

# SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

## Newsletter

No. 72

November 1998

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In early September I hosted a S.M.G. committee meeting and it was pleasing to see not just everyone present, but two new faces round the (now too small!) table. These were Luke Bonwick and Stephen Bloomfield. Luke has agreed to become membership secretary, relieving some of the burden on Peter Dolman. Details of the committee are given in this issue for future reference.

Shortly after the last newsletter was published came the sad news of the death of Monica Dance, the secretary of the S.P.A.B. and its Wind and Watermill Section for many years until her retirement in 1978. Many members will recall her great energy and dedication to the cause, and it was entirely fitting that a full obituary should appear in *The Times*. We publish our own inside.

This issue is largely filled with two longish articles on the history of different Suffolk mills. I would like to appeal to members for more newsletter contributions to maintain the present standard and frequency of publication. Please do help if you can.

Forthcoming events are listed below; full details appear under the Events section.

S.M.G. Social evening (Stanton)  
Herringfleet windpump opening  
S.M.G. public meeting (Ipswich)  
SPAB Windmill Meeting (London)  
National Mills Weekend

Saturday December 5th  
Friday January 1st 1999  
Saturday February 20th  
Saturday March 21st  
Sat-Sun May 8th-9th

Mark Barnard

## VANISHED MILLS Peter Dolman

### THE WINDMILLS OF PRESTON ST. MARY

No windmill appears on Hodskinson's map of 1783, although he was not infallible. However in 1816 a note in the *Ipswich Journal* referred to a meet of hounds at 'Preston Windmill', implying one existed by this time. Two maps of the mid 1820's, Greenwood and Bryant, both show two windmills at Preston, one to the east of Priory Farm, opposite the road to the village and to the north of the road to Lavenham (Grid Ref. TL940506), the other to the east north-east, on the south side of the road (TL942507). Bryant's map appears to mark the second mill further to the north-east but this could be merely inaccurate plotting.

The two mills were in the same ownership and in July 1826 a notice of sale appeared in the *Ipswich Journal*.

*'To be sold by Auction with immediate possession on 11th July at the Lion Inn, Lavenham, by order of the executors of the late Mr. Everard. All that capital and nearly new built Tower Mill with two pairs of French stones and half an acre*

*of land, situate by the side of the hard road at Preston, leading from Lavenham to Stowmarket. The land is leasehold, 50 years of which is unexpired at 30/- per annum.'*

The auction must have been unsuccessful for a little later the following notice appeared in several papers.

*'To be sold by Auction at the Lion Inn, Lavenham, on 19th September. CAPITAL POST WINDMILL, now in full trade, with all the going gears and appendages thereto belonging; with a good HOUSE, stable, granary, cart lodge and one acre of land, now in the occupation of the proprietor, Mr. Joseph Everard. The land is leasehold, 53 years of which is unexpired. Immediate possession may be had.'*

So we have two different windmills at Preston, one occupied by a Mr. Joseph Everard and one by a deceased Mr. Everard. The two come together only a week later in yet another notice.

*'To be sold by Auction at the Lion Inn, Lavenham, on 19th September. Two capital WINDMILLS, one a Tower, or Smock mill, the other a Post ditto, with all the gears and appendages thereto belonging; with a good HOUSE, Granary, 2 stables, cart lodge, and every convenient outbuilding.... (plus 1½ acres of pasture land).*

*The land is leasehold, 53 years of which are unexpired.... The mills are within a few rods of each other, and having been built within a few years, are in a good state of repair. They are the only ones in the place, nor is there any in several of the adjoining parishes. Apply to Mr. Everard, the proprietor, on the premises.'*

This last statement is pushing it a bit as there were several mills in the neighbourhood.

From the above sale notices we can deduce that the post mill had no roundhouse, probably only had a single pair of stones and stood in one acre of land with a house and other buildings. The smock mill stood in half an acre with a stable and had two pairs of stones. It was 'nearly new' which even allowing for flowery prose suggests that it post-dated the post mill, presumably being erected between 1816 and 1824 (the year of Greenwood's survey). The recent archaeological dig (see below) confirmed map evidence that the smock mill was the westerly of the two mills.

In August 1829 'That old established post mill' at Preston was offered for sale by Mr. Garrard, spirit merchant of Chelsworth, and miller of Preston; in March 1830 John Jessup Garrard, miller of Preston, assigned his property for the benefit of creditors. Various attempts were made to sell it; in July 1832 'Mr. Winson' was in occupation when auctioned and again in May 1834 when the sale notice gives us a clue as to the mill's origin. John Garrard, an insolvent debtor, was still the nominal owner of the 'leasehold Post Windmill' which was held under a 99-year lease of which 45 years were unexpired. It was sub-let to William Winson. Working back from 1834 gives us a building date for the post mill of about 1780, which date also concurs with the unexpired term in the 1826 sale notice above. This incidentally could explain its omission from Hodskinson's map, which was surveyed between 1778 and 1782.

