

SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

Newsletter

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Although it's not long since the last newsletter appeared, quite a lot seems to have happened. Our public meeting saw Peter Lewis give a thoroughly entertaining account of his work at Asterley in Shropshire, complete with overhead projector, slides and twin-screen videos. Most impressive. The Ramsey visit in April was a time to reflect - both on how well the mill has lasted with very little in the way of maintenance, and at how fast the years go by. Chris Hullcoop takes up the theme inside. National Mills Weekend was blessed with good weather, and we can report a healthy number of visitors to many mills, especially at Drinkstone. Several were working, including Thelnetham, Bardwell (by engine) and Herringfleet.

Assembling some slides recently for a talk to the Friends of Norfolk Windmills, I was reminded of the breadth of S.M.G.'s involvement in 'hands on' mill work over the years, from a day spent at Stansfield making safe fallen machinery, to major projects over several years at Drinkstone, Stanton and, of course, Thelnetham. It's a record most of the other local mills groups cannot match and one we should be proud of. What a pity our Norfolk Friends seem to be in decline, to the extent that even their Dutch trip scheduled for September has had to be cancelled due to lack of interest. I only hope they don't go the same way as the Cambridgeshire group.

S.M.G. and other mill events in the coming months are given below. More details as usual at the end.

S.M.G. Annual General Meeting	Sunday June 27th
S.M.G. visit to Cranfields, Ipswich	Wednesday July 21st
Work-in at Stanton post mill (1)	July 31st-August 8th
Work-in at Stanton post mill (2)	August 14th-22nd

Mark Barnard

PUTTING MILLS IN THE PICTURE (10) Peter Steggall

CHURCHYARD MILLS

'Churchyard Mills' - a peculiar title - but at least one reader will know instantly what it means. By chance I encountered Brian Flint, author of *Suffolk Windmills*, at a bicentenary exhibition in August 1998 of paintings by a Suffolk artist, Thomas Churchyard. In the exhibition hall at Abbey School behind St. Mary's Church, Woodbridge, Brian was talking to Robert Blake, the organiser of the exhibition and author of *The Search for Thomas Churchyard* (1997). We had a brief chat during which I admitted that I was hoping that the exhibition would enable me to

write another article in this series. I knew that Thomas Churchyard was a prolific painter of local scenes and I felt sure that some would have included windmills and watermills.

He painted an enormous number of pictures - many thousands according to Robert Blake - mostly after 1818. They included many delightful scenes in and around Woodbridge and Melton where Churchyard lived and worked as a solicitor. It has always been a source of wonder that he was able to combine the two activities, but on his death it was revealed that he had not made a fortune either as lawyer or artist. Indeed a public appeal was made for funds to support his large family. These facts are not particularly relevant to my quest for mill pictures, but throughout this series I have been willingly side-tracked into learning about the lives of various artists. Of them all, so far, Thomas Churchyard's has been the most interesting, and I can recommend Robert Blake's fascinating book, which is illustrated with well over a hundred reproductions of his paintings, about half of them in colour. At the exhibition there were over two hundred pictures, mostly watercolours and oils, but there were not as many mills as I expected. However there were enough to inspire me to go into print.

The first was a drawing in black ink of Dedham Mill, but being only 2"x3" it was too small to show any significant detail or to be recognisable as the subject of well-known pictures by Constable.

Next was 'Tricker's Mill', a watercolour close-up view of the five-storey red brick tower mill, with its fantail, and with shutters set for turning the four sails. Beyond and to the left was the church tower of St. Mary's, Woodbridge. That tower features in many of the artist's local landscapes painted from viewpoints on high ground to the west and north of the town, looking down to the distant estuary of the Deben. Some of those pictures, which I think are among his finest, include windmills. A tower mill, almost certainly Tricker's, appears in two exhibition pictures, both entitled 'Overlooking Woodbridge'. In one, reproduced below, there is also a white post mill which must have been in the area still known as 'Mill Hills' between Woodbridge School and Melton Grange. The Tide Mill and the Granary appear in a watercolour. The only other named mill in the exhibition was 'Windmill on Mousehold Heath' - Norwich - a small watercolour of a post mill on an open trestle on a dramatic hillside scene similar to that of 'The Windmill' (after John Crome) seen in Robert Blake's book, and probably the same mill.

There were a few unnamed mills including 'Windmill by a Harvest Field' and 'Suffolk Mill'. The latter oil painting was of a tower mill with canvas sails. Two windmills were seen in the far distance to the south in a picture of 'Nelson's Monument' at Great Yarmouth.

