

# SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

## Newsletter

No. 70

February 1998

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It's only a few weeks since I produced the last issue, and relatively little has happened on the mill front. Our social evening in early December was reasonably well attended but it would have been nice to have seen a few new faces. The New Year's Day 'blow' at Herringfleet smock mill was one of those rare occasions in winter when the weather had read the script. Mild, clear and sunny conditions, with a steady breeze, made it well worth the ten-year wait, as it was the first time the mill had been run on January 1st since 1988. We now have the public meeting to look forward to, of which more details inside.

Perhaps more significant than any S.M.G. event has been the arrival in Suffolk of the new owners of the Drinkstone mills, Alex and Rosy Hayward. On behalf of the Group I would like to wish them a warm welcome and congratulations on acquiring what is without doubt the country's most important windmill site. We will give them all the support we can.

Scanning the newsletters of other mill groups around the country recently, I was encouraged by the generally high standard of production and content. Groups' fortunes tend to ebb and flow over the years, but from what I see in their newsletters most are in very good health. Indeed, S.M.G. seems to be falling behind, but as I've said before, unless or until other members come forward to help run the show, it's simply impossible to do more.

On a personal note, I stepped down from the S.P.A.B. Mills Section committee at the end of 1997 after over 15 years. Suffolk will still have a voice however, as Peter Dolman is taking my place!

The mill diary for the coming months reads as follows:

S.M.G. public meeting, Ipswich	Saturday February 21st
SPAB Windmill Meeting, London	Saturday March 21st
S.M.G. visit to Gt. Whelnetham mill	Sunday April 26th
National Mills Day	Sunday May 10th
SPAB Mill Section tour (Sussex)	Saturday May 16th
S.M.G. Annual General Meeting	Sunday June 28th

Mark Barnard

## LOOKING BACK OVER 20 YEARS Chris Hullcoop

Was it really just over 20 years ago that we met in Woodbridge tide mill to discuss the formation of a society to further the study and preservation of Suffolk's old mills? What were our expectations then and have they been fulfilled? We did not wish to become just another committee defined as '*a group of people who on their own as individuals unfortunately can do very little, but*

*when they join forces, share experience and skills, become a team, a dynamic positive force who together decide... that... unfortunately... they can do very little!*'. Thus the committee was chosen from people who were already active in the study and preservation of mills. It was significant that after the inaugural meeting the committee descended on Buttrum's Mill to sweep it out prior to its opening for Woodbridge carnival.

In that first year, activity which had started well before the formation of the Group continued: the working holidays ('work-ins') at Ramsey post mill; the opening and running of Herringfleet drainage mill and the salvage of the parts of the collapsed East Bridge drainage mill surveyed a year before.

Our annual social evenings, held in December, with slides, film and today videos of mills together with an ample buffet, were started, together with public lectures held in Ipswich every February. No-one there could forget the first lecture with Rex Wailes, the father of the study and preservation of mills, and Hallam Ashley, veteran photographer, when 150 attended. Since then the lectures have been held every year with speakers including wind and watermillers, millwrights, mill historians and those designing and working modern flour mills and power generators using wind and water power. All have been delivered with deep knowledge, humour and personal reminiscences.

From the start a newsletter was produced to a very high standard by Mark Barnard who continues this demanding task to this day. More like the journal of a learned society, it has well researched articles on mill history, mill repairs, reminiscences of old millers, accounts of mill visits at home and abroad, book reviews, commentary on planning applications, obituaries, repair philosophy, disasters and triumphs. 'All mill life is there.' The first newsletters were produced with a splendid old upright Imperial typewriter while the current edition will be born with the aid of a modern(ish) computer system, like the mills of the 19th century reflecting progress in technology. The 69 editions contain over 1,000 pages of A4 and are 2½" thick, a considerable body of information.

The most extensive mill work we had ever undertaken was the repair of Ramsey post mill. At 49ft tall with sails spanning over 70ft, and with terrible structural deterioration due to rotted side girts and cracked sheer trees, it was a formidable challenge. We never attempted a working order restoration but just kept it standing, preserving all the machinery and most of the original structure.