William Winson auctioned his effects at the mill in December 1834 and in February 1835 R. Winson of Rattlesden Mill offered the

mill to be let, with immediate possession. The 1837 Ordnance Survey map clearly marks both mills and the parish Tithe map (1838-9) confirms the ownership. The westerly mill was owned and occupied by Johnny Green and the easterly mill by Johnson Edgar. White's directory of 1844 lists John Edgar and Henry Green.

In 1846 'Johnson Edgar of Preston, Yeoman' bought a piece of land from Sir Benjamin Collins Brodie of Savile Row, London, for £60 on the opposite side of the road from the easterly mill. Business was presumably booming and he took the bold step of building a new tower mill and house on his own land (TL942508). This mill was built by the Sudbury millwright William Bear and was said to have been one of the finest windmills in the area. It bore the datestone 'J. Edgar, Preston, 1846'. The post mill was redundant after this and in February 1848 a rather half-hearted attempt to sell it was made when it was described as 'A POST WINDMILL with all its machinery and going gears'. It was 'unoccupied' and as no more is heard of it we may assume it was demolished soon after. For a brief period there were three windmills in Preston, therefore.

The 1853 directory still lists John Edgar and Henry Green at the two mills but in 1855 the tower mill was occupied by Robert Bear (perhaps a relative of the millwright?) and the smock mill by Henry and Mrs. Elizabeth Green. In 1864 Edward Green is listed at

the smock mill. In 1859 the newspapers reported an accident at one of the mills where a Mr. Hogger, wheelwright, of Brent Eleigh was killed when his horse took fright at the sails and caused him to be run over by the waggon. In 1868 Maurice Pike was listed, possibly at the smock mill. In 1869 one Ruffel Spraggon is given as miller at the smock mill. In 1874 Henry Martin Harris is at the smock mill and this is the last listing for it as a mill. The 1881 (?) large scale Ordnance Survey map marks the smock mill as being disused and it had gone by the 1901 revision. The site is still plainly visible as a depression in the meadow attached to Priory Farm (see postscript).



The tower mill (pictured left) continued to thrive however. John Edgar died in March 1872, having let the mill to Maurice Pike in April 1870. In April 1879 Thomas Edgar, farmer, of Lavenham, sold the mill (which was still tenanted by Pike) for the tidy sum of

£1150 to John Thomas Alen. He is listed as miller from 1879 to 1896 and in October 1898 he sold the mill to James George Pike of Woolpit (he had the post mill in Mill Lane, Woolpit) for £450, which price was described in the trade journal *The Miller* as 'a good price as things go'. James Pike continued at the mill until September 1914 when he sold it to Matthew Gray, farmer of Preston, for £570. Matthew Gray junior is listed at the mill in the 1916 directory and it ceased work in about 1919-20. At this time the sails and some machinery were removed, reputedly by a millwright named Baker, and fitted to the mill at Debenham which had been damaged during the war while under government control. Preston mill stood disused until it was pulled down in about 1928. The foundations can still be seen in the garden of the mill house.

It probably had three pairs of stones. The brakewheel had an iron hub and six radial arms, with a wooden rim and brake and iron teeth in segments. The wallower was of iron with eight arms and wooden cogs and at Debenham was mounted on the iron shaft with a boss to take up the gap of the (presumed) wooden upright shaft at Preston. The mill had a fixed steam engine with a tall chimney stack, probably from new and so was not dependant solely on wind power. The cap was domed, similar to other Bear mills in the area and had a fantail with eight blades. The sails had ten bays of three vanes, were double-sided, and were 'struck' from inside. Pencilled on the former workshop door is a note of the vane sizes: 'Outer sails vanes 11" wide 2'4<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" and 3'5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" Inner 11" wide 2'8<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" and 3'9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>". This gives an approximate span of 72 ft and width of 7ft. The tower contained five storeys and the foundations are three bricks wide, with an old millstone as doorstep. In appearance it was very like the new mill at nearby Lavenham, built in 1831 by Thomas Bear (brother of William) which was no doubt the inspiration for John Edgar to build his new mill at Preston. The old post mill was a very simple affair with no roundhouse and was turned to wind by a tailpole. What a contrast Edgar must have noticed when he started up the new tower mill for the first time!



Excavation of the smock mill site in October 1998. The surviving part of the windshaft is in the foreground.

## Postscript

In early October there was an archaeological dig at the site of the smock mill which revealed that the walls had been robbed out completely apart from a section of internal foundation. The wall foundations could be traced however and showed a typical octagonal plan, 15ft across flats internally and with 17ins thick walls. The surrounding area was paved with large round stones and the doorway had fragments of burr stone outside. Metal finds included one of the slip cog pins from a stone nut, two sailcloth hanging rings and pieces of clamp, possibly from the sails. The rear 6ft of the wooden windshaft also survives, having been built into a farm building. This retains the iron cross-fin tail gudgeon (which is not drilled for a striking rod) and parts of the two brakewheel spoke mortices. The mill could have resembled nearby Brettenham mill which dated from 1804 and was of similar size.

