

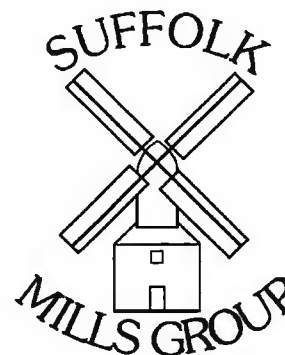
SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

Newsletter

Hon. Secretary: PETER DOLMAN
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During the summer the mill news in this part of the world has mostly been encouraging. Work has continued steadily at Drinkstone mills, two work-ins have been held at Stanton post mill, emergency repairs have been completed at Sroughton watermill, extensive repairs carried out to the tower of Walton smock mill near Felixstowe, and weatherproofing work is currently under way at Great Whelnetham tower mill. Our A.G.M. at Mildenhall mill was an enjoyable experience, with a pleasing turnout of members on a lovely warm June day. Apart from the work-ins and the opening of Herringfleet mill in August, S.M.G. has not organised any other events since the A.G.M., which is unusual. This is really a reflection of the heavy commitments of our very few active local members, and underlines the urgent need to recruit more organisers and leaders if we are to flourish as a mills group.

A further newsletter is planned for early February and any contributions would be most gratefully received as my editorial 'reserve folder' is getting very thin!

The dates for the next three events are given below. Please note that the New Year's Day opening of Herringfleet is subject to confirmation (see 'Events' below).

S.M.G. Social (Stanton mill)	Saturday December 7th
Herringfleet mill opening	Tuesday January 1st (confirm)
S.M.G. public meeting	Saturday February 22nd

Mark Barnard

SOME KENTISH MILLS Brian Beach

During the late 1940's and early 1950's I made quite a number of sketches of mills in the county of Kent. The most common type found was the smock mill with tarred weatherboarded tower and white wagon-shaped cap, these smocks nearly all possessing a gallery to give access to sails ('sweeps' in Kent).

One such type stood a short distance from my home at Milton Regis near Sittingbourne. From very early years I had known it as a derelict, its spindly traces of sails bereft of any shutters or framework. Many successive sketches were made of this familiar landmark, virtually up to the time of its demolition in 1955.

Journeying eastwards, towards Thanet I visited Herne smock, imposingly set on its height and in fine shape. It was possible to make a close study of the sails, showing shutter construction. Another journey made from time to time was between Sittingbourne and Deal. As one left Canterbury there was the tower mill on St. Martin's Hill, overlooking the city, and with the stocks of its sails remaining. Then, at the village of Wingham, another tower