My initial pessimism on the capability of members to restore a mill to working order was dispelled by the splendid Thelnetham project led by our secretary Peter Dolman. Keeping to the highest standards of historical authenticity, quality of materials and craftsmanship, the mill was restored to full working order by volunteers in just six years. A unique combination of factors worked in the mill's favour. First class ownership, availability of funds without onerous strings, considerable freedom of operation and not too much of the current obsession with regulation, risk, insurance and possible litigation. Volunteers of all ages, skills and several nationalities took part but above all

else it was a central group of people in the prime of life with the necessary knowledge, skill, dedication and great amounts of energy and time. Today those people are a lot older and have commitments to families and other mills, and it is unlikely that a project like this will ever happen again in this way in Suffolk.

Another way of helping mills where time and money are strictly limited is that of the holding operation, a policy advocated by those great Victorians William Morris and John Ruskin. This aims to keep a building standing for as long as possible in the hope that one day a proper restoration can be achieved. These low cost projects have been a feature of our work for many years and are well justified. Without this work the post mills at Ramsey, Drinkstone and Stanton would almost certainly have gone and the tower mill at Bardwell would have suffered the indignity of house-conversion. The work enabled them to survive until a change to a competent owner became possible. Sadly the holding work at Syleham post mill was not sufficient and it succumbed in the great gale of October 1987. Recently holding work has been completed at Great Whelnetham tower mill and on Suffolk's two listed roundhouses at Saxmundham and Thorndon, while work continues on the little engine-powered mill at Great Whelnetham. Such work gives help and encouragement to the owners, and the fact that we are prepared to do this emphasises the value of these buildings to owners, local people and local authorities alike.

Something that has always concerned us is the degree of protection given to mills by listing and planning law. Over many years it has been a personal and political minefield and any group concerned with this takes on a role similar to that of councillor or M.P. and must be able to take criticism and indeed hostility. Thirty years ago few mills were listed and demolition by contractors or through neglect occurred with disturbing regularity. The attitude of local councils was that in Suffolk a mill of each type had been preserved and that was enough. In the early days of listing it was often argued that the protection applied only to the building and not to the machinery. Thus a fine workable watermill could be 90% destroyed leaving only an average building. Even before the formation of S.M.G. it was obvious that several of the founder members who had been active in the London-based Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings for some years had far more knowledge and experience of mills and their problems than those who made the crucial decisions. Some of the repair work at the time was pitiful, destroying important historical features with shoddy work that soon fell to pieces. We had no real voice and our views had to be expressed through the S.P.A.B. or Suffolk Preservation Society. As well as our knowledge of mill problems, our status as a learned group with constitution, committee and headed notepaper has given weight to our views on planning decisions.

Not long after our formation we were faced with planning applications to convert both Layham and Kersey watermills into houses, particularly sad in the case of Layham, where we had enjoyed a visit only a few months previously. The account of this case in a newsletter of 1979 is full of our frustration with the lack of understanding of the problems shown by the owners and those making decisions and the inadequacy of listing. Thanks to a

well presented case and support from S.P.A.B., Suffolk Preservation Society, the local council and Col. Rowley Hitchcock, the previous owner, the plans for conversion were rejected. It was particularly pleasing to arrange a visit there in recent years. The new owner has commissioned repairs to the gates and wheel and hopes to continue the good work.

In the early days with our limited resources we felt we stood little chance against architects and engineers with their well produced reports which looked good to most people. But to those who knew anything about mills they were full of error and totally biased in the direction of the planning decision sought. There is no substitute for knowledge and experience and our committee are well acquainted with the problems of owning, restoring and maintaining mills and the consequent financial problems as well as technical details and historical importance. We can produce a report or feasibility study worthy of a learned society and at the same time address the practicalities in a realistic way.

Over the years and in conjunction with the S.P.A.B. we have sought to influence mill listing and policy at local and national level. For many years Mark Barnard served on the committee of the S.P.A.B. Wind and Watermill Section. He has now retired from this and his place has been taken by Peter Dolman. Both have extensive knowledge of all aspects of mills and both S.M.G. and the S.P.A.B. benefit greatly from this.

When we started we never envisaged that we would be able to award small grants to worthy mill projects, or undertake holding operations where we paid for the materials. When set beside professional millwrighting costs for major restoration the amounts that we give seem pitifully small, but to the sincere restorer on a DIY basis sums such as £200-£500 can be a great help towards timber, nails and paint. Over the years we have given several thousand pounds in grant aid.

