

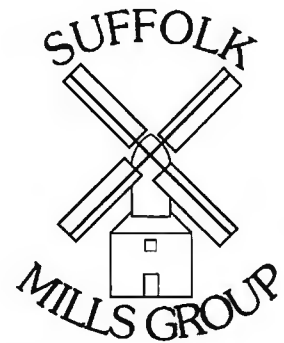
SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

Newsletter

No. 73

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First the good news. We had an enjoyable 'social' gathering at Stanton mill in early December, and another splendid New Year's Day session at Herringfleet windpump, where if anything conditions were even better than in 1998. And I took one of my best-ever photos of the mill in action - you can't beat a sunlit winter marshland landscape! Sadly, however, the start of 1999 has been overshadowed by the discovery of extensive unauthorised work inside one of our best watermills, Ashe Abbey mill at Campsey Ash, details of which appear inside. This serves as a reminder that it is not only the elements which pose a threat to our mills, and that a great deal of damage can be wrought in the name of 'repair'.

The vulnerability of even preserved mills was brought home to me when I read details of 1998 visitor numbers to Kentish windmills in the excellent Kent Mills Group newsletter: Stelling Minnis 414; Woodchurch 670; Margate 1100; Wittersham 158; Sandwich 1200; Cranbrook 3450; Chillenden 170. O.K., some of these figures aren't too bad, but for how much longer can mills survive on a couple of hundred visitors a year? Certainly not in Wales, where several restored ones have now closed.

This newsletter is timed to provide full details of our main indoor event of the year, the annual public meeting. This year we welcome Peter Lewis, familiar to many SPAB members following his entertaining talk at the 1995 Windmill Meeting. We are back in the Town Hall in Ipswich, and I hope as many of you as possible will be there. This and other forthcoming events are given below.

S.M.G. public meeting (Ipswich)	Saturday February 20th
SPAB Windmill Meeting (London)	Saturday March 20th
S.M.G. visit to Ramsey mill	Sunday April 11th
National Mills Weekend	May 8th & 9th
SPAB visit to Oxfordshire	Saturday May 15th

Mark Barnard

VANISHED MILLS Peter Dolman

SAXMUNDHAM POST MILL

No mill is shown on Hodskinson's map, published in 1783 (not necessarily a true indication, but fairly reliable). However, in the Sun Fire Insurance Policy No.415756 - 1st July 1779, Mary Easter of Saxmundham insured a house in the town in the tenure of William Holmes, miller. It does not follow that his mill was at Saxmundham, and if it was it may not have been a windmill.

The first definite reference is Royal Exchange Fire Insurance

Scaling up from photographs the mill would seem to have been 52 feet high, and was very similar to Friston (also owned by the Reynolds family) which also attained this height. The buck was not particularly big and had not been extended. The sails were very large, one pair having 9 bays and the other 11, although this pair had narrow vanes. They must have spanned at least 70 feet but still cleared the ground by a good 8-10 feet. The roundhouse, which still survives, is tall enough to contain three floors but the third was left out apart from small portions like giant shelves. The first floor is particularly unusual, being left open in the centre, with an octagonal rail to guard the opening. Part of it is framed to carry a pair of stones and the engine was in a small lean-to shed adjoining. As the mill had a roundhouse as early as 1797, and in 1852 was not described in particularly glowing terms, I think the roundhouse was rebuilt and the mill raised in the 1850's or even later. It has a 'late' look to it, with cast iron windows, and is almost certainly the work of Whitmore (or Whitmore & Binyon).

The post and trestle survive and are in remarkably good condition. There is no paint, or decay, indicating the mill always had a roundhouse, and there is a complete absence of straps or bands on the post butt and quarter bar joints. How's that for confidence! The roundhouse roof was a fine construction too, with 1½in planed, tapered and cross-tongued boards.

The mill stood close to the town and as housing encroached it was first raised, and then demolished. The roundhouse survived as a motor garage for many years and is currently being re-roofed.

TAKING STOCK Chris Hullcoop

Christmas gives us a welcome bonus of time, so I thought this year I would finish making the 50 or so steel clamps required to assemble a laminated stock for Stanton post mill.