Milton Regis Mill

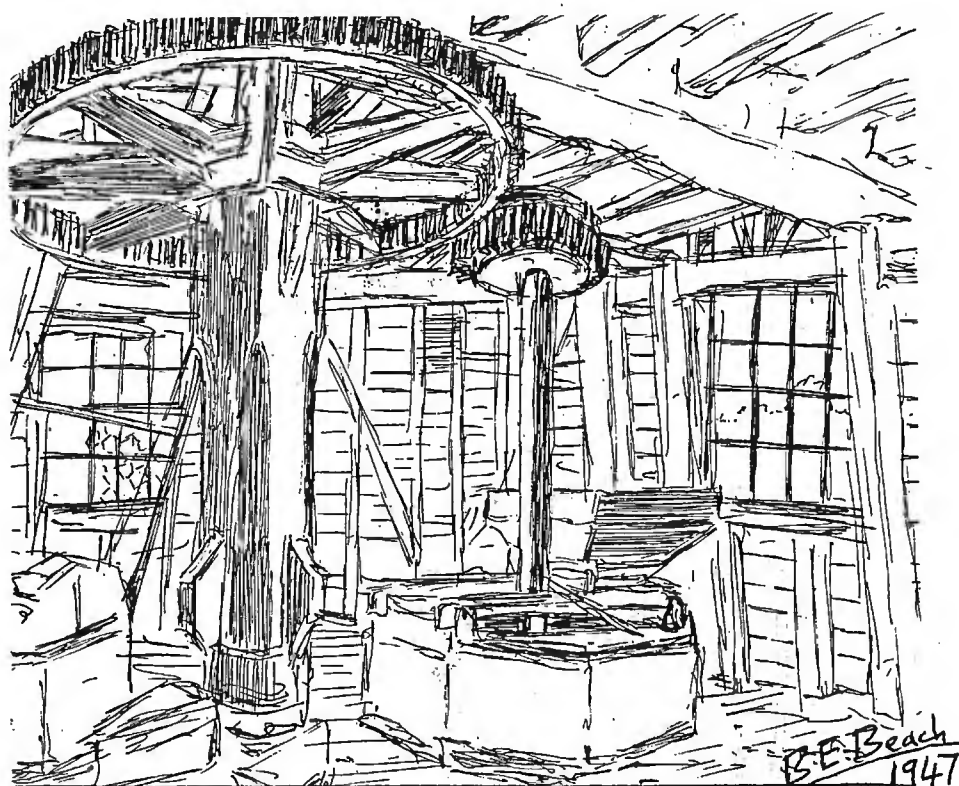
B.E. Beach
1954

mill was observed, this retaining more of its sails, but looking quite derelict. Not far eastward, Ash mill came into view - a truly attractive landmark; for here was a post mill with round-house and complete set of sails. It was of great age, making the study of its wooden gearing of particular interest. Eastward again; and now came the smock at Sandwich, known as the White Mill, though at that time more grey than white, and generally looking in a sad state. Between Sandwich and Deal lay the Northbourne mills, new and old. I made a pencil sketch of the latter in 1950. Somewhat less usual, it had no brick base as a ground floor, the tower entirely sloping. A remaining sail hung down from the canister, and there were traces of the fantail. Finding the place quite isolated on its grassy mound, and noting that a substantial gap appeared in the weatherboarding, I could not resist the opportunity of clambering inside. All very rewarding, as gearing and milling fittings could be observed; and another sketch was made, now of the cap interior, showing

windshaft and striking mechanism.

Within the triangle formed by Canterbury, Deal and Dover stands Chillenden post mill. This has an open trestle, mounted on small brick piers; at the rear a tailpole with wheel on end, protrudes through broad steps attached to the buck. When this was visited in 1948 I had the good fortune to find it working. It was most stimulating to be able to stand up within the mill as it was in operation, the cogs all active, the millstones spinning, and the whole structure rocking as the swinging unseen sails had vigorous effect. I had to make my outside sketch whilst the mill was working, but in the course of things the miller obligingly applied the brake, and stopped for his lunch-break earlier than usual, so that I could capture details of the sails!

Not far away from Chillenden lay Barham smock, another memorable landmark on breezy green heights, well seen from the Dover road. Sadly and ironically this fine black mill was burnt down just at the time when restoration was in progress, the result of a bonfire close at hand. Across country, in districts south of Canterbury, lies Stelling Minnis, and here, about 1950, I sketched the restored smock mill, which was again of the type without ground floor brick base. Moving further south and coming to Willesborough, near Ashford, I now note a mill recalled with special regard, as this was the very first windmill entered on my part. I was ten years old, and it was one evening about a fortnight before the outbreak of the war. With my parents and elder brother I was travelling from Folkstone to Ashford when the mill came into view. We stopped, and my father and I walked up the



Leigh Mill

B.E. Beach
1947

driveway to it. The owner, seeing our interest, asked whether we would like to look inside. I shall always remember that first experience of climbing the diminishing floors, and seeing the mysteries within. Later on, several years after the war had ended, I painted a watercolour of the mill - a white smock, with typical Kent wagon-shaped cap, and possessing quite an elaborate gallery.

In the Weald of Kent I sketched the mills at Smarden - one a smock, the other a post type with roundhouse. The former had lost its cap, whilst the latter was scarcely in better shape. I recall sitting up in the abandoned, rotten structure, sketching the gearing and stones; an outside picture showed the deteriorated weatherboarding. West of Tonbridge, Leigh mill was visited; here was a black smock without gallery, pleasantly placed among meadows. Again finding reasonable isolation and the possibilities of access I took the opportunity of climbing up inside. Two sketches resulted, one showing the milling floor with spur wheel and stone nuts, the other made from the somewhat precarious



Cranbrook Mill

B.E. Beach

1950

position of the centre of the sails. Just outside the storm hatch I was able to capture one of the broken sails positioned horizontally, so the picture showed close details of this arm, with touches of surrounding scenery far below. A third sketch was made, now from ground level, looking up at the black weatherboarded tower.

Travelling the Weald meant, of course, that Cranbrook had to be visited. A 'cathedral' among windmills, this has long been accepted as the finest smock mill in England. Even when the three floors within its brick base have been ascended one can look over the town's roofs. It has always seemed to me that windmill 'evolution' was brought to ultimate perfection here. Not so easy to sketch however, as I found on one occasion when I attempted a close view looking up at details of cap and sails. As I worked, the fantail was intermittently slowly rotating, inching the cap round almost imperceptibly. This gradual process meant that I had to work very quickly to capture the angle attempted.

Other mills sketched or visited in the Weald included Sutton Valence, Headcorn, Biddenden (actually a heap of ruins, having collapsed), Benenden, and Sandhurst, a five-sailed mill, unusual for the county. A pen and ink study was made of Wittersham post mill, down near the Sussex border, and a line and colour sketch was done at Woodchurch smock mill. Not far from Leigh previously mentioned, stood Hildenborough smock, unusual in that the cap was turned by wheel and chain, and that the gallery was placed well down the substantial brick base. I also understand that it had been of great age, possessing wooden cogs.

