

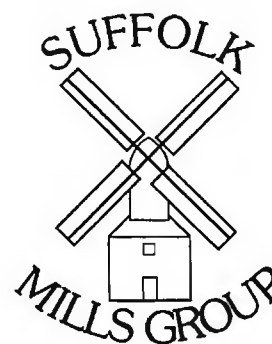
# SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

## Newsletter

No. 75

November 1999

Editor: MARK BARNARD  
41 Melbourne Road,  
Ipswich, Suffolk. IP4 5PP



The six months since the last issue has passed very quickly, but then the warmer months always seem to fly by, don't they? Apart from the A.G.M. and an enjoyable summer evening's visit to Cranfields roller mill in Ipswich, most of our efforts have been directed towards mill repairs. Further tasks have been completed during the work-ins at Stanton, while Chris Hullcoop and his small team have successfully conserved the roundhouse of Syleham post mill. Read all about it inside!

Although the computer used to produce our newsletter is now very dated, we are taking steps to avail ourselves of the latest means of mass communication and hope to have a permanent S.M.G. web site on the Internet before too long. Returning to the newsletter, I must make an urgent appeal for material as there's now virtually nothing in reserve. If it wasn't for the news items, this issue would be quite thin! PLEASE HELP IF YOU CAN - AND YOU CAN!!

Mill events taking us up to and beyond the big M are listed below. Full details appear at the end as usual.

SPAB Watermill Meeting, London	Saturday November 20th
S.M.G. Social Evening, Stanton	Saturday November 27th
Rex Wailes Memorial Lecture, London	Saturday December 4th
Herringfleet Mill 2000	Saturday January 1st
S.M.G. Public Meeting, Ipswich	Saturday February 19th

Mark Barnard

## VANISHED MILLS Peter Dolman

### TUDDENHAM ST. MARY WINDMILL

The earliest reference to a windmill would seem to be Royal Exchange insurance policy no.67421 of 9th April 1776 in which William Limmer insured the goods in trade at the watermill (which was presumably leased) and also 'his windmill timber built and boarded' for £100. William took another policy (no.86277, 16th April 1783) and in the same year Hodskinson's map of Suffolk marks the mill, at Grid Ref. TL729720. In 1788 Thomas Limmer insured the mill (Royal Exchange policy no.106482). The relatively low value and description imply that the mill at this time was a post mill, with an open substructure.

The *Bury & Norwich Post* of 4th November 1795 contained a notice from the Lackford Hundred Association for the Prosecution of Felons: 'Whereas, on Monday night, or Tuesday morning early, the 12th or 13th days of October last, a certain SAIL CLOTH,

belonging to William Limmer, of Tuddenham, in the said County of Suffolk, miller, was feloniously taken and carried away from the windmill of the said William Limmer...' (a reward of two guineas was offered for the apprehension of the villains). Another item in the same paper on 22nd July 1801 informed that 'Mr. Limmer, miller, of Tuddenham' had just died. A little later a creditors and debtors notice was published, the executors being John Limmer and John Branwhite.

In an agreement for a lease dated 30th June 1802 between John Limmer and John Turner, of Little Barton, farmer, a 'windmill together with the stones, cloths, dressing mill and all other mechanism' is mentioned, standing on a heath belonging to Rectory Farm, Little Barton.

The first reference to the smock mill is contained in an auction notice in the *Bury & Norwich Post* of 18th August 1802. 'A new-erected SMOCK WINDMILL, in complete repair, with the gears and appurtenances...situated in the parish of Barton Mills, near Tuddenham, late in the occupation of the said John Limmer' was for sale by auction on 21st August, along with Limmer's household goods. It is quite likely that Limmer had overstretched himself financially by the building of the new mill and was forced into selling up by creditors. An assignment of a lease from Sir Charles Davers Bt. to Jeffery Dobito (Gent., of Woodditton) dated 1st December 1802 also mentions a 'Smock Windmill'. The actual building date for the new mill is not clear, as the earlier references do not specify the type of mill. On balance, however, I think 1802 is most likely.

