

SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

Newsletter

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I was speaking to a leading light in another local mills group the other day, and we both bemoaned the almost total lack of young mill enthusiasts in our respective groups (or even among the contingent at the meetings of the Wind and Watermill Section of S.P.A.B.). 'Young' is of course always relative (!), but we were comparing the present day with twenty years ago when we first started attending S.P.A.B. meetings as teenagers. Today the same age group is hardly represented, and the implications for the future are worrying. Various reasons for this state of affairs have been suggested. Should the S.P.A.B. be doing more, or is it up to the local groups, or even individual mills? If any member would like to have their say, and suggest ways young persons can be encouraged to develop an interest in the subject, I would be pleased to open a debate in these pages.

As I write the snow is thick on the ground, but we can look forward to the end of the winter and in particular to our annual public meeting at the beginning of March. This year we are delighted to welcome to Suffolk Alan Stoyel, one of the most dedicated and enthusiastic molinologists I have ever had the privilege to meet. Please do come along if you can for what is bound to be an entertaining evening. This and other events are summarised below.

S.M.G. meeting, Ipswich library	Saturday March 2nd
S.P.A.B. Windmill Meeting	Saturday March 16th
National Mills Day	Sunday May 12th
S.P.A.B. day tour	Saturday May 18th
S.M.G. Annual General Meeting	Sunday June 16th

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of the newsletter. Material for future issues is always most welcome.

Mark Barnard

AUSTRALIAN FLOUR MILLING HISTORY (2) Keith Preston

Similar difficulties to those experienced with windmill construction were to be encountered during the construction of the first watermill in New South Wales, at Parramatta. Three carpenters had been supplied with the '*...plan of a corn mill*' and despatched by the British Government, arriving at Sydney in May 1798. Their arrival may explain the lack of progress with the second Government windmill at this time, due to all available resources being allocated to the Parramatta watermill. Collins recorded in August 1798 that '*...the agricultural hands were employed in breaking up ground for maize...and others were endeavouring to prepare materials for a water-mill*'. The three

carpenters do not appear to have been any more successful than earlier recruits from England as Governor King, following his arrival in September 1800 states that '*...very little of the machinery done and will be at least ten months before the dam, &c, is completed*'.

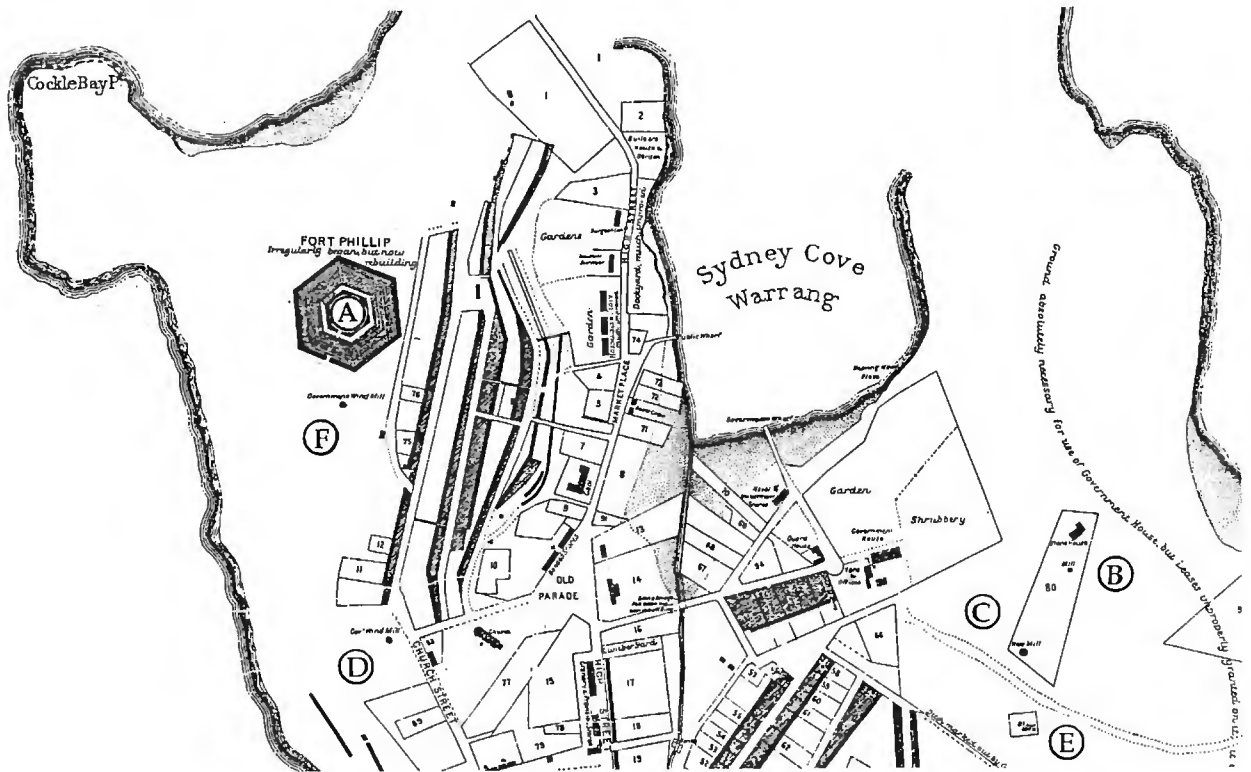
Little progress with the watermill had been made by October 1803 when '*...preparations are making for a Water Mill at Parramatta, for the use of Government, under the direction of Mr Alexander Dollis, lately of the establishment as Superintendent at Norfolk Island*'. Convicts were employed in cutting a mill race in November 1803 and in January 1804 the wheels were reported to be finished and the '*stone work to be in great forwardness*'. The wheel was described as being of over-shot construction, 18 feet in diameter and 18 inches in width. King states that the mill was finished on the 23 February, being built '*...of stone, with two strong and well constructed dams, and the situation such that no floods can ever affect it*'. This was to be an unfortunate statement, as in the following August, King reports to London that '*...the two mill dams erected at Parramatta for supplying the water mill have unfortunately failed owing to the lightness of the soil*'. The repaired earth dams failed again in January 1805, following which timber piles were driven and fitted with horizontal planks to retain the earth dam. This also proved ineffective and after a replacement stone weir also failed in April 1806, the work gangs were redeployed and the mill site abandoned.