The choice of material for windmill stocks is difficult as several options are available, not all tried and tested. They are solid wood; laminated wood; and square-section tapered tubes of steel, fibreglass and aluminium.

Good timber in lengths of 50-60ft is hard to find and for pressure preservative treatment a very long tank is needed of which there are very few.

Steel tube ought to be good; the Dutch have used it for well over 100 years and there are examples of stocks lasting for the best part of a century. Dutch sails though are quite different from English sails, almost all being common or cloth-spread while the majority of English sails are shuttered. These stocks are well suited to Dutch common sailed mills as all that is required to hold the sail bars are rectangular holes cut appropriately on either side of the tube. Correctly spaced and set to give angle of weather, the bars are simply tapped through and wedged. While ideal for Dutch mills, steel stocks are not so well suited to English mills with shutters and the traditional whips and clamps. To make a good steel stock a steel fabrication shop is really needed and is usually only available at high cost.

We have all thought of GRP or fibreglass and aluminium tube, but neither has been tried and tested on a traditional working mill. I believe there is a pair of fibreglass stocks supporting static shutterless sails on a house-converted mill but how they would stand up to shutters and turning is unknown. Fibreglass is used in the blades of modern wind-powered electricity generators but the extreme root of the blades is steel. Aluminium seems suitable, being light, strong and corrosion-resisting, but as far as I know has never been tried.

Thus the best option is lamination. It is well proven as laminated stocks have been turning for over a dozen years on Buttrum's Mill, Woodbridge and at Thelnetham. The planks from which they are made can be pressure-treated anywhere and apart from the 50 clamps, no special equipment is required, so they are easily made in a barn by amateurs.

Each clamp consists of two pieces of stout 2"x2"x1/4" angle and two pieces of 1/2" threaded rod. Every foot or so these hold and squeeze together the 'sandwich' of planks and glue. When the glue is thoroughly set the stock is planed down to final size and once painted looks exactly like a one-piece wooden stock.

New steel angle comes in 20ft lengths and the threaded rod in 10ft lengths. For the Stanton stock these were delivered to Chris Armour's workshop in a World War Two Nissen hut on the old Raydon airfield near Hadleigh. While I cut all the steel for the Thelnetham clamps by hand, there is not quite the power in the elbow now so a machine saw took the strain.

By day I don't believe in ghosts, by night I'm not so sure, and alone, after dark in a derelict building I will believe in anything! If there are such things, this is where they should be, but I never saw any shadowy pilots there.

After 12 years of renting the wartime hut Chris Armour is moving to East Bergholt where he has bought a garage which will give him more space for his business, Armour Engineering. He has been a good friend of S.M.G. over the years. Some 25 years ago when he worked at Ramsomes, Sims & Jefferies in Ipswich he organised their apprentices to make the numerous steel fittings and bolts to hold together the old buck frame of Ramsey mill. I recall that one of my drawings was unclear and the piece could have been made in two ways, so they made them both. Those were the days!

PUTTING MILLS IN THE PICTURE (9) Peter Steggall

CONSTABLE IN WEST SUSSEX

In May 1998 we had a week's holiday in wonderful weather, staying at Slindon near Arundel. What a beautiful area it is, with the rolling hills of the South Downs, and the woods and heaths of the Weald; but unfortunately most of the coast is built up with seaside towns and villages which have merged into many miles of unbroken urban sprawl.

On the way from Suffolk, I saw and photographed the fine smock mill at Shipley, once owned by the author, Hilaire Belloc,

and now the 'largest working windmill in Sussex' (according to a roadside notice). During the week we spent time finding out what we could about mills drawn and painted by John Constable. His stay in Sussex also resulted in wonderful paintings of the Beach and Chain Pier at Brighton, and he painted a smock mill which still exists at West Blatchington on the outskirts of Brighton.