During the summer months we arrange visits to mills not normally open to the public. It is now difficult to find mills we have not seen already and some have been visited twice. Members can enjoy a look around at leisure and inspect progress if repairs are in hand. The S.P.A.B. arrange an annual mill tour of three days based in a particular locality, as well as a day tour. The International Molinological Society hold a week's symposium in a different country every four years. These get-togethers, as well as being little outings or holidays, are invaluable as a means of putting members in touch with others faced with similar decisions and problems. Experience has proved that isolation leads to ill-judged and poor quality work. So much damage has been done simply because a mill owner did not know that a better way or material existed. People can discuss the pros and cons of timber, paint, roof coverings, insurance and visitor arrangements. They can be inspired and learn from the achievements of others and be warned of the perils of hasty and badly thought-out action. In the restoration and working of mills there is a brotherhood; phone numbers are exchanged and there is always the invitation to call if in the area. It is a chance to compare and contrast, to take notes and photographs and to learn.

Today S.M.G. can offer members the chance to help run a

working smock drainage mill (Herringfleet), a working tower corn-grinding windmill (Thelnetham), or to help with the restoration of Stanton post mill and Thorington Street watermill, bringing them back to full working order. We welcome those who for one reason or another cannot spare the time to help but pay their subscriptions to receive the newsletter and perhaps make a few visits. These subscriptions help us to run the Group and make our small grants towards mill repairs, and soon towards the publication of a book on Whitmore and Binyon, that great iron founding and millwrighting company of Wickham Market.

Although membership of our committee has changed over the years, the two most demanding posts of secretary and newsletter editor are still occupied by the founders. Some societies have a rule which insists on a complete change of committee every few years. If this applied to S.M.G. we would quickly exterminate ourselves!

S.M.G. has been extremely worthwhile and more than fulfilled our expectations. It is sad though that there are only one or two young people in the Group which is almost exclusively middle-aged, elderly or last of the summer wine! Looking back through the many photographs in our newsletters, I now look like the veteran millers and millwrights of old, or perhaps more like Compo and Cleggy! The elixir of eternal youth has not yet been found and if a few mills are to survive in working order a new generation of enthusiasts has to emerge. I only hope it does.

## **REPORT OF 1997 A.G.M.**

The 1997 Annual General Meeting was held at Woodbridge tide mill on Sunday June 22nd, by kind permission of the warden, Geoff Gostling. 21 members and friends were present. Apologies were received from Chris Armour, Phil Bailey, David Barton, Luke Bonwick, Des Codd, Des Drea, Peter Filby, Don Porter, John Snowdon and Peter Steggall.

The meeting commenced at 11.20am with the customary welcome from chairman Chris Hullcoop, who described how the late Mrs Gardner had come to buy the mill for preservation in the late 1960's. The minutes of the 1996 A.G.M. were read out and accepted as a true record.

Peter Dolman presented the accounts in the absence of treasurer Des Codd. There was a surplus of over £800 on the year, compared with a deficit of £200 in 1995-6. Most of the payments were reduced, exceptions being tools (a new angle grinder) and materials (for holding work at Great Whelnetham). The deposit account stood at £3,600. Alan Wallis asked about Standing Orders, and Peter explained some of the problems encountered. However, all but one of the Standing Orders had come in this year. Brian Flint proposed that subscription rates remain the same and this was agreed. The accounts were accepted as a true record.

Mark Barnard, the editor, explained how much easier newsletter production is compared to five years ago. Three newsletters a year are produced, each with a print run of 200. Forthcoming material

was described, although as always more would be welcomed. His report was accepted by the meeting.

Secretary Peter Dolman was pleased with the increasing membership: 169 full, 6 junior, 10 society exchange and 3 complimentary members. He was still receiving enquiries from people carrying out research into their family history, where ancestors were involved with mills. The Suffolk Show stand was a success in raising the Group's profile, although it had yet to produce any new members. Peter was thanked by Chris Hullcoop and his report was accepted by the meeting.

Chris Wilson had tendered his resignation from the committee, which left a further vacancy. The need for new blood on the committee was stressed. However, the remaining committee members were all willing to serve for another year and they were duly re-elected.