The watermill seems to have been in the hands of Thomas Steel by 1801; perhaps John Limmer had been unable to take over the lease held by Thomas Limmer and concentrated his trade on the windmill. By 1808 Thomas Steel was running the windmill; he may well have taken it after the sale in 1802. The windmill and watermill continued their close association until the late 19th century. References to the mill being in the parish of Little Barton (or Barton Mills) are something of a mystery, as the mill site was clearly in Tuddenham; perhaps the parish boundary was not so certain in earlier times, and as stated above, the heath did belong to Barton. There was a windmill at Barton Mills, on the same road as Tuddenham mill, about a mile to the north. It was a post mill, however, so the references to a smock mill can only be to Tuddenham mill.

Thomas Steel died in 1838 and was succeeded by another Thomas. He is named as owner and occupier of 'windmill' in the Tithe Apportionment of 1839. White's directory of 1844 lists Thomas Steel as miller, and refers to his 'large steam and water corn mill' (but not the windmill!) and he is also listed in directories of 1847, 1853 and 1858. Four other millers were employed by Steel in the three mills (water, wind and steam-powered). A post preserved in the watermill has some interesting graffiti: 'Mr. Clark came to Mr. Steel's engine 10 Dec 1855. Next to windmill on April 20th' and 'Charles Deeks came to Mr. Steel's Windmill 5 July 1858. To steam January 3 1859'. A problem peculiar to windmills was also recorded: 'Windmill sail fell off March 16th 1859'.

Thomas Steel offered his estate for auction on 30th May 1866, on his retirement from business. It would seem to have been bought by the Bristol Estate, who had owned the watermill in earlier times. As well as the water and steam mill, with five pairs of stones, there was 'Not far distant...a well-placed Tower Mill, with Patent Sails driving Three pairs of Stones, close to which is a substantial White Brick and Slated Granary and Store House'. From this it seems that the mill had been updated by the addition of self-regulating patent sails, perhaps after the mishap noted in 1859.

Isaac Newton King is given as miller in 1869, 1874 and 1875. The 1871 census records two journeyman millers only. In 1879 John Robert Hammond & Son were in possession. The windmill is recorded on the 1881 6-inch O.S. map as still in use; however another piece of graffiti in the watermill records 'Very strong wind Friday October 14th 1881. Cap blown off windmill'. This is confirmed by a note in *The Miller* of November 7th 1881 which records 'At Tuddenham, Norfolk (sic), during a gale on Friday October 14th 1881, Mr. Hammond's Wind Mill had the top lifted completely off by the wind and carried a short distance, where it fell upright'.

Perhaps the mill was not adequately insured, or perhaps its being 'old-fashioned' and somewhat distant from the watermill, led to it being abandoned. An advertisement in *The Miller* on February 6th 1882 offered purchasers the leftover bits and pieces, which give us a very good picture of the mill's equipment. 'For sale, a Windshaft, 10ft 10ins long from out end of neck to end of tail, with brass, striking rod, etc. Break Wheel 7ft 4ins high and 3ft Waller, Spur Wheel 7ft over; Three stone nuts, two stone spindles, with brasses etc; Upright Shaft 18ft long, in two lengths, with clutch, step brass etc.; lot of sail irons and other effects belonging to a Windmill. For further particulars enquire of J.R. Hammond, miller, Tuddenham, near Mildenhall, Suffolk.'

Two photographs of the 1890's show the ruined mill, without a cap, and although a flat roof is covering the tower, the windows and doors are in disrepair. Although still marked on the 1901 6-inch O.S. map as 'Old Windmill', it is likely to have been pulled down in the early part of the century. When mill enthusiast Harry Meyer called at the site in



August 1938, all that remained was part of the brick base, no more than a couple of feet high. These remains were still visible in 1950 but by 1975 they had been dug out and dumped nearby, where the shape of the octagonal base could be made out in the chunks of masonry. By the early 1990's all trace had been removed of the mill.