Robert Blake's book includes a few mill pictures which were not in the exhibition. Woodbridge Tide Mill is seen from Everson's Jetty, looking up the estuary, and in another picture from Kyson Bridge looking over the railway and the river. There are small reproductions of wide landscapes at Loddon and Walsingham in Norfolk, each with a tower mill in the distance. An



Overlooking Woodbridge from the Haugh Lane area showing
St. Mary's in the centre (oil, 6"x9")



Slaughden, Aldeburgh by Laura Churchyard (watercolour)

'anonymous' tower mill with fantail and common sails appears in a small oil painting.

Finally I have to mention pictures painted by two of Churchyard's talented daughters. 'Slaughden, Aldeburgh' by Laura is a fresh-looking detailed watercolour of buildings in what was then a small village separate from the town; on the extreme left is a white tower mill. 'From Bullard's Lane', attributed to Anna, and similar to her father's 'Overlooking Woodbridge', has St. Mary's Church tower in the centre, St. John's Church spire on the left, with Tricker's Mill between; a very pleasing, colourful and detailed picture.

What has happened to the above-named mills? Woodbridge Tide Mill was restored in the 1970's, but is no longer visible from the railway bridge because of the growth of trees on the railway bank. Dedham Mill, after the time of Constable and Churchyard, became encased in huge extensions which were converted in recent years into expensive flats. Tricker's Mill, off Theatre Street, Woodbridge, as recorded by Peter Dolman in his *Windmills in Suffolk* (1978), was threatened with demolition in the early 1970's, but local mill enthusiasts persuaded the District Council to retain it as a common room and guest bedroom in a new complex of accommodation for elderly people. It was completed in 1975, and the tower is still there in good condition, but no longer has its cap, fantail or sails. There are television and radio masts on the flat roof of the tower which now houses the Suffolk Heritage Housing Association 'Care and Listening Link', a 24-hour communications centre serving the Association's sheltered housing accommodation all over the county. The tower is entered through a modern but imaginative extension clad in black boarding.

Turning to Slaughden, I refer again to Peter Dolman's book. It was 'a small tower mill converted into a house since 1902. It has four patent sails and a fantail (all visible in Laura Churchyard's picture) and two pairs of stones, all of which have gone, the domed cap alone remaining'.

In Woodbridge, because of the growth of trees and building of houses, it is no longer possible to get the fine views 'Overlooking Woodbridge' from Haugh Lane and Bullard's Lane. That leaves the post mill in the Mill Hills area which, according to Brian Flint in his *Suffolk Windmills* (1979), had a remarkable concentration of four post mills and one tower mill, within a small area. They had all gone by the beginning of the twentieth century and I do not think there are any remains, but 'Mill Hills' still appears on maps, and there is a Mill Lane.

Concluding with the Norfolk mills - at Norwich, Loddon and Walsingham - I have gone no further than looking at recent Ordnance Survey maps, from which I am reasonably certain that those three have all disappeared, unless there are some vestigial remains on the ground.

I must record my sincere gratitude to Robert Blake for the great pleasure and interest which I, and many others, derived from the 1998 exhibition, and from reading his book on the life and work of Thomas Churchyard and his family.

POST MILL REMAINS Luke Bonwick

In the late 1950's the efforts of Norfolk County Council were being concentrated on the retention of certain windmills. Before the recent rebirth of post mills in the county, Tottenhill and Garboldisham mills were Norfolk's last survivors. Both required extensive repairs if not complete rebuilding, but were interesting examples and worthy of preservation. The Council decided, perhaps unwisely, to restore Tottenhill mill, but sadly when this proved impossible it was completely dismantled. The components, instead of being stored together for a possible rebuild, were disregarded and some parts lingered on site for a few years, eventually leaving the trestle to stand by itself.

The mill was interesting structurally as it had a gallery around the eaves and a tailpole fantackle, one of a select breed of Norfolk post mills with this Sussex feature. Others I know of include Booton, Happisburgh, Witton, Great Snoring, Greengrass' Mill at Great Yarmouth and Dersingham, which also had a gallery around the eaves. Tottenhill mill ceased work in 1929 on two sails but survived into the 1950's fairly intact. In this state it may have been restorable but before any work could commence a freak whirlwind damaged the mill in 1957 or 1958, causing two millstones to crash to the ground. In 1961, with the aid of a crane, the mill was dismembered. Even the roundhouse was demolished but for a few courses of stone. The exposed substructure was given a coat of paint and the mortise joints were, rather unwisely, jacketed in concrete. This has caused alarming deterioration of the timbers and the whole structure must surely collapse in the next five years if nothing is done to remedy this.