Under Any Other Business, Michael Roots asked about another S.M.G. foreign trip. Mark Barnard did not rule it out, but said that it was easy to over-estimate the level of support for such ventures. The recent excellent Friends of Norfolk Windmills visit to Holland had been poorly supported despite canvassing at the S.P.A.B. Windmill Meeting. Roy Berry asked that events be advertised well in advance, which he said would help with publicity. It was agreed this was a good idea, although there could be problems if trying to book something up to a year in advance. Brian Flint asked about the proposed use of the ever-growing surplus in the Group's balances. Chris Hullcoop pointed out that he had recently spent nearly £600 on materials for Great Wheltenham mill, much of it out of this year's account. There was also the possibility of further support for Theltenham and Stanton windmills, the Group's 'flagships'. Roy Berry also reminded him of Bob Starling, the new tenant at Thorington Street watermill, who was continuing the good work there started by Peter Dolman. Mark Barnard thought funds could usefully be applied towards further publications, especially a revised edition of Peter Dolman's book *Windmills in Suffolk*.

Mark Barnard announced that there had only been one entry for the 20th anniversary competition in the last newsletter, from Luke Bonwick, and he therefore took the £20 prize.

The meeting concluded with the chairman's report for 1996-7, illustrated with slides.

## **PUTTING MILLS IN THE PICTURE (7) Peter Steggall**

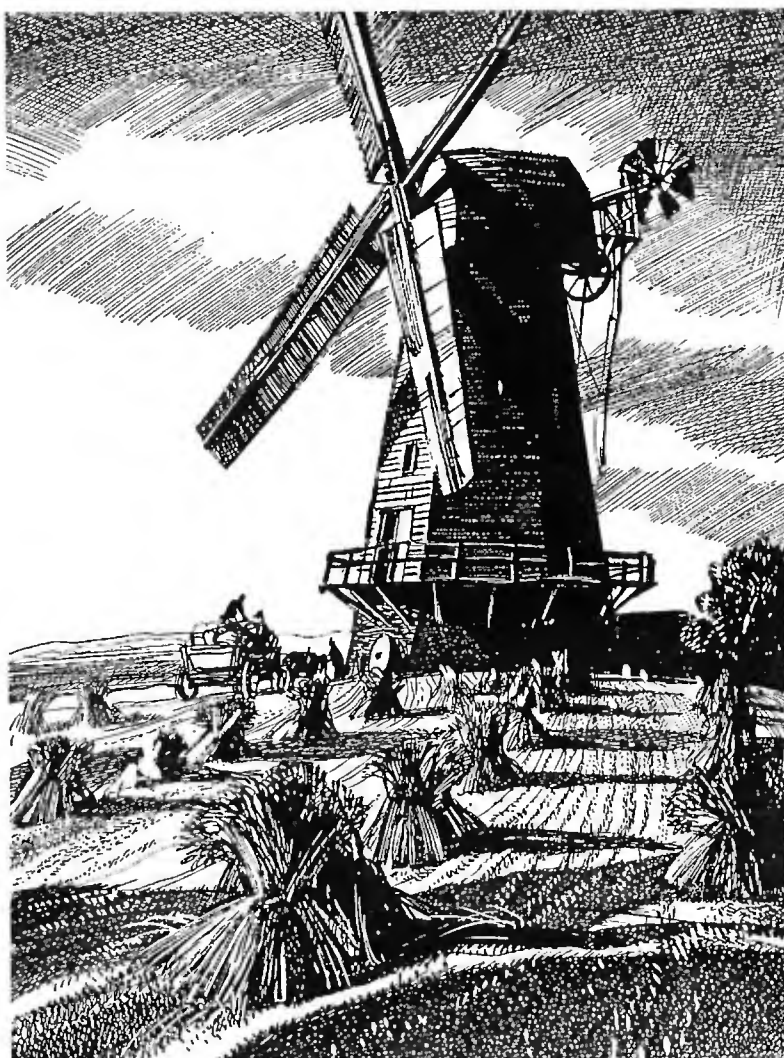
ROWLAND HILDER (1905-1993)

My visit to West Sussex, to see and write about mills painted by Constable, has been postponed; in the meantime I turn to a twentieth century artist.