In north-western parts of the county a pen and ink sketch was made of West Kingsdown smock, which at that time had only the stocks remaining. Shorne post mill, near Rochester, had long been underpinned with brick and received an extension, when I made a line and colour study around 1950. At Rochester itself I sometimes visited Delce mill, now sadly demolished, the last of a whole concentration of windmills around the Medway Towns.

Since the days of my sketches there has been a remarkable change of fortune in the lives of several Kent mills: Sandwich, a derelict as I knew it, has been commendably restored. So too has Sarre north-east of Canterbury. Margate Draper's Mill was given a completely new lease of life. Woodchurch has virtually been rebuilt. Rolvenden post mill, West Kingsdown and Meopham Green have all seen restoration.

In the course of these notes I have mentioned opportunities of access, and must close by recalling one particular visit to a Kentish mill. The door was open, and the mill seemed to have plenty of space around it. But on this occasion, when floors were ascended, I was met not by gearing and stones, but by a dressing table, a wardrobe, and all the trimmings of domesticity. The place had been turned into a private flat!

Editor's note

Not only are Brian's drawings superb records, many of mills in their final days, his recollections make compelling reading. Other S.M.G. members must also recall bygone mills, or perhaps their very first mill visit? Why not write them down for the newsletter?

LETTER

Roy Berry was sent the following newspaper extract, relating to the removal of a post mill from Sudbury to Assington in 1868, by Mrs. J.E. Pollard of White Colne, whose husband is the great grandson of Walter Pollard. The squire at the time had diverted the water from the watermill, for his own purposes, leaving Walter Pollard with no option but to buy a windmill in order to pursue his trade. The windmill is no longer at Assington although the watermill building still stands, minus its waterwheel and machinery.



Walter John Pollard (1830-1912)
and his wife Sarah

Halstead Gazette 22nd August 1912

Mr. W.J. Pollard of Assington Mill died on Sunday last. Being a miller by trade he was much esteemed in the village of Assington, where he held the office of rate collector for many years and worked strenuously on behalf of Odd fellowship. He also acted as local secretary of the Assington Agricultural Society.

Many years ago he bought a windmill at Sudbury and removed it intact to Assington. So many people were curious to know the time of the proposed removal that it was deemed advisable to carry out the work at midnight, this being done in order to avoid disturbing the horses, as no less than 21 were used for the work. The incumbent of St. Peters Church, Sudbury, asked to be allowed to witness the work and was the only person in attendance excepting the workmen.

It was a huge structure to move along the highway and passed over the hedges on either side of the road.

A.G.M. REPORT

The 1996 Annual General Meeting was held on Sunday June 16th at Lark Mills, Mildenhall, by kind permission of Mr. Bernard Parker. 20 members and guests were present. Apologies were received from June Baker, Len Ball, Desmond Drea, Peter Elwin,

Brian Flint, Max Hoather, Nicholas Law, Bob Sharpe, John Snowdon, Bob Starling, Alan Wallis, Marguerite Wells and Chris Wilson.

The minutes of the 1995 A.G.M., as printed in Newsletter 64, were accepted as a true record (proposed Michael Roots, seconded Peter Filby). Treasurer Des Codd reported that subscription income was down on 1994-5. We had made a loss of nearly £400 over the last two years, and for 1995-6 the deficit was £266. £60 worth of Standing Orders had been lost, and it was agreed that the Standing Order scheme be dropped in future because of problems encountered. There was some discussion as to whether we should do more to appeal to younger age groups, but the decline in numbers of young members and their reluctance to participate was a problem experienced by other groups too. Peter Dolman said there were recruiting opportunities at the other end of the age scale as increasing numbers of people take early retirement. Chris Hullcoop wondered whether, with more attention being devoted to risk, mill work was now considered too dangerous.

Noting the small size of the collection taken at the public meeting, John Capps thought it might be better to charge for entry. Chris Hullcoop said that getting numbers through the door rather than income was the priority at the public meeting. Roy Berry said a figure could be suggested as an appropriate donation. Chris Armour thought the Group's assets were pretty good and could withstand several years of small losses.

Peter Dolman questioned the level of grant aid for materials for the repairs at Drinkstone, and also the principle of paying travelling expenses for work on mills. Chris Hullcoop disputed the figures for Drinkstone shown in the accounts, which would need to be examined further (see footnote). On the issue of travelling expenses, it was the unanimous view from the floor that Committee members should be able to claim if a large mileage is involved.

Chris Hullcoop said S.M.G. would help with grants to members who buy a Suffolk mill to repair. For example, £500 had been given to Peter Dolman for his work at Stanton post mill. The accounts were accepted as a true record (proposed Cliff Lovett, seconded Chris Armour).