The ineptitude of the Government in Sydney in providing a well built windmill no doubt encouraged the small group of free settlers to establish the first commercial ventures in the colony. Boston's Mill, a cylindrical stone tower mill with common sails, is shown on Grimes Map of 1800 and in early sketches, together with the two Government windmills. The mill is attributed to John Boston, one of the first free settlers to arrive in October 1794 and who is listed as having been granted land in September 1796. Boston's Mill therefore appears to be the second windmill working successfully in Sydney. By May 1801, a second privately owned tower mill was operating nearby in The Domain. This large tower mill was erected at great expense by John Palmer who was appointed Commissary, following his arrival as a free settler with the First Fleet.

The next windmills built in Sydney were erected by Nathaniel Lucas after Governor King had arranged for his return from Norfolk Island where he had been appointed Superintendent of the Carpenter's Department. King states



Palmer's Tower Mill, The Domain, usually referred to incorrectly as Boston's Mill (State Library of N.S.W.)



Plan of Sydney - 1807 (James Meehan)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| A = Fort Phillip Tower Mill | D = Military Tower Mill |
| B = Boston's Tower Mill | E = Lucas's Post Mill |
| C = Palmer's Tower Mill | F = Government Smock Mill |

that '...he has undertaken to bring with him the works for a Wind Mill on account of Government...He may also my permission to bring some Materials to construct a Wind Mill for himself'. Lucas was allowed to erect his post mill first, in May-June 1805, which 'was undertaken and finished within the space of six weeks; has been several weeks at work and is found capable of grinding, with a sufficiency of wind, upwards of six bushels per hour'. The third Government mill was erected during 1806: '...the frame of an octagon smock mill, was last week erected by Mr Nathaniel Lucas... the height of the frame is 40 feet, and the diameter at the base, from opposite angles, 22 feet. It is to work two pair of mill stones, which are the best that could be procured at Norfolk Island'. The mill was still under construction in July 1806 when 'Nathan Lloyd was severly hurt by a piece of timber falling from the top of the new octagon windmill'.

A further five post mills, five tower mills and a smock mill were erected in the Sydney suburbs of Miller's Point, Pyrmont, Woolloomooloo, Darlinghurst and Paddington prior to 1830. The first of these were of limited size until, in the period 1826-28, three substantial brick and stone tower mills were built in Woolloomooloo. Two of these were built by the English millwright John Smith for Francis Girard and Thomas Barker. They worked commercially until the 1850's while all of the post mills had ceased working by about 1840, with the exception of Gordon's Mill

at Paddington, which continued until about 1870. One final post mill was erected in 1846, by Henry Hough at Waverley, and was the last Sydney windmill to remain operational, ceasing in 1875.

The first steam flour mill was erected at Cockle Bay (Sydney) by John Dickson, commencing operation in June 1815. Described as an 'engineer and millwright' by the Colonial Office, Dickson closed his Southwark engine and tool works following inducements in the form of land grants. Governor Macquarie was instructed to *'...allot to him a Grant of Land in the Interior of the Colony proportionate to his Capital'*. Further steam mills followed in 1825 at Darling Harbour, 1826 at Parramatta and 1829 in Sussex Street, Sydney. By 1839 17 steam mills were established in the main population centres of Sydney, Wollongong, Goulburn and the Hunter Valley, increasing to 30 by 1842. The mid 1840's marked the peak of traditional mill development in New South Wales when some 30 horse mills, 35 windmills and 30 watermills were recorded in the Mills & Manufactories Returns. A dramatic increase in the number of steam mills between 1842 and 1860, when 134 were recorded, was associated with a steady decline in other mill types. Only 14 horse, wind and water mills were operating by 1875, the last windmill ceasing in 1882 at Appin, and the final watermill in 1892.

Many steam mills were initially erected at wind and water mill sites to overcome the operational problems associated with inconsistent winds of required strength, even in coastal areas, and the irregular water supply provided by many river systems. Outbreaks of 'rust' disease in many of the older established wheat growing districts during the 1860's led to the premature closure of some wind and water-powered mills. Flour mills established in the newly settled districts after 1850 were inevitably steam-powered.

The only other area of Australia where traditional wind and water-powered mills were developed extensively, was Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania from 1856), first settled in 1803. Tasmania experienced similar problems to the infant New South Wales colony and pre-1830 development was painfully slow. The first mills were established largely by the same families involved with the early mills of Sydney and Norfolk Island. Robert Nash had been transferred to Van Dieman's Land in September 1808 and initially was employed by the Government to build the first watermill in Hobart Town. This mill was operational by March 1816. After receiving a land grant from a grateful Lieutenant-Governor Davey, Nash erected a post mill at Pitt Water which was working by February 1817. The mill was probably of similar construction to that built by Nathaniel Lucas on Norfolk Island. Surviving photographs from the turn of the century show the mill to be of primitive construction, open trestle in type and having common sails, the stocks being mortised through the wooden windshaft. Post mills were also the first mills to be erected at the other initial settlement in Van Dieman's Land, at Port Dalrymple (later Launceston). A mill built by William and Nathaniel Lucas, sons of Nathaniel Lucas senior, was operational by May 1817, with a further post mill built on Garden Island credited to a John Smith.