The trestle of Tottenhill mill (September 1998)

News of the remains of Rougham mill in Newsletter 71 led me to think about the fate of other post mills in the region. In all, post mills have fared rather badly, becoming almost extinct in Lincolnshire and Norfolk but for single examples. Suffolk, happily, still has seven preserved post mills, but in this case it has been due to the sometimes superhuman efforts made by enthusiasts since the 1940's.

Post mill remains, too, are always interesting, yielding particular clues as to the construction and character of a mill even if the main structure has disappeared. There is more intrinsic value in the ruins of a roundhouse and the foundations of a group of outbuildings than in a mill site obliterated by housing and commemorated by a single road name.

A complete post mill trestle is an imposing structure in itself and I think these should, if possible, be conserved where such remain. For strength and stability the design of a trestle cannot easily be equalled. Yet main posts have often been felled as they were considered dangerous - examples include Great Hormead in Hertfordshire, which I discovered last year lying forgotten in dense undergrowth, and Ringmer in Sussex (subsequently deemed of historical value by locals and rebuilt!). There are many old photographs showing the wreckage of overturned mills heaped around the upright trestle - surely a sound preserved trestle would not provide too many safety risks?

Luke Bonwick, our young membership secretary, has recently put together an excellent guide to his local windmill: Cromer Windmill - History & Guide. Copies are available at the mill or from Luke at 6, Lower Green, Tewin, Hertfordshire AL6 0JX, price £4.30 post paid. In March Luke became the first recipient of the Frank Gregory Award for Young Millers. Congratulations on both accounts, Luke!

VANISHED MILLS Peter Dolman

LING MILLS, WORTHAM

This would seem to be the oldest mill site in the parish (TM091796), being shown on Hodskinson's map of 1783. The mill, a post mill, was rebuilt about 1825, probably gaining its roundhouse. A magazine article in 1896 claimed the mill to be 'more than two centuries' old. In 1809 J. Robinson was advertising for an apprentice and in the census of 1851 James Robinson is recorded at the mill, aged 63, assisted by his sons Ray and Josiah. In 1852 the assignees of James Robinson sold the mill to John Fisher. The sale notice in May 1852 stated the mill had a 'spacious roundhouse, patent sails, wind tackle, 3 pairs of French stones, flour mills, jumper, and other requisite going gears'. In 1855 it was acquired by Benjamin Youngman (Fisher's son-in-law, I believe), who built a small steam mill soon afterwards, with two pairs of stones, later increased to four. In 1890 Ernest Youngman took over from his father, installing smooth rolls to work with the stones. In 1896 the decision was taken to convert fully to rolls, a 3-sack Tattersall plant being installed. At that time the windmill was still in use for

grinding the animal feed. By 1908 the windmill had lost its sails and appears to have been power driven, a covered belt drive and a walkway reaching across from the steam mill. The steam mill was always driven by a condensing steam engine, and was still there in the 1930's although I'm not sure whether it was working then



as the last directory entry is for 1916. Ernest Youngman attempted to retire in 1909, when the mill was auctioned, but at £1500 it did not reach its reserve and was withdrawn. He pulled the windmill down during the Great War as he did not like the government insisting on him adulterating the flour with other products and it is quite likely that the mills went out of use at this time. I don't know when the steam mill was pulled down; the engine house still stands alongside the mill house and smaller miller's cottage.

The windmill had double-shuttered patent sails of nine bays driving three pairs of stones, presumably two in the head and one in the tail. The buck was very large, being both wide and long. The roundhouse, in comparison, was unusually narrow, with a low pitched roof. Although the roundhouse had two floors, the crosstrees would have been at first floor level so the mill was not of exceptional height. As built it probably had a ladder-mounted fantail but after the steam mill was built close by the fly was mounted on the roof, on posts which raked back slightly. The drive was still taken to the ladder wheels however, this being achieved by a very long spindle supported on wooden props which projected from the mill. A universal joint (and also, presumably, a sliding joint) was incorporated to cope with the inevitable fluctuation of the wheels on the ground relative to the buck.