Mark Barnard, the Group's editor, reported that once again three newsletters had been completed in the last year, with production of the last one in a record four days from the start of typing to the end of printing. He outlined some of the material included, which as ever was quite varied. Chris Hullcoop thought the format of the newsletter was just right. The editor's report was accepted (proposed Luke Bonwick, seconded Peter Dolman).

The secretary, Peter Dolman, reported that we had 179 members: 162 full, 3 junior and 14 newsletter exchange. This was slightly down on 1995, but the general trend was still upward. He said in terms of numbers, S.M.G. is one of the biggest of the regional mills groups; the Friends of Norfolk Windmills had only 105 members. Despite the small decline in numbers, in theory we should cover our costs and no increase in subscription rates was necessary. Peter reminded the meeting he was also the S.M.G. archivist and averaged up to one enquiry a week. Chris Hullcoop said the future of individual mill archives should be written into any will a member makes.

Election of the officers and committee for 1996-7 followed. The members were all willing to serve another year and were re-elected en bloc (proposed Chris Armour, seconded Trevor Scott). There is still one unfilled vacancy.

Under Any Other Business, John Capps complimented Peter Dolman for his lecture to the Institute of British Foundrymen. Michael Roots pointed out that 1997 would be the 20th anniversary of both S.M.G. and the Friends of Norfolk Windmills, and suggested a joint celebration, such as a dinner at a venue close to the Norfolk-Suffolk border.

The meeting concluded with a review of 1995-6 by Chris Hullcoop. After lunch several members went on to various mills in Cambridgeshire including Wicken and Haddenham.

Note Since the A.G.M. several accounting errors have been discovered in respect of expenditure on Drinkstone Mills. These have now been rectified. If any member wishes for a revised set of accounts for 1995-6 would they please contact the Secretary. The overall effect is to reduce the 'loss' to £206 and to increase the Bank Current Account by £60.

NEW BOOKS Reviewed by Peter Dolman

Watermills and Windmills of Middlesex by Guy Blythman BA.
Published by Baron Birch for Quotes Ltd., The Book Barn,
Whittlebury NN12 8XS. Price £20.

There has rarely been a more publicised book on mills; I must have received at least five copies of the advertising flyer from different sources, plus the author made an impassioned plea to the audience at this year's SPAB Windmill Meeting to buy the book. Rumours that the author had changed his name to Buy Blythman could not be substantiated! Was it worth the hype, and the bullying of the publisher when the subscriber's money was demanded?

Well, I have just read Len Ball's review for the Essex Mills Group. He condemns the book as being too expensive, containing errors such as dodgy grid references, and for being a numbered limited edition of infinite size (no print run is given). To these I would add poor proof reading - two interior photographs of House Mill, Bromley by Bow (actually an ex-Essex mill, but included as being the most complete mill near Middlesex) are upside down and ignorance of basic mill technology - many of the picture captions are wrong in statement of fact and some of the author's opinions expressed in the text display equal ignorance. My other criticism is that for what sets out to be the definitive work on the subject, no references are given, which means that anyone wanting to verify any of the numerous bald statements given in the text will be unable to do so.

But what do I think of it? To me Middlesex is almost on another planet when it comes to mills so I actually rather like it. It reads fairly well, despite occasional lapses of grammar, and the author has obviously done much original research, as well as pooling information with other researchers such as Stephen Buckland. There are lots of nice pictures which have reproduced

well together with line drawings taken from other pictures which were presumably not available to be reproduced themselves. I do think it is a book worth acquiring for the serious molinologist or native of the former county. Its appeal will be limited otherwise at the price of £20 (which is not unreasonable, considering the costs of publishing such a specialised book). Subscribers had the benefit of a lower pre-publication price and although this means buying sight unseen, the risk is usually justified. This method of publication does extend the mill bibliography which would otherwise probably not happen.

Suffolk at Work - Trades and Industries by Robert Malster.
Published by Sutton Publishing Ltd and Suffolk County Council.
Price £8.99.

This book is one of the 'Britain in Old Photographs' series and contains a section on (mostly) windmills in the county, although millwrighting also gets a mention. Bob Malster has used the copious material in the Suffolk Photographic Survey plus material from other sources to give a variety of subject matter with detailed captions and an informative commentary. The book is well illustrated, as one might expect, although the two-page picture of the Whitmore & Binyon works (from Redstone's 1890 book, not 1875, as stated) has obviously been 'scanned' and enlarged too much, losing most of the fine detail. I wish I could wholeheartedly endorse the book but there are several factual errors in the text which need not (and should not) have been let through. Firstly, Whitmore & Binyon's works was not founded in 1780 by John Whitmore; he was not even born until 1801. The local history society has researched the firm's early history and cannot get it back beyond 1800. I found a reference in a newspaper to the firm being founded in 1798. This information has been known for some time now; why keep trotting out the old errors?