We concentrated on three places farther to the west. At Littlehampton Constable produced a very small watercolour, dated 1835, now in the British Museum, entitled 'Stormy effect, Littlehampton'. It shows a windmill standing out starkly white against dark, threatening clouds over the harbour mouth. We did not get to Littlehampton, but at the Roman villa at Bignor we saw an 1823-24 one-inch to the mile map of Sussex. On it was a windmill symbol nearly half a mile east of the harbour. Perhaps Constable 'relocated' the mill to achieve a more dramatic effect. However, the modern street map shows Windmill Road and Windmill Entertainment Complex close to the harbour mouth. The mill was demolished in 1934, but where exactly was it, and could there have been more than one?

At Arundel in 1835 Constable made a fine drawing (about 8"x11", now in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London) of 'Arundel Castle and Mill'. It formed the basis of what was to be his last work, in 1836-7, a superb oil painting (28½"x39½", now in Toledo Museum of Art, but we saw it in Constable exhibitions at the Tate Gallery in 1976 and 1991). It shows a large watermill, with an impressive background of steep wooded hillside, leading to the walls and turrets of Arundel castle in the middle distance.

The mill was fed by a stream flowing eastwards out of Swanbourne Lake to join the River Arun. Ward Lock's Red Guide Book of 1930-31 tells us that 'the waters turned a mill which stood by the lake from Saxon times until recent years. The site of the mill is now occupied by the Model Dairy, charmingly

situated, but of no particular interest unless it be for the fine beasts in the sheds.' All that one sees now is a small stone and flint building, next to a larger building, part of a trout farm, sometimes open to the public, but not when we were there. The small building, with a doorway and arched windows, looks just like a chapel, but it contains a turbine-driven water pump which the Sussex Mills Group hopes

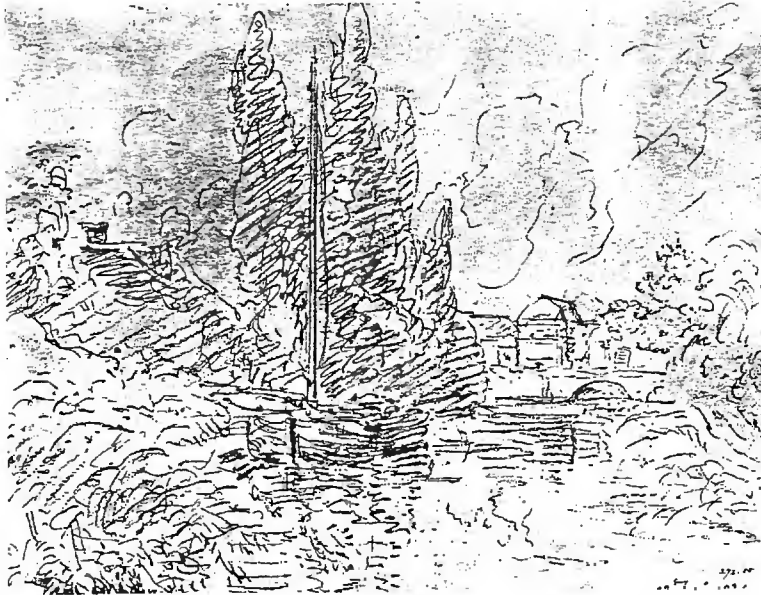


Arundel Mill & Castle (1835)

to see restored. Looking south, one can still just see, in spite of the growth of trees, a high turret with its flagpole at the corner of the castle, as in Constable's pictures.

Lastly, and most satisfyingly, I have to write about a mill which still exists, although it was converted for use as a house some years ago. The watermill at Fittleworth, on the River Rother, about two miles above its confluence with the Arun, was the subject in 1834 of a pencil drawing and a watercolour (both about 8"x11", and both now in the V & A Museum). In the drawing the mill is seen in the background, way beyond a moored barge and a bridge over the river. The watercolour is a 'close-up', with

the waterwheel just visible on the south side.



Fittleworth Mill (drawing, 1834)



Fittleworth Mill (watercolour, 1834)

We went there on a Sunday afternoon, and by a remarkable coincidence encountered a man who was purchasing the mill and would be moving in during the summer. He and his family and friends had lunched at 'The Welliggers Arms' in the village, and he was showing them his future home. I told him the purpose of our visit, and promised to send him a copy of this article. He was very interested to learn that the mill had been the subject of pictures by Constable and Turner; later I sent him photocopies of the Constable pictures, and he has recently sent me a copy of a picture of the mill from Turner's Arundel-Sussex sketchbook.