CORRESPONDENCE

WINDMILL GAZETTEER FOR ENGLAND

Niall Roberts of the Mills Research Group writes:

I was looking forward to reading what Peter Dolman would say in his review of the Windmill Gazetteer in the last newsletter because he was one of the thirty or more 'leading experts in each region' whose undoubted knowledge the Mills Research Group (MRG) sought to tap during the preparatory stages of the Gazetteer. I

was a little surprised by some of what he wrote, and I hope that other readers will not be deterred from looking at a copy of the Gazetteer to see if its usefulness for them is quite as limited as Peter believes.

I am an unrepentant 'mill spotter' (Peter's term) but my interest - and that of very many others like me - goes considerably beyond mere ticking mill names off a list. There is a wide range of reasons why people first become interested in mills, and of the directions in which their initial interest leads them. Some (like Peter) become very practical restorers and operators of mills. Some of a less practical bent (like me) are fascinated by the visibility and the deceptive simplicity of mill machinery. Others become absorbed by historical detail and write books and articles about mills surviving or long since disappeared. Some (like Peter) are able to combine these activities. Yet other enthusiasts are content to admire, photograph, sketch or paint the mills they see. The future of mill preservation depends on our success in generating and sustaining as wide as possible a range of interest and skills relevant to the protection of our common heritage of mills of all kinds. Mill spotters matter!

Although the Gazetteer was not conceived primarily as a means of generating an interest in mills, I certainly hope that this will be one of its effects, especially among 'Young Millers'. I hope they will compare the features recorded in the Gazetteer with what they find on site and let MRG know if there is a difference. This may be due to an error in the Gazetteer or (more likely) to a change for the better or for the worse in the condition of a mill. One aim of this publication is to serve as a convenient benchmark for recording changes in the condition of our surviving windmills.

Another aim of the Gazetteer is to make available in a convenient format a concise body of basic information on all windmill sites that still have significant visible remains, to serve as a starting point for a wide range of possible lines of mill research. I can understand that Peter would have preferred to see a publication that covered all sites whether or not there were still remains visible. At one stage in the preparation of this publication, historic sites with few or no visible remains were included, but these were omitted from the final volume because of differences of view about the authenticity of some such sites and because there is a lot of interest in knowing about what is or once was at sites that still have something worth looking at.

I am sorry if Peter thought that the coding system used for presenting data was 'extremely complicated' but at an early stage it was decided to provide no more than one line of information for each site and I do not see how the same amount of information could have been given otherwise than by some kind of abbreviation. (A methodological report due to be published by MRG as an Occasional Paper discusses some of the problems involved in devising the coding system used.) Further, information in coded form could be presented in a simple matrix (or table) so that visual scanning down the columns could easily select mills having characteristics of particular interest.

Peter Dolman responds as follows.

Niall implies that I was being derogatory in my use of the term 'Mill Spotter'. Not so. I count myself as one and as Niall knows I have a long history of searching out minor remains all over the country. If I have caused offence in the use of the term then I apologise, but still reckon it is appropriate for the small percentage of mill enthusiasts who scour the country looking for the mythical brick in a ploughed field that marks the last remains of so and so mill! My other views on the Gazetteer however were formulated over the long period of its gestation and I remain convinced that it sets out to do too much, and as a result is 'neither fish, nor fowl'.

RAMSEY REVISITED Chris Hullcoop

I admit to nervousness before our visit to Ramsey post mill on April 11th. A great deal of work went into that mill between 1974 and 1978 and it seems hard to believe we started work there over a quarter of a century ago. I took with me an album of photographs, drawings and reports which chronicled the work. Half a dozen or so people who worked on the mill then joined the visit and we could see in what condition they and the mill were in



today. One amusing photo showed a rather too clean and smart looking Brian Flint and Chris Armour standing in the doorway with myself thoroughly engrimed and in clothes that would shame a scarecrow! For a laugh we re-enacted this photo - not much change, well some perhaps!

The mill had fared better and we were keen to see the sails and roof. The storm hatch designed and made by Cliff Lovett lifted out as if fitted yesterday and I don't suppose it had been out for 20 years. The sails have survived remarkably well, as can be seen on the photograph. We opted to repair the old sails in place with just striking gear but no shutters. The stocks were getting rotten in the centres but were still mostly good so we fitted four new clamps in place of the old ones which had rotted. On one pair each

clamp is 12ins thick at the centre and nearly 40ft long. Clamps were stood off the stock with spacers and held by six encircling steel clamps. Thus there was no water trapping sandwich effect and the clamps are as good today as when fitted. The stocks and whips are much the same. New bars and hemlaths were fitted in pressure-treated timber but we did not attempt to paint the sails. Thus the last working sails (a rarity today) could easily survive for 100 years!