Rowland Hilder painted in a unique, personal style which created an appealing and evocative atmosphere, especially in pictures of his favourite locality in the North Downs and the Weald of north-west Kent. Most of his paintings were of wide landscapes with old farmhouses, barns and oast-houses; and of

course there were some mills. I have two splendid books, 'Rowland Hilder's England' and 'Rowland Hilder Country', containing about 200 reproductions of his pictures; amongst them are eight watermills, one tide mill and two windmills.

They all deserve an appreciative description, but I have room only to comment briefly of a few. High Mill, Farnham, Surrey, a small weatherboarded watermill, and its house and barns, are seen in the snowy depths of winter. At Hambleden on the Thames, we see a huge and handsome mill reflected in the mill pool and lit by the pale sunlight of early Spring. A fine brick-built mill at Tewkesbury stands athwart the Avon



between old houses on the bank and a modern sluice-gate. Bickton mill on the Hampshire Avon is a large mill of rosy brick, contrasting with the very small watermill and 'barley kiln' (looking rather like an oast-house) at Preston, East Linton, Scotland; they are built of grey stone with red pantile roofs. Birdham tide mill, near Chichester, is the subject of a wonderfully atmospheric study in shades of blue, grey, black and silver, in the light of a full moon.

'Maltings in East Anglia' looks to me more like a watermill. It is long, low and weatherboarded (surely most maltings are brick buildings), and sacks are being hoisted from a horse-drawn cart up to the projecting lucam above. It is a pity the artist did not give the name of the place. I leave you to speculate also on the location of the windmill in the pen and ink drawing reproduced above; a large smock mill which I think has a Kentish look about it. It was published in *'The Bible for Today'* in 1942.

The only two mills in the book known to me are at Cley and Harlow. Cley mill has long been a favourite with artists. Rowland Hilder's watercolour of the watermill at Harlow, beside the lock and the lock-keeper's cottage on the river Stort, was painted in the 1930's, and is therefore much as I remember it while I lived at Harlow from 1931 to 1936. With some of my schoolboy friends I



used to swim in the pool below the mill. Even then it was a restaurant (one of the earliest so-called 'road-houses') and still is, but it was largely rebuilt after a fire some years ago, and a motel has been added.

Finally a few words about the artist's technique. In '*Rowland Hilder Country*' he tells us 'that most subjects can benefit from a little judicious rearrangement.... I make it a practice to re-order the components of a landscape, their relationships to one another, if by doing so I can enhance the inherent dignity of the whole'. Whether or not he has done so in any of the mill pictures I cannot tell, but I remain an ardent admirer of the results of his great talent.

#### Putting *Me* in the Picture

My thanks to Peter Dolman for the comments and clarifications in the last newsletter concerning my articles in Nos. 67 and 68 about East Bergholt and Brantham windmills in Constable pictures.

I did express doubts about a second distant windmill being visible in his 'Golding Constable's Kitchen Garden'; and in starting my piece on Brantham I did admit that I had probably been confused and confusing about East Bergholt!

Turning to Brantham, Peter claims that two of the mills were not in that parish. He points out that the windmill (NGR095333) just south of the watermill site at Brantham was in Lawford in Essex. I agree with that, as the county boundary ran - and still runs - along the mill stream between the windmill site and the Brantham - East Bergholt road (now B1070). However, because of its closeness to Brantham and its remoteness from Lawford village, the windmill must always have seemed to belong to Brantham and Suffolk rather than to Lawford and Essex. Constable's 1814 sketch was entitled 'Windmill on the Brantham Marshes'. Also, an article in *The Times* on 8th June 1991 included a reproduction (too poor to reproduce here) of an 1814 drawing entitled 'Brantham Mills' which shows a post mill, and buildings which I think must have been the watermill.

I was not aware of the recent research which has changed the title of the 1802 drawing from 'A Mill on the Banks of the River Stour' to 'Windmill near Cattawade', and which Peter thinks was beside the estuary at Mistley (NGR 105319).

Finally I am pleased that my shortcomings have led to publication of additional information, including information about, and a rediscovered view of, the windmill (NGR 130331) on the north bank of the Stour estuary close to Stutton New Mill (watermill).