## **THE CREETING POST MILL BUCK** Mark Barnard

The post mill body or buck which stands at Alder Carr Farm, Creeting St. Mary, near Needham Market, is an important part of Suffolk's milling heritage, even though it has not been used as a mill since the mid 19th century. Its unusual history and very complete frame are described below. The disused buck was moved by crane and low loader to a new site within the farm complex in December 1995 and then carefully repaired to give it a new lease of life as a craft workshop (see Newsletters 64 & 65). As well as the frame, the original weatherboarding (now re-clad with new boards over the old) and much of the internal plaster lining-out remains. The site is readily accessible as the owners, Nick and Joan Hardingham, run a farm shop and PYO business. S.M.G. was closely involved in advising on the conservation of the buck, and this article is based on a S.M.G. report made in 1992. In re-writing it I would like to thank Peter Dolman for his valuable help, especially with the historical references.

### History

It is almost certain that the buck at Alder Carr Farm (formerly known as Houghton Park Farm) came from a post mill which stood some 800 yards to the north-east, on Creeting Hill, in the old parish of Creeting St. Olaves. It is first recorded in 1796 when it was described as 'New-erected'. However, to understand its history fully it is necessary to review earlier references to windmills in the Creetingings.

Maps show two sites on Creeting Hill. Hodkinson's map of 1778-82 marks a mill at Grid Ref. TM097556, further up the hill and on the opposite side of the road to the one shown on Bryant's map (published in 1826) and the first edition Ordnance Survey of 1837, at TM096557.

A Royal Exchange Insurance policy of November 1777 in the name of Daniel Tiffin, who had a dwelling and bakehouse in Needham Market, refers to a timber-built windmill situated in Creeting St. Olaves, insured for £150. Tiffin died in 1793 and left the mill to his wife Sarah. A further Royal Exchange Insurance policy of

December 1794 in the name of Henry Edwards of Sutton, as guardian and trustee of Richard Emerson, a miller and baker of Needham Market, relates to a timber-built windmill in Creeting St. Olaves, occupied by Thomas Emerson. The sum insured was £200. Both these are likely to be the mill shown by Hodskinson.

We now come to advertisements for a new mill. The first appeared in the *Ipswich Journal* of 9th April 1796:

*'Creeting All Saints. New-erected Post-Windmill, 18 feet long, 11 feet wide, draws 10 yds cloth, one pair 5ft. French stones. ...Mill situated on pleasant spot, well-winded, within quarter mile of navigable river....late in occupation of Mr. Samuel Green, to be sold for the benefit of creditors.'*

The second is from the *Bury & Norwich Post* of 8th July 1801:

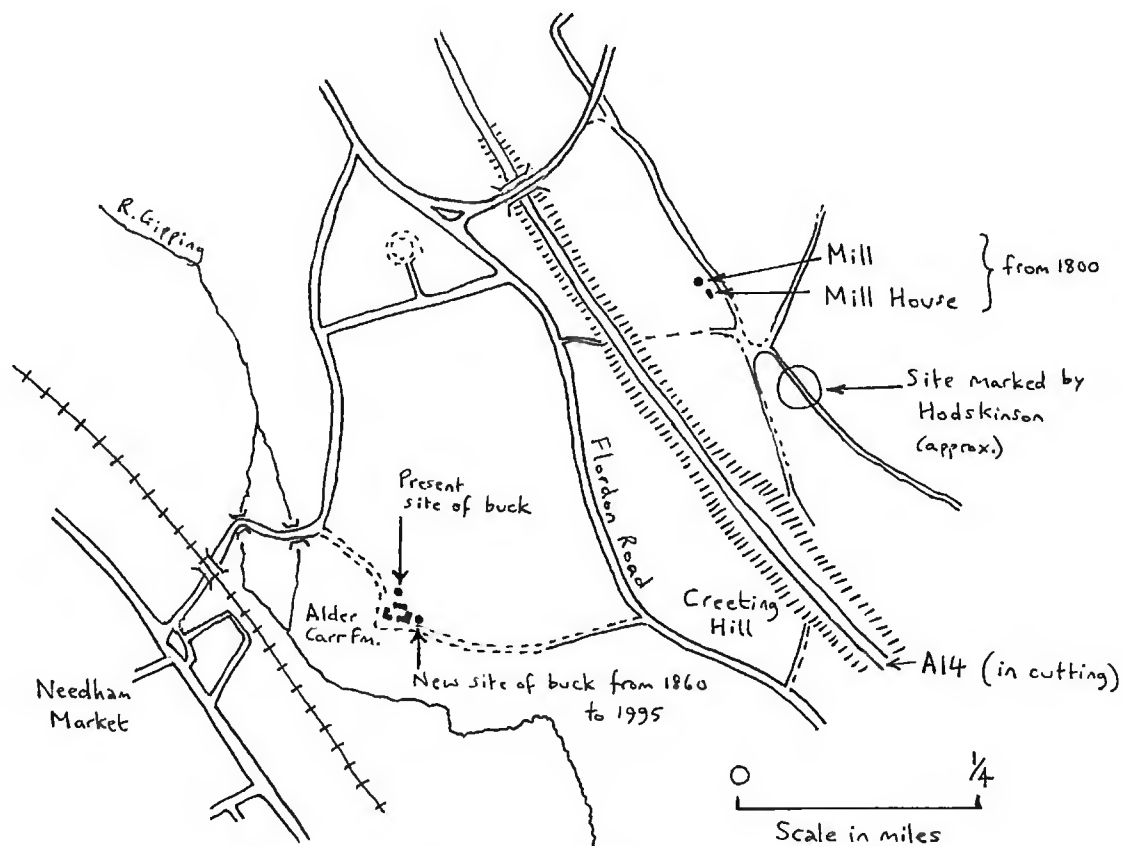
*'Auction 21 July... Lot 1. A large and substantial POST WINDMILL with a Round House....containing a capital pair of French stones, 5 feet high, flour mill, sack tackle and other apparatus, on the newest construction....also a new erected house...in Creeting St. Olaves, within half a mile of Needham Market... (land) held under a lease for the term of 60 years, from Michaelmas last... Lot 2. (bakery in Needham Market) ..in occupation of Mr. Richard Emerson, the proprietor.'*