From the descriptions above and the two photographs, Tuddenham mill would appear to have been an unremarkable structure. The tower tapered from about 20ft to 10ft at the curb, was octagonal in plan, had two timber floors and a single-storey brick base, the walls of which were almost vertical. It was fairly short; perhaps 7ft 6ins high to the top of the base and 27ft to the curb. The cap is missing in the photographs, but from the nature of the various mishaps and the sale notices, would appear to have been hand-winded, probably by tailpole. It may well have resembled Freckenham mill, and could conceivably have had the same pedigree, i.e. been a converted fen drainage mill. The weatherboards are dark, but it is not clear whether this is merely dirty white paint or faded tar. The base was tarred. Four windows lit the first floor and two the second floor, immediately under the curb. The machinery would seem to have been all of wooden construction, for an iron windshaft would have been worthy of mention. The millstones were not offered for sale; the watermill no doubt found a home for them.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Brian Flint of Oakdene, School Lane, Ufford IP13 6DX writes:

*I read Peter Steggall's Putting Mills in the Picture (10) in Newsletter No.74 with interest and remember well our conversation during the Thomas Churchyard exhibition last August.*

*Peter mentions all the pictures featuring wind and watermills shown in the exhibition as well as a few which appear in Robert Blake's book. However he may be unaware that another exhibition and sale of Churchyard's work took place in September 1998 at the Woodbridge Gallery on Market Hill. Apparently many of the 83 pictures on view came from a single, private collection and had never been exhibited before.*

*I neglected to make notes when viewing but have a brief catalogue and from it have extracted the following list of pictures which include mills.*

- 1. A Sandy Track Through Harvest Fields With a Distant Church and Windmills (watercolour)*
- 2. A Windmill Seen Across Harvest Fields (watercolour) This is illustrated in the catalogue and shows what looks like a post mill with 4 sails but rather indistinct.*
- 3. A Windmill at Melton (watercolour)*
- 4. A Vessel Moored at Woodbridge Jetty with the Tide Mill beyond (pencil with white heightening on card)*
- 5. A Windmill By a Pool at Butley (w.c.)*
- 6. Windmills at Woodbridge (w.c.)*
- 7. Meadows Near Ipswich, with a Windmill and Stream (w.c.) Illustrated - again the windmill very small.*

8. *A Woodman's Cart, with a Distant Windmill (w.c. and black chalk)*
9. *A Windmill Beside a Track (w.c.)*
10. *Street Scene, with a Distant Windmill, Probably at Woodbridge (w.c.)*

When I last looked in the gallery several of the paintings were still hanging, unsold. I believe one or other of our members saw the exhibition and may have made descriptive notes of the above entries.

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Ed Goatcher  
of 2, Hoestock  
Road, Sawbridge-  
worth CM21 0DY  
writes:

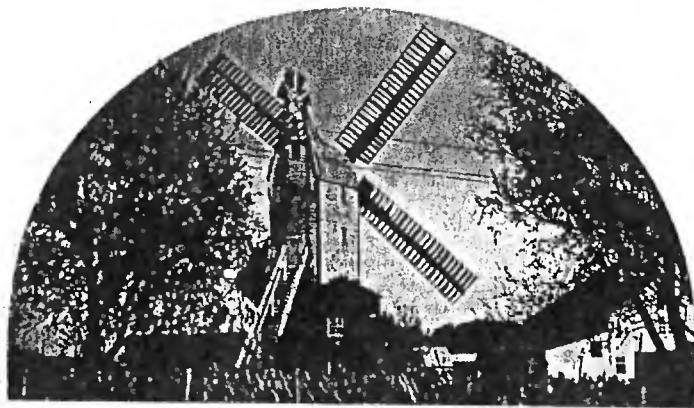
*Chris Hullcoop's reminiscences about Ramsey Mill in the last newsletter reminded my son of an advertisement he had seen in an old and respected quarterly. The enclosed copy is from the 1939 April-May-June issue of The Countryman. It seems an apt follow-on to Chris' article.*

*The famous firm of health food manufacturers has to be, of course, biscuit manufacturer R.M. Scott of Ipswich.*

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BUILDING

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## Ramsey Mill, Essex

This old East Anglian mill has recently been purchased by a famous firm of health food manufacturers for the purpose of grinding special flour. It has thus avoided demolition, a fate which unfortunately has overtaken many such famous landmarks. The new owners have installed electricity and the old mill is now equipped with