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*Members may like to know that Peter Steggall has recently written and published a book about his wartime experiences in London and abroad, when he was a member of the 18th Light Anti-aircraft Regiment. Called Something to Write Home About, 172 pages long and well illustrated, it is available from the author priced £9.95 plus £1 for postage, at 107 Tuddenham Road, Ipswich IP4 2SY.*



## VANISHED MILLS Peter Dolman

### HIGH MILL, SOUTHTOWN, GREAT YARMOUTH

A great deal of nonsense has been put into print about this, probably the largest windmill ever built in this country. But why include it as a bygone Suffolk mill? Great Yarmouth Borough extended over both sides of the river Yare, which formed the county boundary. Southtown, or Little Yarmouth, is on the west bank and so was in Suffolk until the county boundary was altered to correspond with the Borough in the 1880's.

Southtown was no stranger to large tower mills; as early as 1785 there was one there and in 1812, probably spurred on by the demand for flour to supply sailors and soldiers garrisoned in the area due to the threat of Napoleonic invasion, Thomas Woollsey built the new mill on a new site (TG519074), reputedly at a cost of £10,000 (although like many other 'facts' about the mill this is almost certainly hyperbole, a figure of £7,000 being quoted in 1902, which although still very high is perhaps more believable). The engineer is unknown, but as William Cubitt's new patent sails were installed it is quite possible that he was involved personally. The mill does resemble others in the area, however, despite its size, and was probably built by an established millwright. It is interesting to note that it had a domed cap, not the typical boat shape associated with Norfolk and north Suffolk.

Woollsey ran the mill for many years, John Woollsey (son?) later going into partnership with John Secker. The mill was auctioned in 1831 following bankruptcy when it was described as having 11 floors, the lowest being 34 feet in diameter, working four pairs of stones, three flour mills and two jumpers, and was capable of manufacturing 120 quarters of wheat into white flour on average in a week (27 tons). It seems to have been rather difficult to run



An early painting of the mill, with Gt. Yarmouth and its line of windmills in the background.

profitably after this and had several different millers; Benjamin Thurtell was in occupation in 1834 (but he was trying to sell or let it); the 1840 directory gives Brandford & Palmer and when auctioned in 1842 'Mr. Branford' is given as occupier, the lease expiring at Michaelmas. The tithe map (1839/43) records the site owner as the Earl of Lichfield and occupier as 'Gurneys and Co' (presumably the bank had possession following the earlier bankruptcy). In 1845 Richard Branford and James Palmer are recorded at the new steam mill in Southtown but are also thought to have had High Mill. Their partnership was dissolved in 1852, John Palmer alone being listed in 1853. In 1858 Edward Slipper is recorded at the mill and in the same year so is John Parker. In 1864, 1868 and 1872 William Parker is recorded at the mill but about this time it was bought by Press Brothers who were running the nearby Green Cap mill and its adjacent steam mill.



Press Bros. claimed to have acquired the mill in 1867; if so then Parker must have been a tenant to them. Press Bros. were listed at the mill in 1874 and continued to operate it until it ceased work in 1898, which was a decisive year for the firm. They had acquired the earlier steam mill near the bridge and in late January 1898 their original steam mill and Green Cap mill were totally gutted by fire. This had been their main flour mill, having converted to rollers, and due to the distance from the river it was decided not to rebuild. The riverside mill was enlarged and remodelled, probably by Whitmore & Binyon, whose machinery had been used at Yare Mills (the Green Cap site) and in October 1898 Press Bros. became a limited company. The sails were taken off High Mill and fitted to another Press mill at Roughton near Cromer (where they were ridiculously large, despite the mill being quite big) where they worked until that mill was gutted by fire in 1906. It is likely that High Mill carried on by steam doing grist work until 1900 when Press Bros. built a new grist mill adjacent to their flour mill by the bridge. Another fire destroyed the flour mill in October 1901 and when rebuilt the following year it was fitted up by E.R. & F. Turner (Whitmore & Binyon having ceased trading earlier that year). An illustration of the new mill in November 1902 shows the High Mill in the background bereft of sails or fly. In June 1904 the chairman, Benjamin Press died and as a result High Mill came up for auction on 24th August 1904 where it was sold to W.W. Willimont, a builder, for only £100! Demolition commenced in July 1905. The *Illustrated London News* of 26th August carried a picture of the tower down to about stage level, still a massive structure! The estimated 300,000 bricks in the tower (and much of the timber, no doubt) were used to build houses on the site, the actual site being indicated by Nos.35 and 36 Gatacre Road. What a sad end to a wonderful mill!