Richard Emerson was bankrupt by November 1803, and in the *Bury & Norwich Post* of 25th January 1804 the following notice appeared: *Auction 7th February. Richard Emerson, a bankrupt. Lot 1. A Capital POST WINDMILL and Round House...and house...all lately erected on a piece of land containing about  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre in the parish of Creeting St. Peter's (sic) ...let on lease for 60 years to the said Richard Emerson, (3 years only of which were expired last Michaelmas) at the low annual rent of £2 10s... (could be taken down if wished)... also house and bakehouse in Needham market.'*

The property could not have sold as it was advertised again in February 1804, for sale by private contract, and yet again in August of the same year, this time with no mention of Emerson.

The 1801 and subsequent adverts clearly refer to the later site, as marked on the O.S. one-inch map. This is about half a mile from Needham Market, and the two plots shown on the Tithe map (c.1839) containing the house and mill extend to just under the  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre described. (The reference to Creeting St. Peter's is erroneous.) However, the 1796 reference cannot be equated with either of the known sites, neither of which is within  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile of a navigable river. It is also significant that a different parish (Creeting All Saints) is specified, and no roundhouse or mill house is mentioned. The mill however is the same one, so it must have started life at another, unknown, site. One can speculate that Richard Emerson, who had evidently acquired Tiffin's assets by 1794, decided to abandon the old site and purchase the newly-built mill. He moved this to a new site, on which he had taken a 60-year lease, in 1800, where he built a house.

The dimensions quoted in the 1796 advert are exactly those of the surviving buck, and its construction accords well with a late 18th century date.



Locations referred to in the text

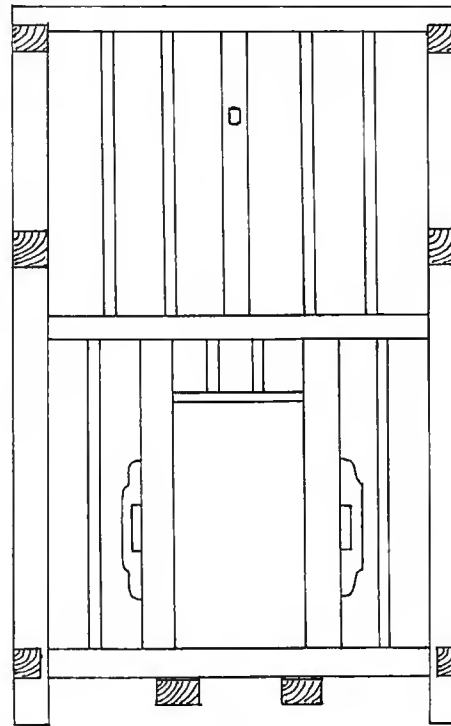
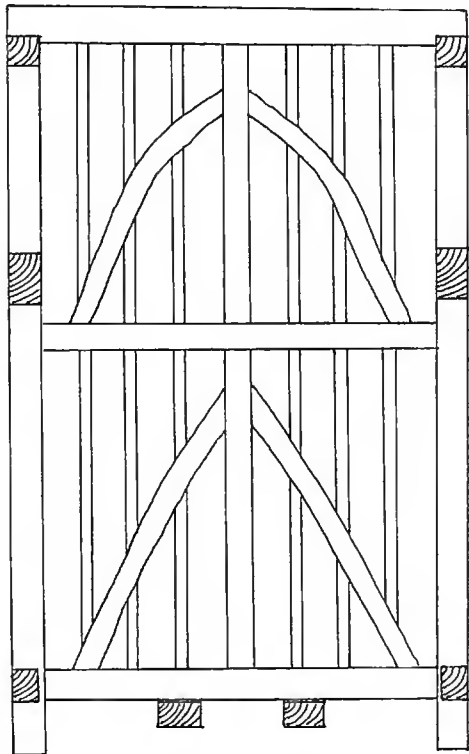
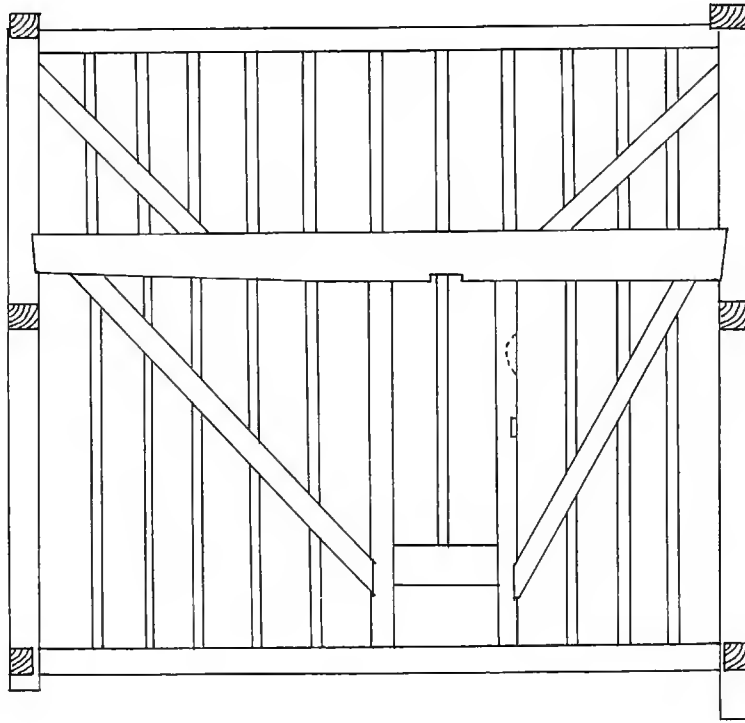
Robert Bixby is recorded as miller in 1844. He died in the early 1850's and the property was advertised for sale by auction twice in 1854, and twice in 1855. The last advert appeared in the *Suffolk Chronicle* of 16th December 1855:


*Auction 24th December Late the property of Mr. Robert Bixby, dec. Lot 1. A well-timbered POST WINDMILL, 18ft.6in. by 11ft., with spacious roundhouse complete, well winded...situate on Creeting Hills, Creeting St. Olaves. The above Mill, Dwelling-House and Outbuildings are standing on a piece of land...which is leasehold for a term of 60 years, which will expire on the 11th October 1860, and if not renewed...the same can be taken down and removed.'*

The Post Office directory for 1858 records a H. Weavers as miller at Creeting St. Olaves, but there is no further entry.

It is highly likely that the mill was dismantled, taken down and moved soon after expiry of the lease in 1860. The frame, in perfect condition, was moved whole, minus its original roof and floors. At its new home, Houghton Park Farm, it was turned into a dovecote. The buck was mounted on brick piers and given an attractive hipped plaintiled roof with gablets. Probably at this time it was tarred to help prolong the life of the old weatherboards, which up until now had been painted. Internally every available wall was covered with tiers of nesting boxes, a total of well over 200 in all. Some of these have been left in place in the recent conversion.

It is not known when use as a dovecote ceased; there may have



  
 Feet (approx.)

**CREETING POST MILL BUCK**  
 Internal sketch elevations of side (top), head  
 (above left) & tail (above right)  
*Based on drawings by Chris Hullcoop*



been a gradual decline into a farmyard fowl-house. By the early 1970's the buck was disused and tiles and boarding were starting to fall off. The remains of the roof were removed in the mid 1980's and corrugated iron nailed to the top rails to protect them. The tail frame was repaired in late 1993, when the badly decayed lower transverse beam was renewed. Following this work the whole buck was enveloped in a tarpaulin.

The mill house at the old site still stands, but the site of the mill itself has been obliterated by quarrying, probably during the last war.

### The Surviving Structure

The buck is remarkably complete, and is probably the least altered post mill body in this country. It is quite large, even for Suffolk where many large post mills were in existence by the beginning of the 19th century. The framing is a mixture of pitch pine and oak. Unlike some post mill bucks it has not been extended or even significantly altered, perhaps unsurprising given its relatively short life as a mill. The head and side frames are well braced but the tail lacks diagonals, which resulted in distortion which was corrected in the 1993 repairs. The stone floor braces in the head are both from a crook piece of oak. The side girts, also a pair, taper markedly behind the crowntree, an unusual feature. The absence of the crowntree affords a rare opportunity to examine the housings for it in the side girts. The head has been stiffened by the addition of a cross timber against the mid transverse beam, probably when the mill was converted to two pairs in the head. The framing is well-finished, and the walls retain much of their original plaster lining, even after the recent move.

The side walls originally had small semi-circular headed windows on each main floor; these were covered by boarded hatches, some of which survive. Quite early in the mill's working life these must have been superseded by much larger side windows, a pair lighting each floor. There was a simple porch, carried on bearers nailed to the sides of the door posts and now sawn off.

In the central stud in the upper half of the tail frame is a square hole, sloping downwards towards the exterior. This was for a striking rod to control shuttered sails. These sails could not have been the originals as the 1796 description of the mill says that it 'draws 10yds cloth', a clear reference to common sails, besides which of course patent sails were not introduced until 1807. The brake was on the right so the sails ran anti-clockwise.