Another error is that the photograph of St. Michael's mill was not taken in 1939, but is a postcard probably of 40 years earlier. By 1939 the mill had been out of use for over six years and had shutterless sails. I found other errors in the mill section and feel this is a pity as the book is written in Bob's usual authoritative style. With these errors it is no better than some of the other similar books of old pictures to have appeared in recent years. It is high time that the job was done properly with a volume of old photographs dedicated just to mills, with captions provided from a thoroughly researched specialist source. How about it, someone?

VANISHED MILLS Peter Dolman

BREDFIELD

Before considering the tower mill it is worth looking at two earlier mills in the parish. These stood in very close proximity at grid ref. 270538 and 271538 and were both post mills. No mill is marked on Hodskinson's map of 1783 and the first reference is in August 1791 in the manor court book when Lawrence Fletcher, miller, had just erected a house at the site. He either ran the mill himself or let it. The mill was described as a post mill with

two pairs of stones and a roundhouse when advertised for sale in 1801. Samuel Cooper took over possession in October 1802 and set about increasing capacity by erecting the second post mill, this time without a roundhouse. This would seem to have put him under some financial problems unfortunately as he was declared bankrupt in December 1804. The two mills were put up for sale in January 1805 when one was described as 'quite new', with one pair of 5ft stones, the other having two, of 4ft 8ins and 4ft. Another attempt to sell was made in September 1805. This may have been successful as they are next for sale or to be let in April 1808 by Mr. Everett, of Bredfield. A Mr. Grayston was the next owner and he put the older mill up for sale in February 1809, to be removed by the purchaser. It is described as being 'remarkably substantial, 17 feet by 10'. Only the 4ft 8ins stones were included however; it would seem likely that the other pair had been set up in the other mill. Where the older mill went is not known - at this date it could well have been rebuilt on a new site in the area.

The surviving mill continued to be run by a succession of millers; one, William Westrup, became bankrupt in the 1820's and the mill was put up for sale by him in January 1829 when it is described as being '19½ feet by 11½, with patent sails and two pairs of stones' (quite a big and advanced mill). More interestingly it is described as being the only mill in four adjoining parishes and standing 'on an acre, on lease for 25 years from Michaelmas day last. The premises adjoin a fine Turnpike Road...'. This means that it had been moved from the earlier site (which had also been leasehold). This new site is unfortunately unknown but as the only Turnpike in Bredfield parish is the present A12 it must have been to the south of the village, perhaps where the Bredfield road from Woodbridge crosses the main road. This is not the end of its travels; its new owner, Stephen Oxborrow, of Darsham, a farmer, moved it to what was probably the site of the subsequent tower mill (271529) for Edward Oxborrow to work. The *Suffolk Chronicle* for 26th February 1831 carried the following: 'FIRE, AT BREDFIELD, WOODBRIDGE... About 2 o'clock on Saturday morning last, a newly erected windmill at Bredfield, was discovered to be on fire. The mill had been removed from another site, and was to have been set to work in the middle of this week. At present the cause of the fire is a rather mysterious matter.' Subsequently a local committee offered the large reward of £650 for information leading to the apprehension of the arsonist.

The mill was presumably insured for the new tower mill was erected in 1832 to replace the post mill, probably by Henry Collins of nearby Melton. Edward Oxborrow worked the mill until 1888 when it was sold to William Turrell, of Bredfield, for £1090. At first he let the mill to John Oxborrow (a relative of Edward, no doubt) but in 1904 he is listed as miller himself. Unfortunately history repeated itself and he was declared bankrupt in 1911, when the mill ceased work. It stood disused for a few years and was demolished in 1919-20, the bricks reputedly being used to rebuild the village shop nearby. Nothing remains at the site, which is overgrown; however the broken iron windshaft with counterweight lies in a hedge nearby (or did do about 15 years ago).

Bredfield tower mill was a well proportioned but rather small mill, of five floors, with a boat-shaped cap with fantail, patent sails and three pairs of stones, two of 4ft and one of 3ft 6ins. An adjacent stationary steam engine drove the mill and had a tall chimney stack. The sails must have been powerful, having nine bays, the inner one with four shutters. It was demolished by the Clarkes and Amos Clarke described it as 'a little old tower mill'. The pictures which survive show the tower to have been a mid grey colour, probably a rendered finish, rather than the more common tar.



The photograph above recently surfaced in the Essex Mills Group newsletter where the identity had accidentally become 'Bradfield'. How easy it is for such mistakes to occur!

NEWS

MAX HOATHER

We were saddened to hear of the death during the summer of one of our original and longest serving members. Max Hoather was one of the few survivors from the old guard of mill enthusiasts, having started to take an interest in windmills during the mid 1920's. For many years he would turn out for our visits and other events, only stopping quite recently through declining health. He continued to attend SPAB meetings until this year and wrote to me with information about Pakenham windmill earlier this year following my article a few newsletters back. Max took an interest in the detail of mills, taking interior photographs from the start. I hope that his collection of notes and pictures will find its way to a good home. (P.D.)

