Baker family, entitled 'A Family and the River Stour - Millers and Boaters', will be given by Robert Baker at 7.30pm on Wednesday 1st February 1995 at the Talk Electric Centre, Ipswich. The talk has been organised by the Suffolk Industrial Archaeology Society.*

**'DESIGNER KNITWEAR' OFFER**

*Through a friend of Melanie Dolman we are able to make available knitted jumpers with mill designs. Two designs are currently available - a tower mill and a millstone. They are available in all sizes in acrylic wool. (Natural wool may be available if required but the cost would be much higher.) The cost is £20 for adults and £9 for children (including postage) and part of this includes a small donation for mill restoration. As the jumpers are made to order some customisation is possible such as choice of colours (two colours are used) and size of the design; some lettering is also possible if required. For further details please call Melanie on 01359 250622.*

## NEWS

### DOUGLAS PLUCK

News of the death of Douglas Pluck on 18th September came as a considerable shock, for only two weeks earlier I had met him at Hoxne watermill during the S.P.A.B. tour. He autographed my copy of his new book *The River Waveney, Its Navigation and Watermills* (reviewed in the last newsletter) and as I left he was chatting away to Ray Wheeler, the owner of Hoxne mill.

Douglas was a Suffolk man, and after living away from the

region, retired to Harleston in Norfolk in 1983. He was a member of the Wind and Watermill Section Committee from 1979-1988, and joined S.M.G. on moving back to East Anglia. It was this move which prompted him to commence research on the Waveney watermills, and the fact that his work had been published was clearly a source of great pride to him when he met the S.P.A.B. party. Douglas was kind and courteous, a real gentleman and he will be greatly missed. (M.B.)

#### MACHINERY REMOVED FROM GREAT WHELNETHAM MILL

A S.M.G. member has recently reported that items of cast iron machinery have been removed from the derelict tower mill at Great Whelnetham near Bury St. Edmunds (right). The items are understood to include both stone nuts and quants, both pairs of governors and steelyards and the complete curb. The curb was in place at the beginning of 1994. Quite why this machinery has disappeared is unclear; scrap is an obvious possibility, although the value would be small compared to the



effort involved. The mill is listed Grade II, and removal of this machinery is a criminal offence. Mr. Plumb, the owner of the mill and the surrounding farm, died in the summer and one has to wonder whether the two events are connected.

The mill, built in 1865, is a small one and still retains potential for restoration. It worked by engine until the 1960's and retains one pair of stones and a crusher in the place of the second pair. S.M.G. is hoping to carry out work in the next few weeks to make the tower secure. Work is also needed at the top of the tower where the corrugated iron roof which protected it for so many years has now disintegrated. (M.B.)

#### WIND FARM APPEAL

According to a Press report, an appeal has been made against the decision of Waveney District Council to refuse planning permission for five wind turbines on the coast at Easton Bavents, near Southwold (see Newsletter 57). It is likely a public inquiry will be held next year.

### PROGRESS AT DRINKSTONE MILLS

Having completed work on the new curb at Wicken smock mill I was able this year to spend more time at the Drinkstone mills.

First priority was completion of the final third of the smock mill cap roof. The ribs are a mixture of originals, a couple of our pallet wood ribs of 15 years ago plus laminated ribs backed by oak ribs from the previous Wicken roof. Quite a mixture, but all we intended for this roof was good external appearance, complete waterproofing, freedom from maintenance and long life. The internal appearance is not too important. The roof has been covered with plywood on top of which is aluminium sheet, all the seams being sealed with Flashband. It looks a lot better than our previous holding roof as it is 2ft 6ins deeper, incorporating a deep petticoat preventing windblown rain and birds getting into the tower top (see photograph, right). We have left it to weather over the winter and next year hope to paint it white and take down the very strong but rather jaunty looking scaffold platform.



More repairs have been made to the smock tower with layers of thick polythene sheet, sealing in two small panes of glass to form windows. The fewer windows the better in such a vulnerable structure. Shortly before the visit of the S.P.A.B. in September I had a great 'bug out' of all the old timber and layers of carpet spread over corrugated steel sheet on the dust floor which had so effectively soaked up the considerable leaks from the old roof. Later, on a very wet October day, Brian Flint and I had a monumental bonfire with almost obsessive regard to safety. A bonfire can soon turn into a *mal*fire, as at Barham Down in Kent when one was lit close to the mill and just before lunch. By the time the meal had been consumed the mill was well alight and nothing could save it.