The most obvious evidence for machinery appears on the forwardmost window post in each side frame. Each has an identical mortice for a bracket carrying a centrifugal governor controlling a pair of millstones on the floor above. The posts have been hacked away to allow clearance for the operation of the governors, which were obviously later additions. The symmetrical arrangement with two pairs of stones side by side in the head is another change from the early descriptions of the mill which mention only one large pair. There had been a steep-sided hopper on the left of the tail, to feed the bolter.

No significant inscriptions were found although a curious



The buck, with last fragments of dovecote roof (June 1991)

cartoon-like drawing on plaster towards the tail on the right side was thought to date from the mill's working days. Externally it was interesting to see the original wrought iron strap which secured the door into the buck.

When moved c.1860 the buck was placed on brick piers. Those at the corners were built round two sides of the corner posts. Six piers were original, four others having been added later at the ends of the sheertrees.

Post mill bucks were occasionally taken down and re-used whole. Photographs exist of Suffolk bucks 'on the ground' at Theberton (moved 9 miles), Worlingworth (moved 4½ miles), Saxtead Green (from the Orford area), Walsham-le-Willows (from Wortham) and St. James South Elmham. The buck at Alder Carr Farm is the last of these to remain. Nationally, the only other post mill body on the ground is at Seaton, Rutland, although only the lower half survives, up to side girt level. It stands in a field and is used as a rough shelter for animals, but it is becoming derelict and from a recent brief inspection by no means all of it is original.

Footnote Members may be interested in a new publication on Suffolk dovecotes by John McCann. The author is an authority on vernacular buildings as well as a professional photographer and the 140-page book is a very good one. Published by the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology, it can be obtained from their Secretary at Oak Tree Farm, Hitcham, Ipswich IP7 7LS. The price is £8.50 plus £1.38 for postage. Make cheques payable to 'The Suffolk Institute of Archaeology & History'.

## **S.M.G. COMMITTEE 1998-9**

Here is a list of current S.M.G. committee members.

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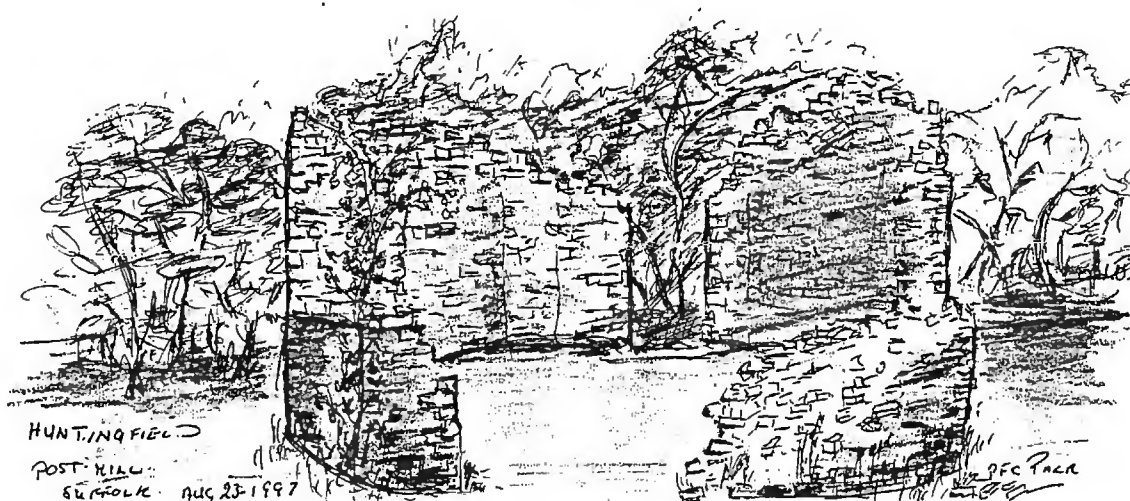
John Snowdon  
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## **MILLS BY WHEELS: SUFFOLK 1997 Patricia Parr**

What better weather could anyone wish when back in the summer of 1997 we left our south-east Kent woodland homestead and turned our caravanette wheels in the direction of East Anglia. We spent two exciting weeks discovering and re-visiting many windmills and windpumps.

Now two post mills in particular had so far evaded us on previous milling tours. The 19th century Huntingfield post mill ruin (TM319745) is situated in the grounds of White House Farm,

where for many years the ruins had lay hidden beneath a thickly-covered scrubland. But this time round we were thrilled to find that the whole site had recently been cleared of all debris, and there standing over in the far corner protected only by a hedgerow was the small remains of the ruinous brick roundhouse. While busily taking a number of photographs, the owner suddenly appeared, probably wondering why on earth two complete strangers were showing so much interest in what after all was just a small brick ruin. But having explained what we were about, he was keen to tell us of his forthcoming plans to build a large stable block and store. So far he has not quite made up his mind whether or not to incorporate the mill remains.