WORK AT STANTON POST MILL

In April a 'mini work-in' took place one weekend to adjust the neck block which had apparently split in two and was rolling forwards. To lift the shaft we borrowed Pakenham windmill's tackle which is a small pair of sheer legs with a chain and double hookbolt. This would have probably done the job alone but to help out we also had a five ton jack under the stock. The tackle soon had the windshaft up about 1½" and with a struggle the (very greasy) neck bearing and block were removed. Once cleaned up we found things to be not as bad as feared. The oak was spiral grained and the split turned out to be a shake which went

diagonally for only about half the length. Two bolts had already been put through to protect against just such a problem and we decided to put another two in to give further support. In drying out the block had warped badly so the top and bottom were trued up, allowing the neck bearing to sit down properly. We also refitted it with larger coachscrews. With new (larger) packing blocks, the bearing was struggled back into place and the shaft lowered. The sails now clear the roundhouse roof by several more inches and the windshaft is back in about its correct position.

During the summer a couple of weeks of 'work-ins' came and went; a lot was done to the mill although it is hard to see any change at first glance. The July week was blessed with lovely hot weather, perfect for putting a second layer of felt on the roundhouse as the heat softened the bitumen bonding adhesive, making it spread much easier. This was a lengthy task and most of the volunteers had a go at one time or other. 'No-rip' felt was used to try to prolong the life of the roof as it would have to put up with foot traffic and ladders. Time will tell if it was worth the extra expense. In the second week the whole roof was given a coat of Ruberoid roof paint from an ancient tin found in one of the sheds which I suspect dates back to Ramsey mill, if not Framsdén!

Another job was to dismantle the left hand set of stones to allow overhaul. First we had to raise the runner stone. There was no room to use tackle so we put a rope around the windshaft, turning the sails (by hand) like a giant windlass. This was obviously how it had been done but none of us had ever tried it so we were very cautious! Once under way everything went well, apart from trouble with the knot in the thick rope catching at the most awkward time with the stone just off balance. As the rear of the stone floor is unrestored, a scaffold prop was put under the stone, just in case. Once apart the dress was examined and found to be fairly good, apart from the ubiquitous cement and sand which had been splodged everywhere to fill holes and cracks. Although this might seem a good idea, it is actually very soft compared to the millstone and breaks up quickly. No wonder Richard Duke's flour was rather gritty! It will have to be cleaned out completely.

With the runner off, the spindle was dismantled and the nut lowered to the floor, followed by the bridge tree. Everything was cleaned down thoroughly and checked before reassembly. Due to moving the floor and machinery around slightly, the stone nut was in the wrong position on the spindle so the 'cone' was removed. This was difficult as the four keys had been driven in and then cut short. Once apart, new keys with gib heads were fitted to allow easier dismantling next time.

Over time the head of the mill had dropped, tilting the stone bearers. The bedstones had been levelled but with a tilt of nearly five degrees the tun had been out of level as well. With everything dismantled the opportunity was taken to level the floor by increasing the size of the blocks supporting the floor beams. As a result the bedstones now need virtually no packing to bring them level and the floor sits parallel with the side girts once more. The floor was a mess, having been bodged with plywood and

concrete(!) to seal it up. With new boarding now going back the whole set up is much neater and closer to the original. The stone spindle has been put back and is now ready to receive the runner.

The brakewheel is the original of 1751 which had a double row of cogs at first, with a later iron ring fixed on. It is reasonably sound, although the later clasp arms (it originally had compass arms) are rather tender and had been reinforced with steel angles. The whole wheel was out of true, being eccentric by about an inch maximum and wobbled in and out of mesh by a similar amount. Truing it up required a new set of wedges plus a lot of patience! It now runs within less than half an inch. At the same time, the wallower was repacked, having slipped out of level. All the gears in the mill were thoroughly cleaned and degreased. The rim of the brakewheel has worn down below the outer row of original cogs, causing some of the old cog shanks to fall out. Replacements in elm were made and glued in place to restore the braking surface and hold the wheel together. Good progress was made but



Top: Martin Hansen
levelling the stone floor
(July 1996)

Right: New floorboarding
to stone floor
(October 1996)

more needs to be done; also all the bolts holding the wheel together need attention as the wheel creaks while running and they cannot be tightened up without restoration.

The second week, in August, started very wet so this ruled out external work. When the weather cleared we took the horizontal timber bearer off the fly posts, having first removed all the gearing. This timber was completely rotten and in several pieces. It's amazing that it held together for so long and must have already been rotten when put up in 1987. The rot had spread to the fly posts but only on the surface. (The inner pair of sails are made of similar timber and with no paint in the joints are equally suspect.) A new piece of pitch pine (from a salvage yard) was trimmed



Fitting the new timber bearer on
the fly posts (August 1996)

and fitted with new bolts and great attention was paid to painting all meeting faces, including insides of bolt holes (using feathers!). With this in place reassembly of the gearing, which had meanwhile been stripped and cleaned, could take place, and not a moment too soon for within an hour of completion the wind sprang up from the tail. As assembled the drive down from the fly was too tight and adjustment has since been effected.