The tower stood on a foundation of oak piles and was of red brick, the walls being 3ft thick at the base, giving an outside diameter of 40ft (not 46ft) and containing 11 floors above the ground, including the dust floor. The height to the curb was given as 100ft and to the top of the cap 122ft. More 'hype', perhaps? I must admit to having difficulty with this as if the mill was 100ft to the curb, which was no more than 20ft across, then a domed cap would be little more than 10ft high, giving a height of no more than 112ft. The cage above was another 10ft high and I think this is where the 122ft height comes from. Careful study of two photographs of the mill supports this, when people or the standard 3ft 3ins patent sail bay are used to scale the mill. The iron cage on top was probably intended to have a beacon hung in it as a sea mark for shipping. Given the fire hazard, this seems to have been quickly stopped! A large wind vane was mounted on top and this survived until the last war when it was destroyed by bombing, having been preserved in a local museum. As built the mill had four pairs of stones on the seventh floor but another three were added along with a steam engine. Power came from four 10-bay patent sails which were said to be 84ft in span and were about 9ft wide. This span seems to tally with photographic evidence. Although the biggest windmill built in England (reputedly) it was not the tallest; that honour went to the later Bixley mill near Norwich which was deliberately built taller than High Mill! There

were (and are) equally large mills elsewhere, such as Dublin and several places in Holland. At about the same time as the High Mill stopped work an even taller mill was being built at Princenhage in Holland (see last newsletter).

The output given in the sale notice is not exaggerated. Being situated close to the sea it benefited from sea breezes and once on the move could turn in very light winds. It was capable of grinding over a ton an hour and was worked by double shifts of four men. Once High Mill and Green Cap mill had a 'race' and both ran continuously for over a fortnight! In favourable winds it could make 200 quarters of wheat into white flour in a week (45 tons). To handle this prodigious output a roadway came into the mill to enable waggons to load or unload under cover. After Press Bros.' roller mill was working in 1889 the High Mill only produced wholemeal flour which was sold in special souvenir bags with a picture of the mill and a recipe included, rather as might be done today! Even this trade stopped after a while and gristing work only was done after 1892, the decline into disuse and demolition being done with unseemly haste, as noted above. Such is progress!

## NEWS

### DRINKSTONE MILLS

As new members of S.M.G. and having been privileged to become the owners of Drinkstone mills just before Christmas, we thought we would write a little bit to introduce ourselves and what we hope to do with the mills.

Alex first got to know and love Suffolk when working at the Museum of East Anglian Life in Stowmarket, and despite subsequent moves to Scotland, London and Surrey, we have always hoped to get back. Alex and I met while working at Bucks County Museum and I subsequently developed a career as a museum education officer. We both have a love of historic sites and rural technology and have spent many happy holidays touring the British countryside in search of an interesting place to live which needs sensitive conservation and can be shared with other people.

When S.M.G.'s advert came from the S.P.A.B. Wind and Watermill Section we drove from a wedding in Wiltshire to Suffolk at 55 mph in a Morris Traveller so we could see it as soon as possible! Not only did the site have a very fine post mill but because of the single ownership by the Clover family for over 200 years, it had a remarkable coherence. We could clearly see the historical development of the site in the remaining buildings and machinery; for example, the horse-mill to smock mill, to steam then oil-engine driven mill; the collecting of buildings as more granaries were needed; the garden with old orchards evident in the undergrowth and the cottage which has had many additions over time. We were aware that it would be a great responsibility looking after two windmills but knew Drinkstone was what we had been looking for.

S.M.G., and particular Chris Hullcoop, have done a wonderful job making sure the mills are still here, and we are very grateful to have the time to 'take stock' and proceed slowly with any

further conservation and restoration work we do. To this end, we are gathering as much advice as possible and welcome people to come and look (and soon to come and help too!). We are also very pleased that Peter Dolman has kept the excellent survey work done by S.M.G. at Drinkstone in 1978, which we are sure will prove very useful.