By August it was time to start again on the post mill. The buck roof was now leaking badly and the boards beyond protection by paint. We had thought of new boards but once the old boards had been removed the ribs would have fallen to pieces, presenting us with a task for which neither money nor time was available. As the

whole roof although leaking was holding together and only had itself to support, we decided to fit a watertight aluminium skin. The cost of this in time and money was only a tenth that of a new traditional boarded roof and it has the bonus of being virtually maintenance free. A simple scaffold platform was constructed with access via a ladder from the steps and Wilfred Clover's old platform at the tail. The old leaking rainwater gutters and downpipes were removed and aluminium-clad dripboards put in their place. One of the downpipes was made from the driveshaft of an old car! We were able to cover both sides of the roof with aluminium and it is now waterproof for the first time in many years (see photograph below).

Work on the roof gave a bird's eye view of the neighbouring pig farm where some 8,000 pigs are fattened up for Sainsburys. Their houses are set in twin raised banks facing each other with a central driveway for bringing their food. There is a certain similarity in looks to the chamber of the House of Commons and the noises seem familiar as the occupants are variously squealing and grunting, sleeping, fighting and stirring. As feeding time approaches their squeals and grunts build up into great crescendos and I'm sure I hear one of them say 'Order! Order!'.

For some time we had neglected the post mill's winding gear and now considerable rot has spread into the left step string via its top surface. To save it a steel channel has been bolted to its cut-down top surface. Next year this will be covered and both step strings weathered with aluminium over their vulnerable top surfaces.

So much work still has to be done though and it is difficult to reach the right compromise between what is realistic in terms of time and money and what we would really like to do. As the post mill still keeps to wind the head takes most of the weather and as



there is very little overlap on the half-rotten and now leaking boards, it would be nice to re-board the head. The structure is not too bad and boards with a good overlap add great strength as well as weatherproofing. The boards on the sides and tail of the mill are in reasonable condition and if she keeps to wind will last many more years.

It's difficult to know what to do with the sails. The spring shutter sails are now totally beyond repair. The stock centre has rotted through and only the clamps hold everything together. The sail at the top is in a fair state but the lower one is dreadful, with the whip rotten and the stock starting to bend where it leaves the clamps. The whole sail very visibly sags by about two feet. They are beyond even turning the other way up. The common sails are in a better state, the stocks and whips being in fair condition but with bars and hemlaths rotting. I'm reluctant to remove sails, especially where there is little or no prospect of their replacement. But if they become dangerous and threaten the survival of the whole mill they should be carefully taken down.

We must continue to do what we can for Drinkstone mills although it is all compromise and the future is very uncertain. We must at least ensure that they survive beyond 2000 and that the post mill sees some years of its fifth century. (C.H.)

#### S.P.A.B. WIND & WATERMILL SECTION TOUR

The Section's tour of Suffolk took place between 1st-4th September and was based at Belstead House. On Thursday afternoon there were visits to Woodbridge tide mill, Buttrum's Mill, Friston and Saxtead Green post mills, and on Friday to Baylham watermill, Drinkstone mills, Pakenham watermill, Stanton post mill, Ixworth and Euston watermills, Thelnetham mill and Hoxne watermill. A second full day's excursion on Saturday took in Wixoe watermill, Great Thurlow and Dalham smock mills, Lark Mills at Mildenhall, Cavenham and Tuddenham watermills and Home Farm waterwheel at Culford. Finally, on the Sunday morning the watermills at Thorington Street, Wiston and Layham were visited. The tours were complemented by talks on Suffolk windmills and watermills by Peter Dolman, the organiser of the weekend, and from Brian Flint and Chris Hullcoop, who recollected Suffolk mills they had known since the 1960's.

We understand the tour party was most impressed, both with the quality and diversity of mills Suffolk has to offer and with the efficiency of the organisation. Well done Peter! A fuller account of the tour appears in the current Section newsletter. (M.B.)

#### STANTON WINDMILL

As you will know by now, the mill has been bought by me and my family, and we moved in at the end of July. As the S.P.A.B. tour were to visit within five weeks a high priority was to clear the mill of junk, also to repair the sackhoist which was partly broken. Since the S.P.A.B. visit nothing further has happened to the mill as we are concentrating on the house and other buildings, which need a lot of work to put them in good order.

The windmill is in a fairly sound state generally but there are worrying signs of decay in the fanstage, ladder and sails, due to the use of secondhand or untreated timber. Hopefully this will not accelerate too quickly as I can't expect to get around to repairs and replacement for a long time. A more pressing concern is to re-felt the roundhouse roof which leaks badly in several places. I hope to get the mill grinding next year but will have to do a lot of 'setting up' before this can happen as much of the machinery is out of alignment or very worn. I see the complete renovation to 'as new' condition taking many years but I would like to aim for 2001 which will be the mill's 250th birthday year.