Fittleworth Mill still looks much as in Constable's time, except that the east end, which is all that can be seen from the road, is

now completely covered with green creeper, making it very difficult to get a satisfactory photograph. The other main difference is that the water passing the mill no longer flows under the bridge seen in Constable's drawing. All the water, from the river and past the mill, now runs under the other bridge (the river bridge) south of the mill. The waterwheel is still just visible on the south side of the mill, but I wondered if there had been another on the north side, where there is a narrow, flat-topped arch right beside the building. Through that arch, and the two adjoining wider arches, the water was flowing very swiftly.

Thus, for the time being, ends the story of our visit to West Sussex, but I hope that at some time we will be able to go again and look for answers to the many questions raised by our rather limited investigations. Finally, I must record my sincere thanks to our Editor, Mark Barnard, and to Don Cox, Honorary Secretary of the Sussex Mills Group, who gave me a lot of useful information which added purpose and interest to our holiday.

PICTURES OUT OF THE MILL

The saga of what came out of Baylham watermill in 1995 after the death of Ernest Onians rumbles on. In July 1998 (Newsletter 71) I reported that experts had confirmed that the picture sold by Sotheby's in 1995 for £150,000 as 'The Sack of Carthage' by Pietro Testa, was in fact 'The Sack of Jerusalem' by Nicolas Poussin, and might be worth up to £8M! That picture, which shows the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70, has now been sold to the Israeli museum in Jerusalem for £4.5M! This has resulted in Ernest Onians' executors suing Sotheby's for negligence in failing to identify the picture correctly. With such large sums of money involved it seems likely to be a long time before the matter is settled.

NEW PUBLICATIONS Reviewed by Peter Dolman

Hertfordshire Windmills and Windmillers by Cyril Moore. Bishops Stortford LHS, 121 Sheering Mill Lane, Sawbridgeworth CM21 9ND. Price £11.99 post paid.

This book, produced by the society themselves, fills an important gap in our historical knowledge of windmills. It has been written by an author whose interest is in original research so is all the more valuable for that, not being merely a repeat of other people's work like so many mill books. It is not a work to be taken lightly, and is rather dry in places, not helped by a paucity of good illustrations; indeed, Arthur Smith's revised volume on Hertfordshire contains better photographs of some of the mills. The author gives technical details where possible but in some of these he displays a lack of knowledge of the technology involved. He is also prone to occasional exaggeration of dimensions of mills; for example Cromer mill is stated to be 13 feet wide, yet the sectional drawing reproduced in the book scales at only about 11 feet! These are minor criticisms however and don't diminish the book's value, especially at the amazingly low price. You get a lot of information for your money!

Windmill Gazetteer for England Mills Research Group; 1998. Available from MRG, 1 High Street, Mistley, Essex CO11 1HA. Price £5 including postage.

This lists all known windmill sites with significant visible remains (1143 in total) in England. It is a shame that Wales, Scotland and Ireland could not be included - perhaps some other time? I must admit to having misgivings about it in its present form. It will no doubt be of interest to those mill enthusiasts who are 'mill spotters' but beyond this it is almost worthless, concentrating as it does on physical remains alone. In other words, interesting mills which have completely vanished, yet may be well recorded otherwise, are omitted. On the other hand, an extremely complicated system of annotation and charting provides a great amount of detail about mills which may only be visible as a 12-inch high ring of stonework at ground level!

I also question the accuracy of much of the information, which in theory has been assembled from the leading experts in each region. For example, in Suffolk, Saxtead mill is given a building date of c.1860 (!), Framlingham smock base is said to have ceased work by 1712 (1772 is correct) and the Creeting buck is said to be 'ruined by 1898', whatever that is supposed to mean. In Cambridgeshire, Ingle's mill at Willingham has been confused with the mill of which only the base survives. (Ingle's mill disappeared completely in the 1950's.) I hope that the Index will continue to evolve and grow, allowing such errors to be corrected. At present though, it is of only limited usefulness.