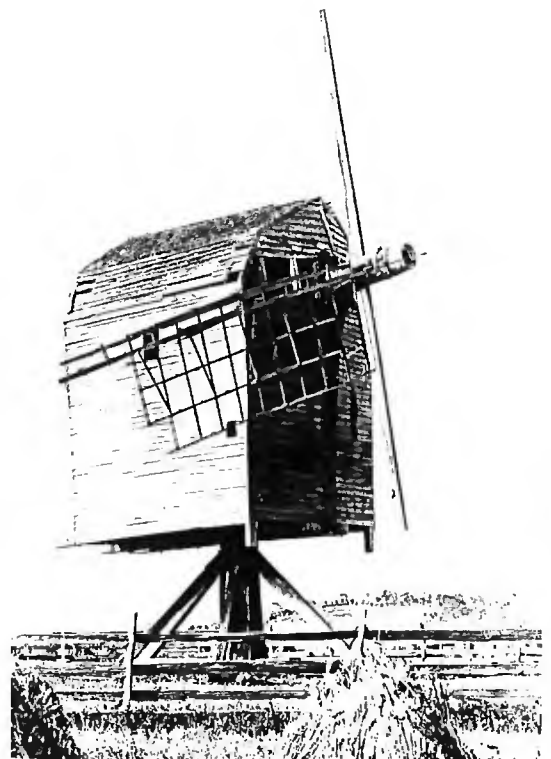
Mill development peaked in Tasmania between 1855-70 with horse

mills accounting for some 8% (approximately 6), windmills 11% (approx.9), watermills 56% (approx.45), and steam mills 25% (approx.25). The availability of a plentiful water supply largely accounts for the more limited development of steam-powered mills which did not dominate until after 1888 when the number of watermills had fallen to 14. The last recorded operational windmill, that at Oatlands, ceased working in 1892, about ten years later than in New South Wales. The longer operating period in Tasmania and the retention of many of the farm properties by descendants of the original grantees, has resulted in Tasmania having the best surviving record of mills (watermills) in Australia.

Mill development in the remaining Australian states was restricted by the later colonisation with settlements in Queensland (Moreton Bay, later Brisbane) established in 1825, Western Australia (at Perth) in 1829, Victoria (at Portland and Port Phillip, later Melbourne) from 1834, and South Australia (at Adelaide) in 1836. A windmill (a tower mill) was erected at Moreton Bay in 1828 but was out of use by 1849. Only one flour mill, a steam mill, is recorded as being operational in 1858, when Queensland was formally separated from New South Wales. In Western Australia, the first mill, a horse mill, was erected by William Shenton in 1831, who is also credited with building the first windmill in the state and although further traditionally-powered mills were erected throughout the south-western part of the state, their numbers were limited.

In Victoria, mill development proceeded slowly prior to 1843 when more than half of the flour was imported. Only one windmill, one watermill and two steam mills are known to have been erected by this time. By 1850, one windmill at Port Fairy (a post mill), nine water mills and 11 steam mills are recorded as operating in the Mills & Manufactories Returns. Both wind and water mills were erected in small numbers after 1850, but their working lives were short, and in most cases supplemented by steam power. The early mill development in South Australia followed a similar course to that in Victoria.

Given the early demise of wind and water mills in Australia, it is not surprising that few complete mills remain. Windmills have suffered most, with only a handful of gutted tower mills remaining. The last operational tower mill in New South Wales, at Appin, was stripped of its original wooden gearing in the 1940's and a water tank installed. The last complete tower mill in



Pitt Water (Sorrell) Post Mill,
Tasmania (Archives of Tasmania)

Australia, at Busselton in Western Australia, survived largely intact until the late 1950's, when the gearing was removed for the restoration of Shenton's Mill at Perth. Today, the only 'complete' windmills are the recent tower mill reconstructions at Old Sydney Town in New South Wales and an incongruous structure at Launceston in Tasmania.

A co-ordinated national approach to environmental heritage in Australia has evolved slowly during the last 15 years following the passage of the Australian Heritage Act in 1975. Legislation in each of the states followed (in 1977 in New South Wales), and a 'Register of the National Estate' was established, which includes all items of merit including flour mills. Protection of individual structures included on the Heritage Register is the responsibility of local councils, in much the same manner as in the U.K. The National Trust of Australia also maintains a register of heritage properties and advises local councils when dealing with development applications. Government funding for restoration has benefitted only a handful of mills. Notable examples include Anderson's steam/water mill at Smeaton in Victoria and Oatlands tower mill in Tasmania where grants from federal and state governments have been supplemented by funds from the National Trust and from private sponsorship.

A number of mills in high profile locations such as the Wickham Terrace Tower Mill in Brisbane and Shenton's Tower Mill in Perth, have been restored (superficially in Brisbane's case) by property developers and for promotional purposes. The majority of the remaining mills, including the few that are largely complete, owe their survival to the care and maintenance provided by the present landowners. In some cases the mills are still retained by descendents of the settlers who initially established the mills on the original land grants in the first half of the nineteenth century.

In summary, the paucity of surviving mills in Australia reflects the early demise of wind and water power, due largely to the unsuitability of extensive areas of the country to these applications. The absence of conservation bodies and lack of co-ordinated planning procedures throughout the twentieth century has unfortunately accelerated the loss of the remaining structures. Only a handful of nineteenth century horse and water-powered mills, that have been maintained by benevolent landowners, remain in their original working condition. Public awareness of Australian mill heritage is largely confined to a small number of mill reconstructions operating in tourist ventures. Sadly, some of the last surviving watermills with nineteenth century machinery continue to deteriorate due to inadequate resources and the failure of government agencies on a state and local level to intervene.

A.G.M. REPORT

Our 1995 A.G.M. was held on Sunday June 18th in the library at Flatford Mill Field Studies Centre, by kind permission of the warden, Edward Jackson. 14 members were present, of which eight were Committee members. Apologies were received from Chris Armour,

June Baker, David Barton, Sq. Ldr. Birt, John Snowdon and Bob Starling.

In welcoming everyone to Flatford, chairman Chris Hullcoop said it was a pity so few had turned out at such a splendid venue amid fine weather. Peter Dolman read the minutes of the last A.G.M. (see Newsletter 59). These were agreed (proposed Brian Flint, seconded Chris Wilson). There followed a brief discussion about sources of funding and responsibility for repair work, prompted by concern over the condition of Pakenham windmill.