I am aiming to do as much work as I can myself but would of course welcome assistance. It may well be that I hold 'work-ins' to do some of the larger items but for the time being I will be doing work in any spare time I can muster! If anyone can offer help then please make contact with me. One benefit of our residency at the mill house is that it is now possible to visit the mill much more easily than in the past and visitors are indeed welcome on a casual basis, since my family will normally be at home during the daytime. Obviously if planning a special visit then a telephone call in advance would be a good idea (telephone 01359 250622).

To enable me to refit the mill and other buildings to their original state I need to have as many pre-restoration pictures as possible. If any members could lend me monochrome or colour pictures showing the mill in its context, or interior views before restoration, I would be most grateful. (Peter Dolman)

#### SPROUGHTON MILL INQUIRY

The public inquiry into the proposal to demolish Sproughton watermill (see the last two newsletters) is to be held at Babergh District Council offices on November 23rd. S.M.G. will be opposing the application. We have asked a leading structural engineer, specialising in the conservation of historic buildings, to report on the mill and give evidence on behalf of both S.M.G. and S.P.A.B. to the inquiry. We intend to publish more on this case in a future newsletter.

In recent weeks the mill has been advertised for sale on its own (i.e. without the house) for the first time. A condition of sale is that emergency and full repairs are carried out within specified timescales. Agents are R.C. Knight & Sons, Stowmarket IP14 1DN (0449 612384). (M.B.)

#### THORINGTON STREET MILL

The windows are now installed in the lucam and the corrugated iron clad extension, completing the external repairs with the exception of the main door which is getting rather tired. Other progress hoped for this summer has not happened, possibly due to the Estate management changing during the year and earlier plans for Estate-funded repairs being abandoned or postponed. The mill has run on several occasions over the summer, when low flow rate in the river was a major problem as ever.

With my increased mill commitments at Stanton it is likely that I will have insufficient time to devote to Thorington Street mill in future years. I propose to continue for the time being but if any S.M.G. member would like to take over I would be happy to relinquish my 'arrangement' (there is no formal lease as such). The mill is in reasonably good condition now but there will always be something needed so restoration work ought to continue if possible. (Peter Dolman)

### CRANFIELD'S CLOSURE ANNOUNCED

Allied Mills has announced that Cranfield's flour mill beside the Wet Dock in Ipswich is to close in the next five years, as part of a programme of 'investment and rationalisation' (familiar words these days). Around 70 people are currently employed at the roller mill, and Allied Mills has said there will be no job losses for three years.

Cranfield's original roller mill was erected in 1884. Subsequent expansion, mainly in the years up to 1930, has resulted in a dense castle-like cluster of buildings which is one of the last great industrial complexes fronting the Wet Dock (see photograph on right). The fresh smell of flour on the wind and the sight of lorries being loaded direct from the mill beneath the covered quayside was always something very special. Now we know it will be ending. (M.B.)



## EVENTS

### S.M.G. SOCIAL EVENING: SATURDAY DECEMBER 3rd, from 7.30 pm., at STANTON POST MILL

Peter and Melanie Dolman have kindly agreed to host our social gathering this year, at their new home at Mill Farm, Stanton. Those members attending are asked to bring with them a contribution of food suitable for a cold buffet. As in past years, drinks will be provided by S.M.G. free of charge. Depending on numbers, we will show slides and videos either in the house or in the post mill roundhouse, which is very spacious (heating is promised!). Please bring along slides if you can.

Stanton mill is at Grid Ref. TL972734, a short distance east of the village centre on the Upthorpe Road, almost opposite the Middle School. We look forward to a good turnout of members and friends.

**S.M.G. PUBLIC MEETING: 'THE MILLWRIGHT'S CRAFT'; IPSWICH LIBRARY LECTURE ROOM, SATURDAY FEBRUARY 25th 1995 at 7.30pm.**

Millwrighting 'then and now' is the subject of next year's public meeting, which has been provisionally arranged for the new venue above. The speakers will be Martin Watts, who is based in Devon, and our own Peter Dolman, who is researching the famous firm of 19th century millwrights, Whitmore and Binyon. Further details of this event will appear in the next newsletter.

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**OTHER EVENTS**

**Mill Weekend at Flatford: 31st March - 2nd April 1995**

The Field Studies Council are repeating last year's weekend course at Flatford Mill on windmills and watermills. There will be a detailed investigation of a number of Suffolk mills and a close look at Flatford mill itself. For details contact the Field Studies Council at Flatford Mill, East Bergholt, Colchester CO7 6UL.

**S.P.A.B. Events for 1995**

Windmill Meeting, London: 18th March  
Day Tour: 6th May  
National Mills Day: 14th May  
Weekend Tour (Bath area): 31st August-3rd September  
Watermill Meeting, London: 18th November

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