Other jobs tackled as fill-ins were the removal of most of the concrete from the shakes in the lower floor timbers and making some of the blocks that will eventually be glued in with resin as a repair. During reassembly of the tenting gear the thread on the tenter screw stripped; being a non-standard thread it was repaired by welding on a new length of rod and bushing the screw.

Since August further work has been done in an attempt to stop vermin and birds from entering (no easy task in a post mill), some stone floor joists repaired and a start made on reboarding.

Support for the work-ins was fairly good, with a mixture of familiar faces plus some new ones. My thanks go to Chris Wilson, Steve Rodenhurst, Martin Hansen and Sue, Alan Wallis, Dave Lewis, Stephen Bloomfield, Chris Armour, Des Codd, Peter Cole, Robert Paterson, my father Charlie and, last but not least,

Luke Bonwick, probably the leading mill enthusiast of his generation (he is only 15!).

As for the future, I must get my full restoration scheme and grant applications sorted out this autumn so that proper restoration can get under way next year (work to date has been either 'emergency repairs', minor adjustments or weatherproofing). The mill is a scheduled Ancient Monument so I need English Heritage's blessing before major repairs can start; grant aid would be appreciated, income from visitors having funded the work so far. I intend to get the stone floor sorted out and the stones back together by the time we open to the public at Easter so if any member would care to offer help during the winter and Spring I would be pleased to hear from them on 01359 250622. (Peter Dolman)

Footnote Some time after the last work-in finished I found a grey tracksuit top inside the mill. This could have come from a visitor, or from one of the work-in gang. So far no-one has claimed it. I also acquired an old engineer's hammer but lost a handsaw with a black wood handle. Any offers?

WALTON SMOCK MILL REPAIRED

Extensive repairs have just been completed to the smock mill on Walton High Street, near Felixstowe. This very distinctive mill has a two-storey brick base and relatively short two-storey smock above, clad for many years in corrugated iron sheeting which undoubtedly saved it from terminal decay. Over the years this sheeting has gradually dropped off, revealing the original boarding as well as worrying areas of decay. In June 1992 the mill was very nearly burnt down, only being saved by the prompt action of the owner, Mr. Bloomfield (see Newsletter 54). No machinery survives, but the interior is otherwise little altered from its last working days and the cast iron rack is still in place around the outside of the wooden curb, fitted over the cut-off cogs of the original.



The mill during re-boarding

In August the existing conical roof was repaired and clad in sheet aluminium by Armour Engineering of Raydon. Work then proceeded on the smock frame, the lowest portion of which was in especially poor condition. Care was taken to retain as much of the original as possible, as the empty tower will never have to cope with the stresses of a working mill. Even so, five of the oak sills had to be renewed in green oak, and the other three splice-repaired. In fitting these, care was taken to retain in place the four holding-down bolts set into the brickwork together with their retaining timber blocks. Most of the pitch pine cant posts needed various repairs (often on top of earlier ones), three on the south-east side being strengthened with 6"x3" larch timbers bolted to their inner faces. The smock has been completely re-boarded, provision being made for small hatch-like glazed windows as shown in old photographs. The work has been completed with exceptional skill and dedication by Rick Lewis of Ipswich, and was grant-aided by the County and District Councils, and by S.M.G. (we gave £100).

S.M.G. pays tribute to Stanley Bloomfield for initiating this work, saving what is one of only five corn smock mills left in Suffolk. His grandson Stephen now lives in the mill house next to the mill. Stephen is very appreciative of what has been achieved, has already joined S.M.G. and is planning to carry out repairs to the brick base in the coming years. We hope to publish a history of the mill in the newsletter next year. (M.B.)

FIRST AID AT GREAT WHELNETHAM

For some years now I have been intending to put in hand some first aid repairs to the little tower mill at Great Whelnetham, just south of Bury St. Edmunds. I recall that when I first saw the tower with its fine 1865 datestone, I thought that there must be people still alive who could remember it being built and that it would be 100 years old in ten year's time!

A year or two ago I contacted Mr. Farrow who inherited Fentons Farm on which the mill stands from farmer Mr. Plumb. After hearing that curb plates, a governor and a quant had been stolen from the mill (see Newsletter 60), probably for quick, easy and concentrated scrap iron, we felt we had to do something. As winter draws I don't go far on my old motorcycle, but Brian Flint found he had some time available early winter and we thought that in three or four days we could make the tower watertight and secure against thieves.