NEWS

ASHE ABBEY MILL, CAMPSEY ASH

The watermill at Campsey Ash, on the River Deben just below Wickham Market, is part of an historically important group of buildings on the site of a priory, and is listed Grade II*. The mill (pictured below) is at one end of a long timber-framed





The attic walkway (1979)

range, with a later wing, probably of the early 1700's, at right angles. The present machinery dates from 1820 and is complete, with a wooden waterwheel and three pairs of stones. It worked as an estate mill for most of its life, ceasing in 1961, since which time it has been preserved. It was sold to its present owner in about 1980 and was re-boarded and re-roofed in the early 1980's, so that its attractive external appearance was maintained.

Early this year S.M.G. was consulted on a listed building application for work to the mill interior, some of which was for retrospective consent. A site visit revealed that extensive building work had been going on for at least the last six months, resulting in major damage to the mill and the



Stone floor, Campsey Ash mill (1979)

loss of a good deal of the historic character of the interior. The entire second floor structure (partly visible above the stones on the photo on p.9) has been destroyed and replaced by a poor unauthentic new oak construction. Worse still, the attic walkway and grain bins (see photograph) have been removed, resulting in a lack of support for the roof over the later wing. Various parts of the machinery have been displaced, including the entire sackhoist mechanism in the attic, and the wooden great spurwheel lies in pieces, mostly outside. Adding insult to injury is the lamentable standard of the repair work, with the use of crude metal plates and angles and clumsy (to be polite) workmanship. That repair was needed we do not doubt, but what has been done is far beyond what was reasonably necessary and has effectively destroyed much of the building's special interest.

This is by far the most serious case of unauthorised work to a Suffolk mill since S.M.G. was founded. We have prepared a report for Suffolk Coastal District Council with recommendations for enforcement action to get the interior reinstated as far as possible. Work has now stopped, and it will be interesting to see what action the local authority takes. (M.B.)

KERSEY WATERMILL UNDER REPAIR

Repairs are under way at Kersey watermill near Hadleigh. The precise extent of the work is not known but the mill is sheathed in scaffolding and new boarding is starting to appear on the gable end facing the road. The mill has consent for use as an annexe to the house, safeguarding all of the machinery (see Newsletters 49 & 63).

The mill owners have recently made an application for the diversion of a small stream which presently runs alongside the outbuildings to meet the headwater immediately above the mill. The intention is to re-route it to the south of the buildings, to join the tailrace. While not affecting the setting of the mill, it does diminish the flow onto the wheel, albeit that this has long ceased to turn. At the time of writing, Babergh District Council has yet to make a decision on the application. (M.B.)

PROGRESS AT WICKEN SMOCK MILL

As many of you will know, the Wicken Windmill Preservation Group is restoring the mill by its own labour, with the vital support of enthusiastic volunteers. This is very much the way that Thelnetham mill was restored, and akin to Peter Dolman's methods at Stanton. In 1998 there were the usual two major summer work-ins at Wicken, combined with site work spread through the year. We are very grateful for the major effort made by all concerned.

Progress was good in 1998, concentrating mainly on those tasks necessary to allow the first pair of stones to work. The various areas covered are as follows.
Sails Further shutters have been fitted. The wind boards have been fitted to the outer two-thirds of each sail. The sails now idle much more readily, vital for attracting visitors! Work is progressing on making the remaining shutters; the design calls for 208 in all.

Brakewheel The full set of tooth segments has been cast, and work is in progress on the joints between segments. When the wheel has been finally trued and its location along the windshaft finally adjusted, we will turn a shallow groove in the face of the wheel, to aid positioning of the tooth segments.

Wallower This is a large wooden wheel, with pitch circle of 5ft 6ins diameter. The bevel face has been profiled with the new wheel in place on the upright shaft. We are now considering a jig to assist with mortising for the 63 cogs.

Upright Shaft Repairs to the centre coupling are complete. New bearing brasses have been cast, machined and fitted to the sprattle and middle bearings.

Stone Spindle (West Stones) The footstep bearing has been raised to allow for the replacement bedstone being thicker than the previous stone (which is thought to have been removed soon after milling by wind ceased in the 1930's). The stone nut is being re-cogged.