The remains of Huntingfield post mill

Having left the quiet Huntingfield village we continued winding our way through sun-scorched landscape to the village of Metfield. This time we finally managed to track down the remaining traces of the 1824-built Metfield post mill (TM300798) situated on a grassy mound in the garden of Mill House.

Now high on our list was a return visit to the National Trust's Wicken Fen nature reserve wetlands, where stands the delightful working smock drainage mill. This we followed up by driving round to the nearby Wicken corn mill where once again we had the pleasure of meeting on site a group of familiar faces. Alan Wallis kindly showed us around the mill, and we were amazed to see the amount of work that had now been carried out. All this could not be possible but for the great effort put in by the dedicated volunteers who unselfishly give up their free time working throughout all weathers in a tireless effort in restoring numerous wind and watermills throughout the country.

Since having caught the milling bug, there is always a special highlight to any milling holiday. On this particular occasion it was when we unexpectedly made our brief acquaintance with Ruth, the 85 years young grand-daughter of the last mill owner who worked the original open-trestle Badwell Ash post mill. The mill was pulled down in 1930, and the rebuilt buck-like shed on the site has now also disappeared.

Throughout a number of years while touring England's green and pleasant land we have tried to make a special point of visiting numerous churches, particularly the ones that feature windmills set within the stained glass windows, or found at the ends of pews, etc., and this tour enabled us to add several more to our growing list. Thank you, Suffolk, you did us proud!

## **NEWS**

### **MONICA DANCE O.B.E.**

It is with sadness that we report the death at the age of 84 of Monica Dance. She was a pioneer and leading light in the movement to preserve our heritage of old buildings and had worked for the S.P.A.B. since 1931, becoming Secretary during World War Two. As well as running the main Society and the Georgian Group, she was always very keen on the Wind and Watermill Section, so much so that she was present on all the day and long weekend tours of wind and watermills. On the coach she would be drafting letters on the many cases she had to deal with. She had a good sense of humour and I remember a weekend tour when there was a good old mix-up over rooms involving the allocation of double, twin or single bedded rooms. A rather unsmiling and diffident gentleman had been allocated a double bedded room. It was explained that this was common practice when no more single rooms were available. Perhaps unwisely I added that it could have advantages as there were several unaccompanied ladies on the tour! He glared at me and said "Are you suggesting that I'm contemplating impropriety?" Mrs Dance and I left fairly quickly, closing the door, but only managed a few steps along the corridor before collapsing with laughter.

Today most people are well disposed towards the preservation of historic buildings but in the early days there was many a clash with developers and neglectors. Monica fought numerous cases with depth of knowledge combined with tenacity and was never afraid of being made 'persona non grata'. I recall visiting Abbey Mill at Coggeshall on a mill tour. We stopped by the famous old barn, then a spectacle of decay. Bent over and commando-like she crept along behind a hedge to obtain a clearer view of the barn's condition.

She was always keen to encourage the young and organised the famous Lethaby scholarships enabling young architects to learn to work in the spirit of William Morris, to preserve rather than strip away historic detail. These scholars stayed with her and her husband Harry, and even after retirement she continued with this work from the Old Rectory at Methwold in Norfolk, one of the buildings she had saved.

Our best tribute to her is to continue the work she devoted her life to and especially to encourage the young. Sir Christopher Wren's epitaph famously says 'If you seek my monument, look around you'. Monica Dance's monument can be found all over England in the many fine buildings saved by her work and which contribute so much to the quality of life today. (C.H.)

### **STANTON POST MILL: UP-DATE**

Another two weeks of work have taken place over the summer, with work carrying on into the autumn. The main jobs were to stiffen up

the ladder and fly posts with new bracing, to repair the middle section of the ladder (the only bit left to do) and to take down the inside pair of sails. These jobs were accomplished as planned and in addition a start was made on renewing or repairing the vanes in the outside sails, most of which were completely rotten. A big 'thank you' to all who helped with the work during 1998.

The bracing has been put back as best as can be managed from studying old photographs and measurements of surviving fragments. The main features are that the 1938 arrangement of two pairs of horizontal braces has been replaced by one pair which slope upwards to the fly, as used at this and other bygone mills of the area. The ladder had 'X' bracing beneath it originally and this has been replaced. Also missing from the 1938 steps was a pair of braces from each corner of the buck to the tailpole. The effect of all this bracing is that the mill starts to turn immediately when the fly revolves, rather than winding itself up and moving with a jerk. The buck is also much steadier and hardly 'yaws' at all while running. The handrail has also been replaced on one side as near as can be made to the pre-1938 design. In deference to safety of visitors the other side will also be done (there was only one handrail originally) but is yet to be fitted.

Taking the sails down proved difficult, as expected, with the removal of rusted-in bolts taking several days. It became clear that the nine year old stock was completely rotten and in dangerous condition. Fortunately we got it down in one piece however. The sails themselves seem good but in my search for authenticity I have established that the original sails were of different design so I propose to renew all four. Does anyone want a pair of patent sails?