Treasurer Des Codd circulated the year's accounts. There was a small deficit, although the figures were distorted by £800 worth of grants made to Stanton and Drinkstone mills, which in turn had been financed partly from donations in memory of Richard Duke. If this was excluded, we were £380 in profit. Subscription income was up by almost one third, and printing costs significantly down. Both bank and building society accounts had been changed, to Lloyds Bank and Ipswich Building Society respectively. Chris Hullcoop thanked Des Codd and also Peter Dolman who had prepared the account summary. He said we were able to give token grants of between £50 and £100 towards professional work and larger ones towards the cost of materials to members who buy a mill to work on themselves. The accounts were accepted as a true record (proposed Cliff Lovett, seconded Penny Berry).

Secretary Peter Dolman reported that membership stood at 165 full and 3 junior members, two down on last year. Eleven other mills groups receive our newsletter on an exchange basis and complimentary copies are sent to S.P.A.B., Suffolk Record Office, St. Edmundsbury Borough Council and the editors of the S.P.A.B. Wind and Watermill Section newsletter. Despite repeated requests, seven members had yet to complete a new Standing Order form following the change in subscription rates and bank account. They were named as Messrs. Abbott, F. Gregory, Harrison, Hunt, Malster and Stott and Mrs. J. Oakley. Peter asked members to inform him if they changed their address. Chris Hullcoop thanked Peter for his patience and perseverance in sorting out the Standing Orders. A separate post of membership secretary would probably not be worthwhile as most of the secretary's work concerns membership records anyway. His report was accepted (proposed Michael Roots, seconded Chris Wilson).

Editor Mark Barnard said four newsletters had been produced since the last A.G.M., maintaining the average of three a year. The word-processed format was now well-established, and the length of each issue had been increasing. As usual, content had been varied, and also as usual there was an urgent need for more material. Peter Steggall had compiled an index to the first 60 newsletters, which was sent out with the last issue. Its length underlined the sheer amount of information we have published in almost 20 years, some of it worthy of re-issue in an anthology. Chris Hullcoop congratulated Mark for producing what he considered to be an excellent newsletter, and endorsed the work of Peter Steggall in producing the index. In reply to Peter Filmer he said back numbers of the newsletter can be supplied, either from spare copies or from reprints. The acceptance of the editor's report and a vote of thanks to Peter Steggall was proposed by Trevor Smith

and seconded by Roy Berry.

Election of the committee followed. John Snowdon had offered to resign if a replacement could be found. This meant there were two vacancies. As there were no potential new committee members, it was agreed the existing committee should be re-elected en bloc (proposed Cliff Lovett, seconded Trevor Scott).

Under Any Other Business, a letter from David Barton was read, concerning the dismissal of Bob Malster from the East Anglian Daily Times. The committee agreed to investigate the circumstances before taking any action.

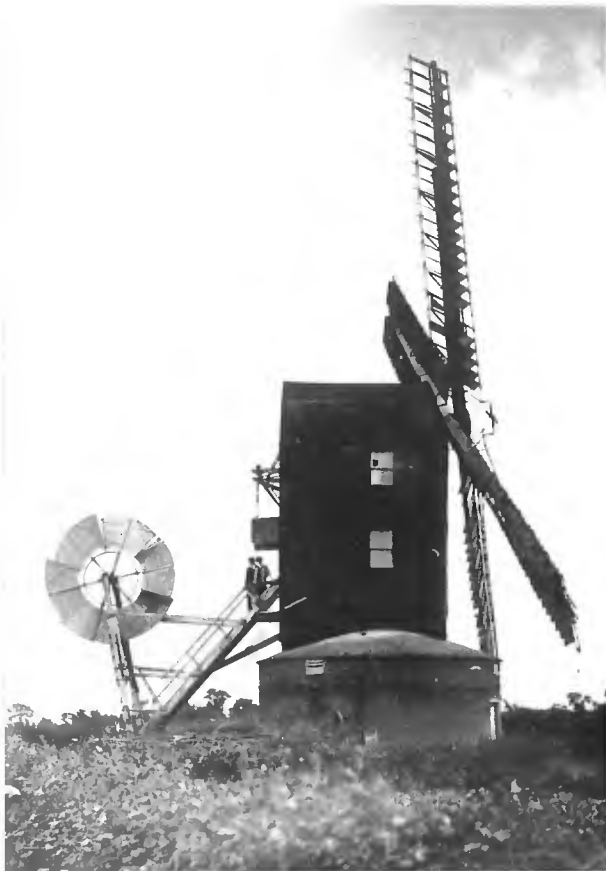
Chris Hullcoop then gave his review of 1994-5 with slides, covering a range of Suffolk mills in the news. Peter Dolman concluded the meeting with a short talk on the history of Flatford Mill.

After lunch we took full advantage of free access to the mill and its surroundings, resplendent on a perfect early summer's day.

VANISHED MILLS Peter Dolman

WENHASTON - 'KITTY MILL'

This little post mill was built in 1830 on a new site (Grid Ref. 420758) by Samuel Stagall Higham, who was tenant of the nearby watermill. About 30 years earlier, incidentally, this



The mill in 1926 (Rex Wailes)

watermill had the dubious distinction of being Suffolk's only known combined wind and watermill, with a small windmill of unknown type on the roof. The tithe map in 1839 names Robert Higham Webb as owner and S.S. Higham (possibly a relative) as occupier of the mill site and in 1851, following Webb's death, the site was offered for sale including 'a cottage and granary'. Possibly Higham bought the freehold, and in any event he erected the roundhouse in 1851. Not long after this he took over the Waterloo Mill at Bramfield (see Newsletter 41) and by 1858 William Scarff Kett had taken over at the watermill and windmill. He continued at the mills until his death in 1898 when the windmill was sold to a Mr. N. Etheridge for £200. He seems to have sold it to Edmund Turner Freeman however as he is listed as miller from 1900 to 1916

(although he still owned it when it ceased work by wind in 1938). In its last years Dick Spencer and his son Harold worked it for Mr. Freeman, continuing by steam power into the 1950's at least. The buck was pulled down in 1966 and the roundhouse subsequently converted into a dwelling.