The buck roof was covered in hardboard followed by two layers of Ruberoid felt. Put on in 1974, the capsheet on the south side is just beginning to disintegrate. If a new cap sheet is applied in the next few years it will last another 26 years.

The windows in the buck were an interesting lesson in survival value. The first to be repaired has a cill that is too shallow, the next one has a lot steeper cill and the last three have very steep cills and despite no paint at all for a quarter century have survived well.

The greatest problem when planning repairs to a mill is the extent and standard of the work. Of paramount importance is ownership, be it trust, local authority or individual. While not an appropriate subject for a full written report, the condition of the ownership is just as important as that of the mill. This as we know is extremely variable; there are good and bad trusts and authorities, while individuals vary from total dedication to could not care less. No-one can see very far ahead and repairs to an old mill as far as the future is concerned are an act of faith. It's quite amusing looking at the old Ramsey reports with



Ramsey visit 11.4.99. Back: Chris Hullcoop, Brian Flint, Cliff Lovett, Des Codd, Peter Dolman. Front: Mark Barnard
(Photo by Luke Bonwick)

the benefit of hindsight. In my initial report to Essex County Council I described the work as a 'holding operation' and to quote the exact words 'See what the next 5-10 years will bring about in local interest, greater prosperity and therefore finance (EEC, Maplin?)'. Ho! Ho!

Looking at the repairs to the buck frame using RSJ's and a motley collection of timbers I'm not proud but given the limitations of time, finance and ownership it was all we could do. The RSJ's and all large timbers were donated, only weather-boards and small timbers were bought. The total cost was £1,671, a small sum even then. The finance and input of volunteer effort kept pace with the work we were able to do but never looked like increasing to take it further than a complete but static windmill. About half way through the project it attracted the attention of company directors Hervey Benham and Hamish Orr-Ewing. Both gave grants towards the work and visited the mill. They liked the idea of a working windmill and I spoke with them of the many factors to consider when planning restoration to working order. Whilst I had to ease them away from attempting working order at Ramsey I did tell them of several skilled and enthusiastic young men who were seeking a mill to restore to working order and I promised to keep them posted. The many requirements influencing restoration to working order were not present at Ramsey but they were subsequently at Thelnetnam tower mill, and with the promise of working order the two directors were happy to help.

Ramsey mill has survived well and is now for sale again with its fine house and land for about £350,000. It is interesting to note that agents Peter Andrews of Bildeston and Mayfair advertise it as 'Grade II* listed windmill with Period Country House'.

At the end of my report to the Essex County Council in 1974 I wrote 'Ramsey mill will have to wait, like Mr Micawber, in the hope that 'something will turn up''. Over a quarter of a century later it's still waiting!

NEWS

BEYTON STEAM MILL UNDER THREAT

The fine steam mill building overlooking the green at Beyton is the subject of an application for demolition and replacement by two houses. Although stripped of gear long ago, the buildings are very fine and largely complete. The first building, dated 1852, was built by John Hearn and when sold in 1860 had three pairs of French stones driven by a 5 h.p. engine, as well as a maltings and malt mill. It was bought by James Limmer, a miller from Bury, who installed as miller Edward Limmer. In 1868 it was sold to George Wicks and again in 1873 to John and Alfred Hearn. At this time it was largely as built but the engine had increased to 12 h.p. and there was an 'American Grist Mill' as well as the stones. In 1885 Alfred Hearn took over and he extended the building in 1888, recorded on another datestone. The mill was sold in 1901 to the Reverend F.E. Horne and was worked by Frederick Horne. It was sold to Mrs. M.A. Younger in 1924 and is

thought to have worked up to the war. During the war troops were billeted in it.

The mill buildings are four storeys high, of red brick with white brick ornamentation under a slated roof. They deserve better than demolition and S.M.G. has written in opposition to the planning application, suggesting a conversion instead. We understand that Mid Suffolk District Council has now served a Building Preservation Notice on the mill, hopefully to be confirmed by listing in due course. (P.D.)