On our first visit we found the mill to be in far better shape than expected. All the floors bore our weight and at the top the frame supporting the shallow pitched roof was in good condition, the corrugated sheets having blown off.

On our second visit we made the mill secure by repairing the single door and fitting new hasps and padlocks. The old wooden cased lock had long since been removed. The two windows on the ground floor were boarded up and further secured with thick aluminium, and it would now require a substantial effort to enter the mill without the keys.

We made a start on covering the gables on the shallow pitched roof with aluminium sheet. Of course a roof of this design is not

a good idea on a circular tower but as the old woodwork was in such good condition we decided to re-clad it rather than remove it and built a cone. Galvanised steel sheets have been ordered and as soon as we have a fine Sunday we will fit them onto the roof. It is well worth conserving this fine little tower and we hope to give more details of it next year. (C.H.)

THORINGTON STREET MILL

Since acquiring Stanton mill I have been looking for someone to take over at Thorington Street watermill. One of my regular helpers there, Bob Starling, has bravely stepped into the breach and following a meeting with the Tendring Estate agent and Sir Joshua Rowley the way is now clear to transfer responsibilities. There will be some overlap as I had intended to do more jobs there myself before leaving. Bob has many other interests (including ongoing repair work at Easterford watermill at Kelvedon) and like me would appreciate help at the mill on the occasional week-ends that we work there. Any member interested in helping should contact either Bob (at Clovelly, School Lane, Lawford, Manningtree, CO11 2HZ) or myself. (Peter Dolman)

NEWS IN BRIEF

The urgent repairs at Sproughton mill have been completed. The work involved the rebuilding of one corner, at the rear on the river side, including underpinning, and holding the opposite end with scaffolding as a temporary measure. We understand that planning permission for conversion to a single dwelling has now been granted, but despite this the future of the building is still uncertain.

Millwright Richard Seago has recently been working on Buttrum's Mill, Woodbridge for Suffolk County Council. The exterior has been repainted, mostly using lead-based paint, permissible as it is a Grade II* listed building. The striking gear has been adjusted so that the shutters close and (more importantly) open fully, and the leading boards, omitted from the sails in the 1980's restoration, have finally been fitted.

Holton post mill will be decorated next year, when it is hoped to fix the binding brake, enabling the sails to turn more easily.

Work has been continuing steadily at Drinkstone mills for most of the year, Chris Hullcoop having made over 70 separate visits. Tasks completed include patching and painting the post mill, painting the cap of the smock mill, and repairs to the post mill winding gear. A full report on the Drinkstone work, which is drawing to a conclusion, will be given in the next newsletter.

Two open days have been held at Herringfleet windpump during 1996. On the second of these, in August, a local visitor described an early photograph of the mill in her possession - showing, she insisted, a thatched cap! While not entirely convinced, it was difficult to argue with photographic evidence, and no other early pictures of the mill are known. A few weeks ago the lady kindly sent me a copy of the said photograph - clearly showing a boarded boat-shaped cap! While disappointed, the view, of c.1924, is a fine one, the mill looking well maintained although with no sail cloths fitted.

PAYMENT OF SUBSCRIPTIONS BY STANDING ORDER

Following difficulties in administering Standing Orders, which have resulted in financial losses to S.M.G. and the expenditure of much time by your treasurer and secretary, it has been decided to discontinue the present scheme and revert to simple annual renewal. No new Standing Orders will be accepted and existing ones can continue until the next subscription increase, unless members decide to cancel in the meantime. If any member paying by Standing Order does cancel, would they please notify the secretary.

EVENTS

S.M.G. SOCIAL EVENING: SATURDAY DECEMBER 7th from 7.30pm at STANTON POST MILL

For the third year running Peter Dolman and his family have kindly offered to host our pre-Christmas social. Basic snacks and a range of liquid refreshment will be provided, but further contributions of food from those planning to come would be appreciated. Please bring along your holiday slides or videos too - provided they have a mill content!

WINTER DEMONSTRATION OF HERRINGFLEET WINDPUMP: WEDNESDAY JANUARY 1st 1997, 1 - 3.30pm (confirm first)

This year's New Year's Day event at Herringfleet had to be cancelled because the mill was still under repair. As it turned out the day was a rotten one weatherwise, so perhaps it was just as well. The above event will only go ahead if there is no rain, ice or snow. If you intend to come, please contact Mark Barnard on 01473 727853 first to confirm the mill will be open. The event is intended mainly for S.M.G. members, friends and other local enthusiasts and will not be advertised outside this newsletter.

S.M.G. PUBLIC MEETING: IPSWICH LIBRARY, SATURDAY FEBRUARY 22nd 1997

During 1997 we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of S.M.G. (how time flies!), and the theme for the public meeting will be a review of the past as well as a look towards the future. We have provisionally titled the evening 'Old Suffolk Mills', and the main speakers will be Brian Flint and Chris Hullcoop. More details in the next newsletter.