For us, Drinkstone is a lifetime's project which we hope our 8-month old daughter Halcyon will grow up to participate in. It will never be a commercially viable site again but we hope in some years time to have a few open days a year here. We feel tremendously honoured to be custodians of one of East Anglia's most interesting mill sites and look forward to meeting more S.M.G. members over the coming months. (Alex & Rosie Hayward)

#### THELNETHAM MILL WINS AWARD FOR FLOUR

Peter Dolman entered samples of Thelnetham mill's flour in the 1997 Organic Food Awards, promoted by the Soil Association and sponsored by 'You' magazine. Much to his delight, the Organic Wholemeal flour was judged to be the best in its class, allowing Peter to go to a swish ceremony in London to collect the award from Jonathan Dimbleby, the president of the Soil Association. A certain amount of publicity has resulted but no vast increase in sales has been apparent yet!

#### PETTAUGH ROLLER MILL DEMOLISHED

The roller mill in the centre of the village of Pettaugh was demolished in January 1998, allowing the site to be redeveloped for housing. This large steam mill dated from 1899, but had been considerably altered and converted to a feed mill. It is not thought that anything of mill interest survived inside.

#### MILLS IN ART AT THE HASTE GALLERY

The Haste Gallery in Great Colman Street, Ipswich will be exhibiting paintings by Jack Welbourn from 5th-21st February (open Mon-Sat, 9am-5pm). Jack Welbourn has been painting in and around Suffolk for over 50 years and is now in his 89th year. There are several mills featured, including Baylham, Ralph's Mill, Westleton (a smock mill now demolished), Shottisham, Bosmere Mill, Needham Market, Campsea Ashe, Flatford and Saxtead Green.

## **EVENTS**

### S.M.G. PUBLIC MEETING: 'WINDMILLS...OVER HERE & OVER THERE'; SATURDAY FEBRUARY 21st at 7.30pm, at IPSWICH CENTRAL LIBRARY

For this year's public meeting we are delighted to welcome Jon Sass, one of the country's leading figures in mill preservation over the last 30 years. Jon will be speaking about his rare experience of working with windmills on both sides of the Atlantic. A native of Lincolnshire, where he still lives, he and Edward Travis led the restoration of the last Lincolnshire post mill at Wrawby in the 1960's. Later he moved to the U.S.A. to become miller at the reconstructed post mill at Flowerdew Hundred in Virginia. If there is time, he will also touch on some of his

other work in Lincolnshire.

At the end of the talk we will show the 16mm film of the building of the Flowerdew Hundred mill, featuring both Jon Sass and one Rex Wailes!

The meeting will once again be held in the Lecture Hall at Ipswich Central Library, Old Foundry Road.

VISIT TO GREAT WHELNETHAM MILL; SUNDAY APRIL 26th, from 2.30pm

This is one of the very few windmills containing machinery to which S.M.G. has never organised a visit. Over the past 18 months Chris Hullcoop has been carrying out holding work on both the mill tower and the adjoining engine mill building. The windmill is one of the few in Suffolk which retain the potential for restoration. It carries a datestone of 1865 and although only worked by wind until early this century, milling continued by engine power until the 1960's. Despite the illegal removal of items of machinery a few years ago, there is still plenty to see inside the small tower, with the cap frame still in place.

The mill (TL 878598) is approached through Fenton's Farm which is on the road to Stanningfield about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile after leaving the A134 at Sicklesmere. Please park in the farmyard rather than on the narrow road.

NATIONAL MILLS DAY: SUNDAY MAY 10th

As usual S.M.G. will be opening Herringfleet marsh mill to the public, and other mills will also be open including Thelnetham, Buttrum's and the tide mill at Woodbridge. Two extra mills open this year are Bardwell tower mill, which will be grinding, powered either by the traction engine *Oliver* or by a stationary engine, and Pakenham tower mill. Other attractions are also planned at Bardwell so look out for local publicity nearer the time!

S.M.G. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: SUNDAY JUNE 28th at 11am

The venue for this year's A.G.M. will be Drinkstone Mills, by kind permission of the owners and new members, Alex and Rosy Hayward. The afternoon will provide an opportunity to re-examine the mills, especially the post mill which still has secrets to give up, including its exact age!

STANTON MILL 'WORK-INS' 1998

Advance notice of the dates of the Stanton work-ins:

Saturday August 1st - Sunday August 9th; and

Saturday August 15th - Sunday August 23rd.

Likely subjects for work are sails and interior machinery. Contact Peter Dolman for further details.

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