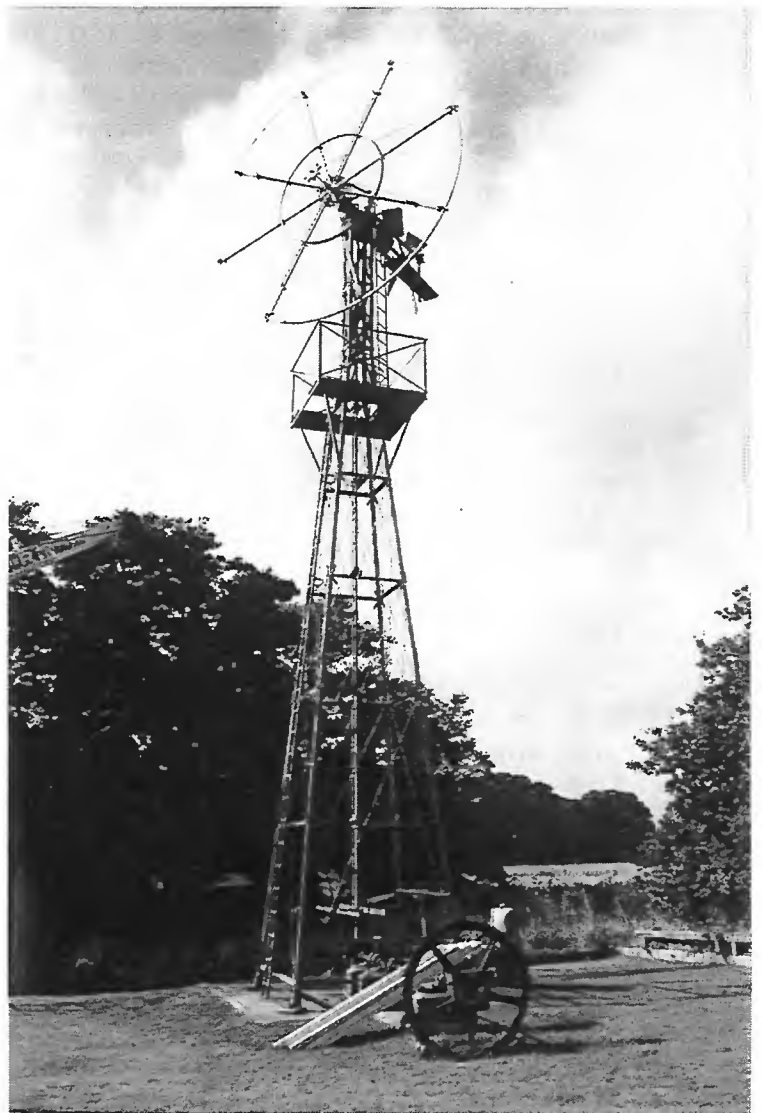
SUFFOLK WIND ENGINES RE-ERECTED

We were surprised and delighted to learn that the Titt 'Simplex' wind engine from Minsmere has now been rebuilt at Repps in the heart of the Norfolk Broads by enthusiast Bob Morse. It forms part of a small private collection of wind engines and dragline excavators, both types of machine with strong links to the surrounding marshland landscape.

The Minsmere Titt formerly stood on the site of a conventional drainage windmill at Grid Ref. TM475659, whose scoopwheel it drove. Dating from c.1924, it collapsed in 1979 and S.M.G. rescued the components the following Spring (see Newsletter 15). The tower is entirely new, and much of the engine is a very careful copy, although the main head casting and some gearwheels were re-used. The 16ft-diameter windwheel has 24 shutters, which have yet to be fitted.

A second Titt wind engine, from the Blackheath estate near Friston (TM415585), is currently being rebuilt, although the tall tower on which it was mounted is not being reconstructed.

Other wind engines in this remarkable group include a Newark from East Bridge, Suffolk (which has a fine partly original tower and renewed 18ft diameter windwheel); a 6ft diameter Climax; a copy



The Minsmere Titt as re-erected
(Photo by Gareth Hughes)

of an American wind engine with wooden blades to the windwheel, mounted on a tripod; and the latest arrival, a new 12ft diameter Southern Cross which Bob Morse imported from Australia. (M.B.)