Stones The glut box has been replaced by the superior one surviving from the original bedstone. This box will accommodate an adjustable wooden bearing block to take up bearing wear. We need to cast bearing brasses for the box.

Sack Hoist The hoist repairs are largely finished, including the major task of making a new sack bollard. Further detailed work is needed, such as leather hinges for the traps.

Bins A new bin has been made, to feed the western stones. The grain and flour chutes are well under way. Soon we will need to carry out extensive varnishing of the stone furniture.

Other works are proceeding as necessary. The tower has received a fresh coat of tar and the next coat is planned after the winter. The main work-in dates for 1999 are (provisionally) May 22-31 and August 21-30.

For those into the latest technology, Wicken windmill now has a web site on the Internet. For aficionados, the web site can be accessed via the following Internet address:

<http://www.ziesler.demon.co.uk/wicken/wicken.htm>

This is very new, and is under continuing development. It contains a brief history of the mill, photographs, a map showing the mill's location, and provisional work-in days for 1999. It also lists other mill web sites as are known to us. Please let me know of any additional mill home pages: within reason we will add them. The intention is to raise public awareness and hopefully increase visitors to mills generally. (Dave Pearce, 14 Church Lane, Long Clawson, LE14 4ND (01664 822751); November 1998)

RAMSEY MILL ON MARKET

Ramsey post mill near Harwich is for sale. The asking price for the property, which includes a fine 6-bed house and 3 acres, is £340,000. Agents are Peter Andrews (01449 740080). (M.B.)

REPAIRS TO START AT PAKENHAM WINDMILL

Michael Bryant tells me that Thompsons will be starting on his mill soon. They will crane off the cap and sails to sort them out at ground level and hope to have it back together by May (I'll

believe that when I see it!). A half-set of shutters will be fitted, to reduce drag on the sails.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Work is in progress on a new slated roof on the roundhouse at Saxmundham, and by a remarkable coincidence the same contractor is also working on another roundhouse, at Battisford Tye (Combs).

Permission has been granted for an extension to the converted three-storey roundhouse at Honington, in the form of a single-storey concentric lean-to running half the way round.

The barn containing one of the last complete hurst-mounted engine mills, at Wilby Hall, has recently been listed Grade II.

The Grade II listed 1886 water tower on Southwold Common which was once surmounted by a Titt wind engine has been repaired and brought back into use by brewers Adnams, appropriately enough for the abstraction, purification and storage of water for brewing.

EVENTS

S.M.G. PUBLIC MEETING: 'THE MAN WHO BUILDS WINDMILLS'; SATURDAY FEBRUARY 20th at 7.30pm, at IPSWICH TOWN HALL

This year we welcome Peter Lewis as our main speaker, who will be talking about his work restoring Asterley tower mill in Shropshire from a derelict shell, a real labour of love in an area not known for its windmills. He will also be touching on his plans for a second mill on the site - a post mill with twin tailpole-mounted fantails (!) - and on other mills in the area. Peter is a very entertaining speaker, and it promises to be an enjoyable evening.

S.M.G. VISIT TO RAMSEY POST MILL: SUNDAY APRIL 11th, from 2.30pm

The mill at Ramsey, near Harwich, is one of only four surviving tall East Suffolk type post mills. After ceasing work in 1939 it stood derelict until repaired extensively by volunteers led by Chris Hullcoop and the then owner Michael Organ between 1974 and 1978. Little has been done since, but it is still in good order, and well worth seeing. It is up a long driveway, reached from the centre of the village.

While our visit should be possible, owing to the fact that the mill is for sale you are advised to check that the visit is on by phoning Mark Barnard on 01473 727853 during the preceding week.

NATIONAL MILLS WEEKEND: MAY 8th & 9th

This year the SPAB has decided to designate a whole weekend to mills rather than just the Sunday. Mills open include Herringfleet, Stanton, Thelnetham, both at Woodbridge, Drinkstone, Bardwell, Pakenham watermill, Museum of East Anglian Life, and possibly Saxtead, Letheringham, Framsdon, Thorpeness and Euston. Look out for the special S.M.G. poster!!