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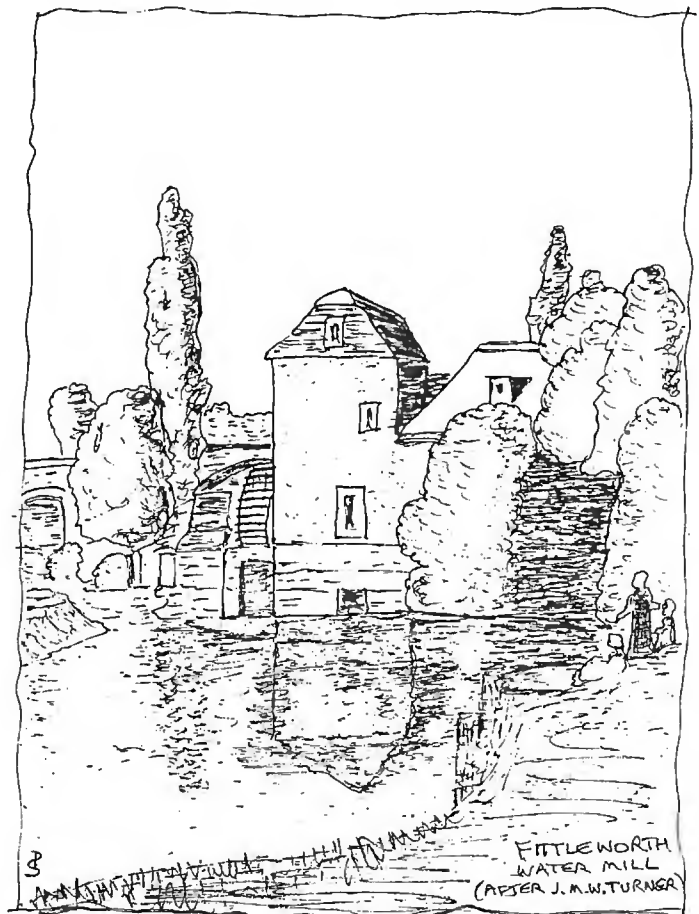
## PUTTING MILLS IN THE PICTURE (11) Peter Steggall

### TURNER AT FITTLEWORTH

In February 1999 (Newsletter 73) I wrote about mills in West Sussex drawn and painted by John Constable. My illustrations included two of his pictures of Fittleworth watermill where, by a remarkable and pleasing coincidence, during a holiday in Sussex, I met the man who was then, in May 1998, purchasing the mill. We spoke then, and corresponded later, about the fact that the mill had been the subject of pictures by Constable and Turner. I was able to send Mr Charles Fowkes (who moved into the mill in June 1998) photocopies of the two Constables. Now he has sent me an excellent colour print (9" x 6") of Turner's picture. It is quite delicately coloured in shades of pale blue, various greens and white. Unfortunately we cannot reproduce the picture here in colour, and a photocopy in black and white would not be clear enough. So I have made a tracing (now reduced in size) in which I have tried to show the main features.

Although Turner painted the mill from a different angle to that in Constable's watercolour, it is still seen from the east, and we can see the waterwheel on the left much more clearly than in the Constable. On the right of Turner's picture are three figures of what look like girls - one standing, two sitting on the bank - looking towards the mill. Beyond and to the left of the mill are two arches which look like bridges over the river and the mill-stream upstream of the mill. I asked Mr Fowkes if he could tell me anything about the arches. He replied 'The bridges in the Turner watercolour are something of a mystery. No such structures now exist nor is there any trace of them in or around the river. Turner of course is known to have given himself considerable artistic licence on occasions in order to achieve the effect he wanted! I have to say that the windows in the drawing do not seem to conform with the present structure either, although - of course - these things can change over the years'.

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## A.G.M. REPORT

The 1999 Annual General Meeting was held at the Museum of East Anglian Life, Stowmarket on Sunday 27th June. 19 members and friends were present. Apologies were received from Mark Barnard, Luke Bonwick, Jack Clover, Brian Flint, Martin Hanson, Rosy and Alex Hayward, Sue Hiddleston, Alan Loasby, Don Porter, Bob Sharpe, Bob Starling and Chris Wilson.

Chairman Chris Hullcoop welcomed everyone to the meeting. The minutes of last year's A.G.M. were read and accepted as a true record (proposed Chris Armour; seconded Penny Berry). It was explained that Luke Bonwick is now the membership secretary, leaving Peter Dolman to deal with general enquiries. Peter confirmed that he was satisfied with this arrangement. Luke has just completed his A-levels and will take a year out. He hopes to start university in autumn 2000 and will therefore be available to help the Group for another year.