DRINKSTONE MILLS & NATIONAL MILLS WEEKEND

This year Drinkstone Mills participated for the first time in S.P.A.B.'s national programme of mill open days. The deadline of 8th-9th May proved an excellent stimulus for a round of site clearance and tidying, most notably in the ex-billet hut granary adjoining the smock mill. This is now able to be given over to a display of small items associated with the operation of the mills by Daniel and Wilfred Clover, including weighing scales, grain and flour containers, and a splendid collection of corn sacks. A selection of these has been hung on the south wall of the granary, including examples from Baker of Lavenham, Suffolk Seed Stores, London & North Eastern Railway, D Clover, and D Clover and Son. It also provided space for the S.M.G. display panels. These had been especially prepared for us by Peter Dolman with extra photographs of the two mills at Drinkstone, together with the striking photo portrait of Daniel and Wilfred looking out of the doorway of the smock mill, reproduced in Brian Flint's book on Suffolk windmills. The display stand proved very popular with visitors, and all the copies of S.M.G.'s leaflet on it were taken by the end of the weekend. Hopefully the Group will enrol some new members as a result of this.

For safety reasons we decided to allow public access only in the roundhouse of the post mill, and the ground floor of the smock mill. We prepared labels explaining this to visitors, and asking them for donations towards the costs of making the mills safe for further public access. The engine shed was opened, and on Saturday was attended by Phil Pearson, an ex-marine Chief Engineer now chapel pastor and living in Woolpit, who is very carefully overhauling the 1929 Ruston oil engine and preparing it for use again. We are very fortunate to have his help, and his work on the engine generated a lot of interest with visitors.

As this was our first public mill opening we put some effort into publicity, sending press releases to local parish magazines, the Bury Free Press, East Anglian Daily Times, and Radio Suffolk. Every one of these followed our story up, the most impressive coverage being provided by a double page full colour spread in the EADT. As we started to see the results of our PR efforts we began to feel that we would need to revise our original estimates of 100 visitors per day. In the event, and with the additional attractions of cream teas (generously organised and provided by friends from Woolpit and Drinkstone), our traction engine in steam and the 1932 Riley (joined on the Sunday by a splendid 1928 Humber) parked in front of the mill cottage, we received over 600 visitors and raised over £1,000 for the mills restoration fund. On Sunday we hosted the congregation of All Saints, Drinkstone, who held their parish communion service in the smock mill granary - a very memorable 'first'. We look forward to welcoming them back for another service - hopefully by then the vicar, Paul Hocking, will have found a special blessing for mills!

We also used the event to launch a Friends organisation for

the mills, and details of this were provided on a leaflet containing a site map and outline history of the site we gave to each visitor. So far we have enrolled 20 individual and family members, a good number of which have indicated they would like to take part in future working days. We plan now to build on the success of the weekend, striving to increase local community involvement in the preservation of the mills and continuing to raise the profile of the site with the wider public. We feel that we are now well started on the way to helping ensure a secure future for the mills in the 21st century, and would like to thank all those who have helped us in this. (Alex & Rosy Hayward)

PROPOSALS FOR PAKENHAM WATERMILL

As a precursor to a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Suffolk Building Preservation Trust has made a planning application for extensive new visitor facilities at Pakenham watermill. It is proposed to replace the engine shed by a new two-storey extension containing the engine (which would remain in situ), an entrance hall, staircase, workshop/stores and first floor viewing gallery. This extension would wrap around the rear of the mill, utilising the existing first floor doorway to the fire escape stair. Within the mill, a new timber staircase is planned in the old mill office, as an aid to circulation of visitors around the building. Also proposed is a detached building to the south of the mill, with reception and lecture areas, a cafe and toilets. A new car park would be created on the opposite side of the road, just to the north of the mill house.

While supporting the principle of improved visitor facilities, S.M.G. has objected to the scale of these proposals. In particular we feel that the new extension is over-large and would effectively prevent the Blackstone oil engine from working again, while the new staircase destroys the mill office, a valuable part of the mill's unspoilt interior from its working days. At the time of writing the application has yet to be determined by St. Edmundsbury Borough Council. (M.B.)

CONSERVATION WORK AT SYLEHAM POST MILL

At the end of 1987 after the October storm had done its worst and all our efforts to save Syleham post mill either on site or as the basis of a rebuild had failed, we regarded it as a closed chapter and best forgotten. Our recent work to the listed roundhouses at Saxmundham and Thorndon reminded us that Syleham is undoubtedly the most important roundhouse in Suffolk as it contains original machinery in good order while outside there is the engine shed and oil engine ready to drive it.

The owner would like someone to lease the roundhouse at a peppercorn rent. This sounds a little unlikely but it could suit. A small caravan could be placed on the site and it would provide an interesting weekend or retirement retreat in peaceful country surroundings. The engine and the stones and machinery in the roundhouse are near to working order and flour could be made.