As built it was a small open trestle mill. It was probably raised when the roundhouse was added and was reputedly rebuilt in 1881-2 when it presumably gained the patent sails. The fantail is said to have come from Pakefield mill (which was a tall smock mill) and was set over the ladder in the usual way. The buck was very small and cramped, only 9ft x 14ft in plan, and two pairs of 3ft 10ins stones were squeezed in across the head, overdriven by iron gearing. The windshaft was iron, replacing an earlier wooden one and amongst the Whitmore drawings which have survived one of the earliest is for this shaft, dated July 30th 1853. It had flanges for head and tail wheels, and although hollow, the poll-end was not shown drilled for patent sails. The clasp-arm brakewheel was typical for the area and a flour dresser was mounted in the tail, driven by skew gear and then belts. The roundhouse contained a pair of stones as well as an oat crusher, power being provided by an ancient portable engine by Youngs of Diss which is now preserved at Bressingham.

The mill was originally white but in 1914 the front and sides were tarred. It had its share of storm damage. It was struck by lightning in 1910, lost the fantail to a gale about 1931, ceased work in 1938 following gale damage and on March 16th 1947 lost the four sails (which were shutterless) complete with windshaft, brakewheel and weatherbeam, torn out of the mill and dumped on the ground. This did however allow the brakewheel to be photographed clearly and revealed that the old wooden windshaft had been adapted as blocking for the wheel on the iron shaft. The roof of the buck was damaged and replaced by a flat corrugated iron roof which survived until the mill's demolition. In 1972 the old steps and fly carriage survived along with other parts of the mill - perhaps they still do. The Spencers knew the mill as 'Little Kitty' - an affectionate and unusual nickname for a windmill!

MY LIFE AT A WINDMILL Gwen Lockwood

My father, Dick Spencer, was the miller at the Wenhaston windmill. I was the youngest in the family and had three brothers. There was a difference of 11 years between myself and my eldest brother.

Kitty windmill was not exceptionally high as there was only one extra floor in the roundhouse and this meant that the sails reached to about three feet from the ground. My father would never allow us to bring any other children up there to play as it was too dangerous. I used to watch my two younger brothers playing a very dangerous game. When the sails were going round, they would dash through a gap in the sails, they then waited near the roundhouse for another gap when they would dash out again. Sometimes they would grab a sail and try to hang on as long as they dare before dropping off. This must have caused my mother a lot of worries, but I suppose she got used to it. There were

never any accidents.

In the top floor of the roundhouse were bins to store the loose grain. On a wet day we used to go up there to play. We would take off our boots. We had enough sense not to go in the barley because of the prickles, and the horse beans were a bit hard on the feet but we liked the wheat best.

The corn had to be sacked up on the ground floor of the roundhouse. The sacks had to be taken up to the top of the mill through the trap doors. At the top was a pulley with a chain; this was fixed to the top of a sack after it had been tied up. We were not allowed in the roundhouse while this was being done in case the chain came off the top of the sack. I once saw one of the mill cats squashed in this way by a falling sack of corn. At the top of the mill were the hoppers. When a hopper was filled a bell which was fixed to the hopper was laid on top of the corn. This went down with the corn and when the hopper was nearly empty, the movement of the mill made the bell ring. This warned my father that he had to fill the hopper again. Up there was the big wooden mill wheel which was attached to the sails. I loved to go up there and look through the little window. On a clear day you could see the Southwold lighthouse about eight miles away, and any ship that might be on the sea.

My father would work through the night if the wind was blowing. The only light he had to see his way around was a candle in a lantern. The mill steps were fixed to a platform which had two huge iron wheels. Above the platform was a fantail (fly wheel), used to turn the whole mill round when the wind changed direction. This is why the roundhouse had two doors as the one where the sails were could not be used when they were turning.

There was a steam engine in a shed which was used when there was no wind. This was a great attraction to my two brothers. I hated it when it was working and my brothers knew this and would wait until I was passing by then blow the whistle. When the engine was being used, my father had to fill a cistern at the side of the shed with water to use in the engine. There was a deep well with a pump (father said it was 80 feet deep). On top was a large iron wheel with a handle which we used to draw up water for ourselves on a hot summer's day. When the engine was working it was connected to the mill by a long belt which was taken to another wheel on the side of the roundhouse. We were warned never to go near this when it was working. In the roundhouse was an oat crusher run by the engine. This was a very noisy machine and if you wanted to talk to anybody you would have to shout.

Father was allowed to have a sack of wheat from the farmer who owned the mill. This he made into flour for himself so we always had a sack of flour in the pantry.

In the summer the repairs had to be done to the mill; the animals would be out in the fields so no food would be needed for them. I used to watch my father dressing the stones by the light of a candle. The only protection he had was a pair of goggles and the backs of his hands would get pitted by the flying chips of stone. These gradually wore out as they were only skin deep. There were grooves in the stones which wore down in the winter. These

had to be chipped out again using a chisel and a mill bill, a heavy wooden mallet.

Our little bungalow had a small kitchen in it with a large dutch oven, an old fashioned high grate with hobs and a copper for washing. Mother used heavy iron saucepans for cooking and there was always a large black kettle by the side of the fire. I often think of the food mother used to make. Once a week the bread was made; this was stored in a large earthenware pot and covered with a cloth. For the pastry, cakes and puddings she used pork lard, beef dripping and suet which she bought from the butcher who came round twice a week. The puddings were cooked in a cloth, and dumplings steamed on top of the vegetables.

The biggest problem was trying to get rid of the dust that father brought in on his clothes, and an occasional mouse that would find its way into the house, but on the whole, I have only happy memories of living at the Wenhaston Kitty mill.

PUTTING MILLS IN THE PICTURE (3) Peter Steggall

TAKING PICTURES FROM THE MILL

In the first article of this series (Newsletter 60, November 1994) I mentioned my small oil painting of Baylham watermill by F.J. Savage. Since then the mill and its owner, Mr. Ernest Onians, have been very much in the news.