The Treasurer's report was circulated by Des Codd. The balances were healthy. Income from subscriptions was up on 1997-8 despite a slightly lower number of members. Donations were slightly down. Insurance costs remain the same. It was not felt necessary to increase subscription rates. Some of the collection in memory of Richard Duke had been given to Stanton mill. Last year Peter Dolman asked for the balance, to buy a Tirfor cable for lowering the sails, and this equipment is available for use by other mill enthusiasts. A very generous donation of £1000 has been received from a member of the Clover family and this will appear in next year's accounts. This was by way of thanks for the work done by Chris Hullcoop at Drinkstone. When repairs commence at Drinkstone, the money will be available as a grant for the project. A £200 grant is still to be paid by St. Edmundsbury Borough Council for work at Great Whelnetham mill. The Group will receive a 50% County Council grant towards the cost of materials used at Syleham mill. Chris Hullcoop said Nick Bence-Jones had given the Group £100 because of helpful advice offered to him on the roundhouse at Saxmundham. The accounts were accepted as a true record (proposed Malvern Tipping, seconded Chris Armour).

In the absence of Mark Barnard, a written Editor's report was read out. Last year there were only two newsletters, and this year there have been four, thus maintaining the average of three which is our aim. Regular contributors such as Peter Steggall and Peter Dolman were thanked; material from the wider membership would be welcomed. Production and format remain unchanged. Mark was prepared to continue as Editor for the coming year. Roy Berry said the importance of the newsletter in keeping the wider membership in touch must not be overlooked. Chris Hullcoop expressed his thanks to Mark. The Editor's report was accepted (proposed Cliff Lovett, seconded Des Codd).

The Secretary's report was read by Peter Dolman. Membership stood at 167, plus two junior members. We send newsletters to 10 other groups and send two complimentary copies. This is a slight drop on last year. During the year Peter had several enquiries asking for details of mills; often they come from relatives of past millers. He also watches for planning applications in the

local paper on behalf of the Group. A detailed report was submitted on Campsey Ashe watermill, where much had been destroyed. Comments were also made on applications affecting Pakenham watermill (since withdrawn), Beyton steam mill (where demolition has been averted) and Kersey watermill. Bob Malster questioned whether anything is being done to prevent a repetition of the Campsey Ashe situation. Peter Dolman said local authorities will often only find out about such things by chance. The owner of Campsey Ashe mill does not let people in and the work only came to light after an architect became involved. Chris Hullcoop said such things are best left to the professionals and S.M.G. should not comment in the Press. If the owner does not co-operate, the local authority will take action. Peter was thanked for his work over such a long period and his report was accepted (proposed Bob Malster, seconded Des Codd).

All the officers were prepared to serve for another year. Roy and Penny Berry had a major commitment to Essex mills and felt the time had come when they should bow out to make room for someone else. Peter Dolman nominated Gareth Hughes (proposed Roy Berry, seconded Penny Berry). Bob Malster also agreed to join the committee (proposed Malvern Tipping, seconded Cliff Lovett).

Under Any Other Business, Steven Binks said a S.M.G. web site would encourage younger members. Peter Dolman admitted this was a good idea, but cost was a concern and he felt it was best to wait and see what happens in this developing field. Dave Pearce has his own web page and Peter said he is also hoping to get one set up. Mr. Gilbey asked for more publicity for National Mills Day. He was told the Group does its best with the time and money available, and that the key was to get more members involved. This was something the committee would discuss.

The meeting concluded with slides illustrating the Group's activities over the last year. In the afternoon members were able to take advantage of free admission to the museum.

## **MILL NEWS**

### STANTON MILL UP-DATE

After a great deal of effort the project at last has the backing of English Heritage, who have both offered a grant towards materials costs and recommended the Department of Culture, Media and Sport to grant scheduled monument consent (so we are legally allowed to restore the mill). This was only achieved after a lot of lobbying and I must thank those friends and colleagues in the mill preservation movement that contributed to this effort. A top-up grant has also been offered by St. Edmundsbury Borough Council, making a total grant of 50% towards the cost of materials. The whole protracted episode has led me to question whether to even continue with the project and has definitely left a bitter taste. I do however have a soft spot for Suffolk post mills and will persevere, so long as I can still count on the support of S.M.G. members.