We looked at the roundhouse last year and found it in quite good order despite total neglect. Our first task was to clad with corrugated steel sheets the surviving bottom floor of the buck

which originally covered the 9ft diameter hole at the top of the roundhouse roof. This done we looked in detail at the roof. It has been built with plain tapered boards butted against each other with a cover strip over the join. The piers are brick, but the roundhouse walls are clay lump, rendered and tarred. Clay lump is a mixture of clay and straw, often used in Suffolk's farm buildings. It will last indefinitely if protected but once water gets onto it, deterioration is rapid.

Nearly half the wallplate had gone and the boards were supported by a few bricks placed on the clay lump. Due to erosion the clay lump walls gave only intermittent support to the wallplate. We decided to make two 12ft lengths of wallplate from $\frac{1}{2}$ " exterior grade plywood in four layers nailed and glued together. This can span over bad places in the wall which can be repaired later. 30 new tapered boards $1\frac{1}{4}$ " thick were ordered and Nick Bence-Jones kindly gave and delivered old boards recently removed from his roundhouse at Saxmundham. On a sunny Sunday in April we carefully removed the bad area of boarding aware that parts of the clay lump wall could fall out. The new plate was laid on top of the wall and we were soon nailing on the boards. Fortunately the 9ft diameter ring supporting the tops of the boards was sound although distorted and we were able to nail to it confidently. The Saxmundham boards were the right length for Syleham although from a larger roundhouse. It can't be often that boards from one roundhouse have been used to repair another!

We have nailed plywood over the outermost two feet of the remainder of the roof, where the board ends have decayed. After considering various materials for the roof covering, we have settled on 1.2mm thick sheet aluminium, while the walls will be clad in corrugated steel sheets. Once fitted, both roof and walls will be decorated with a special bituminous paint.



Fitting the new boards to the roundhouse roof at Syleham

Syleham mill is a relaxing spot to work, so why not lend a hand, so we can ensure the roundhouse is protected before next winter. If you are interested in helping, please contact Chris Hullcoop (01394 671462) or Mark Barnard (01473 727853). (C.H.)

EVENTS

S.M.G. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: EDUCATION ROOM, MUSEUM OF EAST ANGLIAN LIFE, STOWMARKET; SUNDAY JUNE 27th at 11am

Full details of the A.G.M. are given on the enclosed Agenda. All those at the meeting will enjoy free entry to the museum in the afternoon. The Education Room is part of the Primary School at the end of Danescourt Avenue, a turning off Finborough Road.

VISIT TO CRANFIELD'S MILL, IPSWICH: WEDNESDAY JULY 21st at 8pm

Cranfield's roller mill in Key Street, Ipswich, will be closing in the autumn of this year, so this is a last chance to look round this old-established complex of dockside buildings.

We will meet at 8pm prompt, in the Allied Mills car park (parking available) immediately to the north of St Mary at Quay church at the bottom of Foundation Street. We are grateful to the mill manager, Colin Wright, for agreeing to this evening visit.

WORK-INS AT STANTON MILL: JULY 31st-AUGUST 8th & AUGUST 14th-22nd

Subject to getting English Heritage grant approval, we will be working on the new stock and sails. I propose to make a new laminated stock, similar to the two we made at Theltenham in 1984. The new sails will be to a slightly different design, based on photographic and other surviving evidence and will feature wire frame shutters. There will be an opportunity for people to make shutters off-site, and 'kits' will be made up to enable this. 108 will be required in total and little woodwork will be needed in their construction; however, skill with a needle and thread will be! Please consider making a few shutters as a contribution to the mill; if you like you can mark your name on them for posterity!

If work on the new sails cannot go ahead this August, there is plenty else to occupy us. The left-hand stones are now cleaned up and ready to go back together. These will need new stone furniture (or possibly the old repaired) and a new spout, as well as setting up to work. The brakewheel is in need of further work and both roundhouse doors need repair or replacement. The remaining sails need preparing for dismantling in due course and also still require over 30 new or repaired shutters.

The facilities of the house can be used by helpers as usual, with some accommodation available in the house, or the caravan. Those wishing to pitch a tent or bring a caravan have plenty of room to do so. Several 'old hands' have already indicated they are coming so how about seeing some new faces? Any time given is welcome. Similarly, although DIY ability is useful it is not essential, as willingness to take part is the only real qualification needed.