In February 1995 (Newsletter 61) Chris Hullcoop reported Mr. Onians' death in January at the age of 90. Those of us who had met him or corresponded with him - and I had done both in the course of my work in the 1970's - found him to be a unique and determined character, not always easy to reach agreement with, but as Chris wrote, 'his word was his bond'. Some time after Mr. Onians' death, his nephew was quoted in the *East Anglian Daily Times* as saying 'he could be exasperating but he taught me much about standing up for one's rights, about making do and mending, about beautiful things and the old ways of the country'.

Early in October 1995, it was suddenly revealed that the mill, the house and outbuildings had contained a tremendous hoard of 'beautiful things' - antiques which were to be sold by Sotheby's in London. The pictures, of which there were about 500,



Baylham Mill

were sold on the first day, 18th October, for a total of nearly £1,000,000, of which £150,000 was paid for 'The Sack of Carthage', attributed to Pietro Testa. (In December it was reported that the buyers of that picture thought it was 'The Sack of Jerusalem', a 'lost' painting by the 17th century French artist Nicolas Poussin, and that it could be worth up to £8M!) On the second day of the sale in October, most of the remaining items, more than 500 in number, including clocks and furniture, were sold for about £325,000, making a total of about £1.25M for the whole sale.

Naturally we now wonder what will happen to the mill, which is itself a 'beautiful thing' of great interest in a lovely setting in the Gipping valley. A few years ago the long-running dereliction was halted by renewal of the roof and repair and repainting of the external boarding, thus giving the mill a new lease of life. As Chris Hullcoop wrote, 'we hope the good work that Mr. Onians started in 1993 will continue with repairs to the gates and perhaps one day the wheel might turn again'.

NEWS

GEOFF WHEELER

Geoff Wheeler, owner of Bardwell tower mill, died in early October following a long illness. While we knew Geoffrey through his mill, he was known to a greater audience through his involvement with traction engines, owning a 1920 Ruston & Hornsby called 'Oliver' which was a frequent sight in the neighbourhood, often doing charity work. After a spell at the Great Western Railway, and then naval service (including HMS Amethyst during the Korean war) he became a freelance technical illustrator, where he reached a large audience with his brilliant cutaway drawings for the *Eagle* and the B.B.C. *Blue Peter Annual*. In recent years he contributed a series of explanatory articles on traction engines to *Old Glory*. Our condolences go to Enid and his family. (P.D.)

WORK AT DRINKSTONE IN 1995

Good progress was made in 1995 with the new boarding on the head of the post mill, but much that we hoped to do will have to wait until 1996.

During the winter, as well as the weatherboards Clarkes of Walsham had delivered a 20ft long, 2ins thick larch plank to line the left hand step string. This string had a strong piece of channel steel bolted to its top surface in 1994 and with the plank bolted to its inside face it is now very strong indeed. The steps were re-fitted and both strings capped and panelled on their sides in aluminium sheet which will be painted white.

We decided to cover the two raked gables in aluminium sheet for good waterproofing and ease of maintenance. The tail gable had a large window, a door and a platform, all causing numerous leaks. Only a small sealed window was replaced and the platform bearers were cut back and used to support a drip board. On the head gable not a single weatherboard was capable of even supporting the aluminium so they were replaced with the last of the exterior grade plywood offcuts donated by Marlows back in the 1980's.

Some years ago four lengths of steel angle were neatly fitted as diagonals to brace the head of the mill. Added behind existing timbers, they in no way compromise the original structure and could be replaced in oak. We were therefore able to remove the head boards knowing that the structure could withstand a gale on the side. Thankfully the oak corner posts were in good condition but all shapes, rather like the proverbial donkey leg. Pieces of tapered timber had been nailed to the front faces of the posts to form a reasonably straight line. Hedgerow timbers and signs of a job done down to a price. Both weather and lower transverse beams had been plated and were in reasonable condition. The mid transverse beam - prick post joint was showing the usual distress so some steel reinforcement was fitted behind and now hidden by the weatherboards and the prick post reinforced with an oak plate. Some



Fitting the first head boards

studs were replaced and two short ones were made from studs dating from 1751 originally in Stanton post mill! Their ends had decayed and they were too short for Stanton but enough good timber remained for their incorporation into the smaller Drinkstone mill.

All new petticoat studs had to be made and preparing all the surfaces for the boards took a long time. Small timbers had to be nailed the whole lengths of both corner posts and prick post to give a sound and even bedding to the boards. A test board was then nailed in place, taking up a natural curve over the three points. Any intermediate studs had to be plated so as to touch the board but not to draw it in or out, away from its natural form. The odd shapes of Drinkstone tested our skill and patience.

All the new weatherboards had to be fitted from a cluster of three ladders outside and a platform inside. Previous experience in boarding post mill heads at Framsdan, Ramsey and Stanton warned us of the pitfalls. If a gap of two boards is left to accommodate

horizontal platform supports it is virtually impossible to fill it afterwards with two boards due to the sharp curve and 50% lap.

We had thought of using stainless steel nails but as they had to be 4ins long the cost would have been prohibitive. Instead we used galvanised nails but knocked in with a special nylon hammer to prevent the zinc coating being broken away.

The great drought was a help with no significant rain falling while the head of the mill was open. Conveniently placed facing north, we worked in shade and avoided the fierce heat of the long hot summer. The boards have now been sealed into the aluminium sheet and the top and the two edges cut all the way down. It remains though to seal their backs into the side boards and this will be done during 1996 when the sides and tail of the buck are patched and painted.

In 1994-5 the sag in the pair of spring sails increased by about a foot. For many years the stock has been in two halves, held together by the very fine pitch pine clamps. The rot now extended down the stock and past the ends of the clamps where the bend was alarming. The whip was also rotten here and would have added little reinforcement to the stock which was now beyond redemption. It was with sadness we decided to lower these sails before they fell off in the winter's gales.