Removing the rotten sail stock

About 50 vanes have been renewed so far in the remaining sails, the long ones from new plywood and the short ones from cut-down long ones. Unlike previous builders or restorers, we have made sure that there is paint in all the joints, and have used rustproof fixings. The mill still runs well and if anything it goes faster with two sails than with four. I am amazed how important the balance is. At one point with a couple of bays of vanes out for repair I made the mistake of getting the heavy sail to the bottom. What a job it was to turn them round!

Work on the interior of the mill continues. I have been cleaning the millstones of the cement which was smeared all over them and still have a lot left to do. If any member would like to help in the coming months do please make contact as I wish to continue the internal repairs over the winter.

On the paperwork side the conservation plan has now been sent to English Heritage and I await further developments. Hopefully decisions will be taken before too long to enable me to buy materials for the new sails. (Peter Dolman)

#### A WIND TURBINE FOR SUFFOLK?

Recently the local press carried an item about a proposal to site a large wind turbine at Rumburgh, near Halesworth. The illustration showed one of the Darius type. A certain amount of (mostly) 'anti' correspondence followed from 'nimbys'. We await developments with interest. (P.D.)

#### WORK AT GREAT WHELNETHAM

After the S.M.G. visit to the mills in the Spring we had a setback. David Farrow, on whose farm the mill stands, had been alerted by the sound of hammering coming from the mills. As none of our vehicles were in his farmyard he suspected vandals and approached cautiously. He was surprised to find two schoolgirls aged about 12 wielding a club hammer. They had broken one lock and another 15 minutes work would have seen them in the mill. They had pencils, paper and a camera and said they wished to record the mill. Breaking the door down with a hammer was not a good start. All very odd. This meant we had to reinforce the doors and cover them in galvanised steel sheet, a pity but we had no choice.

Our first main task was to complete the boarding on the south side of the engine mill. Where boards had to be joined, small pieces of sheet aluminium were placed behind as soakers to keep out water. We removed the remainder of the ivy whose growth had been so extensive the building from the farm looked like a large group of bushes. Underneath it was a sorry sight. Many boards had fallen and those remaining were in a dreadful state, so another batch of pressure-treated weatherboards had to be ordered. They were placed in the barn to dry alongside the combine harvester, tractors and machines David Farrow uses to farm his 150 acres single-handed. Fitting the boards was tricky. When the south side was boarded we had planned to stop there, so instead of butting the boards against a lath they oversailed the gable end boards. When we came to the two south corners the gable boards had to be fitted to the side boards rather like those in a post mill buck. The two corners on the north side are fitted to vertical laths as

by then we were committed to boarding all sides. During the fitting and afterwards the boards were treated with creosote.

Unfortunately we could not save the small lean-to building at the east end, which was in a state of collapse. It is not clear what this building was, perhaps a grain drying kiln or a bakery as these often went with milling premises. All the buildings on the farm have prominent dates in the second half of the 19th century (the engine mill is 1879) together with the initials of the Fentons. It must have been quite a business in its heyday and there must be more to discover about it. (C.H.)

### HOLTON MILL TURNS IN EARNEST - AT LAST!

A couple of years ago we tried to get the new sails of Holton post mill turning but owing to a binding brake it proved reluctant to go (see Newsletter 65). The problem with the brake was eventually sorted, and we resolved to try again. On October 22nd Chris Hullcoop and I took advantage of a very mild, windy day to spread the two Duradon sail cloths, and later added two of the old green canvas cloths from Herringfleet mill on the driving side of the spring sail frames. The mill turned steadily all afternoon, probably the first time it had done so on four sails since ceasing work around the turn of the century! It caused quite a bit of interest in the village, and a few days later an excellent write-up appeared in the *East Anglian Daily Times*. In the following week I did an interview at the mill (static this time) for Radio Suffolk. Quite clearly turning sails have the power to move the machinery of public relations as well! We plan to repeat the exercise later in the winter, this time making a record on video. Who knows, maybe the television cameras next! (M.B.)

## EVENTS

### S.M.G. SOCIAL EVENING: SATURDAY DECEMBER 5th from 7.30pm at STANTON POST MILL

Peter Dolman and his family have kindly agreed to host this year's social. Snacks and a range of liquid refreshments will be provided, but further contributions of food from those attending would be welcomed. Don't forget your latest mill slides and videos too, or even a few older ones if they have entertainment value!

### WINTER DEMONSTRATION OF HERRINGFLEET WINDPUMP: NEW YEAR'S DAY 1999 from 1 - 3.30pm (please confirm first)

We hope to run Herringfleet windpump again on New Year's Day, but perhaps it is too much to hope for the wonderful weather on January 1st this year, when the marshes looked a treat in their winter clothes. This event will only go ahead if there is no fog, rain, ice or snow. If you intend to come, please check the mill will be open by ringing Mark Barnard on 01473 727853.

### S.M.G. PUBLIC MEETING: IPSWICH TOWN HALL, SATURDAY FEBRUARY 20th

The speaker will be Peter Lewis from Shropshire who will be talking about his plans for a pair of working windmills! More details in the next newsletter.