Removing the second half of the stock
(Photo: Pete Filby)

The worst stock end was pulled to its bottom vertical position, the whip unbolted and the complete sail frame lowered followed by the very rotten remains of the stock. The length of one of the clamps was then extended with a piece of steel channel bolted on to allow effective use of a check rope tied onto it. Another check rope was tied onto one of the stronger common sails. With the check ropes around various trees and a tractor, the half stock and sail were

turned half a circle to the bottom vertical position. The whip was unbolted and the second sail lowered followed by the second half of the stock. Although in poor condition the sails mostly held together and they are now stored under cover. If ever new spring sails are made the complete originals are there to serve as patterns.

I must thank volunteers who worked with me at Drinkstone this year: Brian Flint, Des Codd, Roy and Penny Berry, Pete Filby (who travelled by bus from Cambridge, alighting in Woolpit) and Denis Bowers, who braved journeys on Aristotle!

We will need more help again this year, and hope to start in April when days lengthen and the weather improves. (C.H.)

SAXMUNDHAM ROUNDHOUSE WEATHERPROOFED

True to our word (see last newsletter), during November we successfully carried out temporary work to weatherproof the upper floor and part of the trestle of the roundhouse at Saxmundham. The job was made relatively easy by the existence of a central void on the upper floor. Timbers were set radially from the wall, sloping down to the top of the upstand around the void, and heavy duty horticultural polythene was laid over them with a generous overlap, and secured with battens. Water is able to drain down through the void and onto the rubble ground floor, where it soaks away. Polythene was also fitted to some of the quarter-bars and onto the outer ends of the cross-trees, where water had been gathering in the past and soaking into the joints. The small surviving section of original roof was securely tied down and



The start of the weatherproofing operation

various loose pieces of ribs and boards which could have fallen through the plastic were removed. The work was organised by Chris Hullcoop and Mark Barnard, who were assisted by Malvern Tipping and James Warne.

Listed building consent has now been granted for a revised conversion scheme retaining the central void and surviving bins and sack hoist. The whole property is still on the market, along with an adjacent house in separate ownership. (M.B.)

SPROUGHTON MILL PROPOSALS

The planning and listed building applications for the conversion of the mill to a dwelling have now been approved by Babergh District Council, subject to the receipt of suitably amended plans, and full details of the proposed repair scheme, which must accord with the approach previously put forward by Brian Morton. The opening-up of all the blind panels to form windows has been accepted, provided it can be shown that this can be done without weakening the rest of the building. We understand that the proposal to lower the first floor, another of S.M.G.'s concerns, has been withdrawn.

While this is not the conversion scheme we would have wished, it does leave the basic form of the mill intact and if implemented should ensure that the present building survives. (M.B.)

WICKEN WINDMILL: REPAIR PROGRESS

The main sail components are virtually complete, and await final coats of lead paint. A number of jobs are still to be done: it remains to make an initial fit of some of the wind boards, and to build further sail shutters. Virtually all the back stays have been fitted, with the exception of those on to the sail clamps, which will be completed when the sails have been erected.

The brakewheel is under assembly on the meal floor. We are at the stage of fitting the second set of spokes, and a better centering system is being built for holding the wheel on the windshaft. The brake itself is making good progress. The components of the striking gear are ready, apart from the fork irons which are under construction.

The intention is to put the sails up this year, preferably in the summer. They will be raised by hand, rather than by crane, following the erection of the brakewheel and brake. The date for the lift is dependent on progress with the preliminary jobs, but will be in one of the work-ins.

A slightly different strategy is proposed for the main work-ins. We intend to hold the first work-in earlier, at the end of April. Two shorter work-ins of four to five days will follow at approximately monthly intervals. This will allow another session to be arranged later in the year if necessary! The dates will be finalised very shortly; they are expected to be: April 27 - May 5; May 30 - June 2; July 6 - July 10.

We wish to thank all the volunteers for their sterling and much appreciated efforts during 1995. Anyone wanting to help this year, please contact Dave Pearce on 01664 822751. (D.P.)

FORMER POST MILL BUCK MOVED AT LAST

The future of the disused post mill body (latterly a dovecote) at Alder Carr Farm just across the river from Needham Market has been



closely monitored by S.M.G. for many years. We were therefore delighted when some repairs and weatherproofing were finally carried out at the end of 1993 (see Newsletter 58). This work heralded an exciting new future for this unique building, as owners Nick and Joan Hardingham finalised plans to move it a short distance to a new site on the farm where it could be put to a new use.

Ever seen a load like this?



Lowering the buck onto its new site

The removal was finally accomplished on the morning of Saturday December 16th, with the aid of a large mobile crane and a low loader pulled by a tractor. It all went remarkably smoothly, apart from a minor hitch at a tight corner where two small silver birch trees had to be dug up to allow passage to the vehicle and its extraordinary load. The weight was just under five tons, not counting the temporary steel

reinforcement. A new foundation of brick piers had been prepared earlier in the week, amid uncertainty as to whether they would be ready due to the frosty weather. Even after the second crane lift onto its new site, the majority of the surviving internal plasterwork (dating from its time as a windmill) was undisturbed, a tribute to the careful preparatory work by Ron Ames (following S.M.G. advice) and of course the crane operator (the same guy who lifted the cap onto Thelnetham!). Joan Hardingham opened a bottle of champagne for the small group of onlookers, much appreciated on a bitterly cold day!

In the following weeks a new hipped roof covered in handmade tiles was added, together with new boarded ground and first floors. It was decided to reinstate the dovecote roof as this was intact until the 1970's and because at Alder Carr Farm it has always been a dovecote, not a mill. In February it is intended to fit new weatherboards over the old ones, which will be repaired and left in place. The buck, which now stands prominently opposite the farm shop, will be used as a workshop and display area by a woodturner who is already established in one of the existing craft workshops at the farm. An official opening is planned for May 1st 1996. To avoid having to answer hundreds of 'what is it?' questions, a display board is planned so that the many visitors to the farm can appreciate what it is they are looking at. We will publish an article on the history and surviving fabric of this wonderfully intact post mill buck in a future newsletter. (M.B.)

HERRINGFLEET REPAIRS

The planned S.M.G. New Year's Day opening of Herringfleet had to be cancelled because the mill was still under repair. Just as well, perhaps, as I seem to recall it was cold, dull and windless! Millwright Richard Seago is having to replace the whole of the tailpole assembly, as well as repairing and reboarding the cap. The whole mill was redecorated in the autumn, using proper coal tar on the weatherboards. We look forward to opening the repaired mill for National Mills Day. (M.B.)

WINDMILLS UP-GRADED

Two Suffolk windmills, Bardwell and Friston, have recently had their listed building grading changed from II to II*. Various mills elsewhere have been similarly up-graded. This may be connected with applications for historic buildings grant aid from English Heritage, for which only Grade I and II* buildings now qualify. (M.B.)

MILLS FOR SALE

A couple of Suffolk mill conversions are on the market according to the S.P.A.B. Wind & Watermill Section newsletter. The gutted tower mill at **Barnham** near Thetford is priced at £109,000, which includes 0.8 acres. More interesting perhaps is the fine three-storey post mill roundhouse at **Honington**, quite prominent in the local landscape, also gutted and on offer at £119,500. This is said to have been one of the tallest Suffolk post mills, the buck removed about 100 years ago. Agents Bedford of Bury St. Edmunds (01284 769999) are handling both sales.

FLATFORD MILLS COURSE

This year S.M.G. secretary Peter Dolman will once again be leading a short course on Suffolk windmills and watermills at Flatford Mill Field Studies Centre. The dates are Friday March 22 to Sunday March 24, and the cost £98. For further details contact the Field Studies Council at Flatford on 01206 298283.

MILL HOLIDAY IN CRETE

Following their successful milling holidays to Crete in 1994 and 1995, Island Holidays have decided to offer a further week-long holiday there in 1996, from October 8th-15th. The tour will be led by Alan Gifford of the Midland Mills Group and by John and Chris Henshall who live on Crete. The island has a strong mill culture, with windmills, watermills and animal-powered olive oil mills. Some are still in commercial use. The number of participants is limited to 20, and the fully inclusive price is £870 (£65 extra for a single room). For further details contact Island Holidays on 01764 670107, or Alan Gifford on 01283 702299.

ORIGINS OF CHESTERTON WINDMILL

A fascinating news item concerning Chesterton windmill appeared in a recent edition of the newsletter of the Midland Mills Group. The origins of this remarkable cylindrical stone tower mill, raised on six semi-circular arches, and dated 1632, have always been open to question. Was it built as a windmill, or later converted to one? An account book of 1633-4 relating to the Chesterton Estate records payment for work on the windmill, which was completed in September 1633. Although not accounting for all the building work, this proves beyond doubt that Chesterton was built as a windmill from the start. How ironic that our oldest complete windmill is the most atypical.

MILL MATERIAL FOR DISPOSAL

A number of minor mill publications dating from the early 1970's have recently been donated to the editor (address on p.1). These were collected by David Butters, who was tragically killed in a motor accident in 1987. I am prepared to offer them for the cost of postage, preferably to a young mill enthusiast. They are listed below.

Discovering Windmills (John Vince) 1969 & 1973 editions
Getting to Know About Windmills (Jeffery Whitelaw) c.1970
Windmills of East Anglia (Brian Flint) 1971 & 1973 editions
Windmills (S.P.A.B. booklet)
Windmills to Visit (Norfolk Windmills Trust) 1980's
Nutley Windmill Restoration (3 booklets from early 1970's)
Guide booklets or leaflets to Woodbridge tide mill; Pakenham Windmill; Saxtead Green; Syleham; Framsdon; Holton; Buttrum's Mill, Woodbridge; Berney Arms; Letheringham; Ramsey (Essex); Garboldisham; Mountnessing; Bocking; Polegate; Stevington; Lacey Green; North Leverton; Shipley.

Also available are the following (all prices post free):

Photocopy of *Suffolk Watermills* by Rex Wailes (1965 Newcomen Society paper) Price 50p

Bedfordshire Mills by Hugh Howes (1983) Price £2

Drainage Mills of the Norfolk Marshes by A. Smith (1990) Price £4

Second Time Around (30 minute video of restoration of Thelnetham Mill) Price £8

Please contact Mark Barnard, 41, Melbourne Road, Ipswich IP4 5PP for any of the above.

EVENTS

S.M.G. PUBLIC MEETING: 'TILTING AT MILLS'; LECTURE ROOM, IPSWICH CENTRAL LIBRARY; SATURDAY MARCH 2nd at 7.30pm

Guest speaker at this year's public meeting is Alan Stoyel, one of the country's leading authorities on all aspects of mills, especially watermills. A former chairman of the Wind and Watermill Section of S.P.A.B., Alan will give a personal account of his life with mills, which extends from survey work in this country and abroad (he lived in Spain for several years), fighting for mills at public inquiries and repairing to working order his own Venn Mill in Oxfordshire which he acquired in 1976. Alan is an excellent speaker and we can guarantee a most enjoyable evening.

We had an encouraging turnout for last year's meeting at the same venue, but let's try and do even better this time! Please display the attractive A4 poster which is enclosed with this newsletter (local members only) and tell your friends about the event.

HERRINGFLEET WINDPUMP WORKING DEMONSTRATION: NATIONAL MILLS DAY, SUNDAY MAY 12th, from 1-5pm.

Our usual N.M.D. public opening of Herringfleet should be 'on' following the completion of the extensive repairs to the cap and winding gear (see above News item). And this year we have got the right date! Let's hope for a sunny, breezy day, as the newly tarred and painted mill should look fine.

At present we do not know for sure which other Suffolk mills will be open, but they will probably include Thelnetham, Stanton and both at Woodbridge. If any member is opening other local mills, or would be prepared to help with N.M.D. publicity, please contact Peter Dolman (address on p.1).

S.M.G. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: SUNDAY JUNE 16th at 11am.

Please note now the date and time of this year's A.G.M. The venue is Lark Mills, Mildenhall, part of a working mill complex which we visited a few years back. We hope to arrange a visit to a mill or mills in nearby Cambridgeshire in the afternoon.