The permissions and grant offers came too late to allow work to start on the new sails so the August work-ins were confined to



various smaller, but equally important jobs. The handrails to the steps needed to be finished off; originally only the left hand side had a rail but in deference to safety I have fitted a matching one on the right. The north roundhouse door was in a terrible state, but still retained the original frame, in need of heavy repair. The bottom foot or so of each jamb was cut back and new ends fitted. To present a good face the original was cut back for an inch or so and a new piece of oak fixed on to the full length of each jamb, replicating the original beaded edge. The head, although bowed, was still good enough for another 180 years, so remains. Inside, the rebates were formed by battens so new ones were provided or spliced in as required. The original hinge pins were still in place so these were cleaned and straightened for re-use.

The original stable doors had been replaced by a single door from elsewhere, with a board added crudely to fill the gap where it did not fit. This was in a horrible state and allowed vermin free access. A new stable door has therefore been constructed, using the original strap hinges plus two matching second hand ones (which were lying around and could have been the missing originals).

The plaster and brickwork around the door has been made good using genuine slaked lime mortar (lovely stuff to use) and it now looks very much better. Since the work-ins I have repaired the south door, which is a c.1941 replacement but should be good for quite a few more years if looked after. It had dropped on its hinges so these have been re-set and it now opens, and locks, better than it has for probably 30 years. I am hopeful that the repaired doors will keep the furry beasties out as it has been impossible to store any flour or grain in the roundhouse.



The new roundhouse door being made

Another job waiting to be finished was the bedstone curb to the left pair of stones and this has now been completed. It was a difficult and precise piece of work and the finished result looks splendid. The side of the sidegirt forms part of the tun so this has been smoothed off a little and sealed with varnish, as has the curb. This has been done in the interests of hygiene, as I intend to make flour, although some purists prefer not to see varnish, as they sometimes tell me!

The tun was in a dreadful state, having been thrown out previously, and was broken as well as suffering from woodworm and rodent damage. The sides have been taken apart, cleaned and re-fixed, new corner blocks being provided to the joints. The inside will be lined with a board of some sort and the outside filled and sealed. The edges have been cut back and new lippings applied. In doing this I hope to appease both the environmental health and conservation factions, by repairing the old tun. Much work still remains to be done, however.

I had been aware that the mill rolled about a lot in the wind due to the wood wears being slack, and that the pintle was very worn, making it difficult to accurately level the bedstone. The top of the post also had a piece broken off. The top of the post was surveyed and drawn up at full size, to determine how round it was, and to find how worn the pintle was. The post turned out to be 19 inches diameter, but wandered off the true circle by up to 1/4 inch. Surprisingly, the pintle was 13 inches in diameter so the whole weight is being taken on just three inches around the pintle, part of which was missing. The pintle was also nowhere near being concentric, or circular, so a 'best fit' was arrived at. We coaxed the mill into this position and then fitted a collar underneath the crowntree to take the job of centring the buck away from the pintle. A patch was made to bring the post up to its full size and the mill can now turn with virtually no float. The position of the buck was checked at the steady bearing and was found to be leaning over to the right. The excessive slack in the woodwears was therefore all taken up on one side, to partly correct this. As the mill needs to be trimmed tailsick, to allow the sails to clear the roundhouse, the fore and aft woodwears were similarly adjusted. The trimmers between the sheers were loose so new wedges were made for these. The last job here was to tidy up the floor around the post, to make loose covers that would come out in any position (unlike the old ones). Ultimately I want to make replicas of the original loose covers



The new collar under the crowntree and patch on the post

but find that I don't have any pictures of the post at floor level to base them on. Do any members have a photograph of the mill with its old spout floor boarding in place that might reveal this detail?

Meanwhile, work continued on the sail shutters and now only ten remain to be renewed. To avoid delay in taking the sails down when this becomes necessary in a couple of years or so, all the bolts were freed off or taken out and replaced. The bolts holding each sail on, seven in number, were only made of half-inch threaded rod, unprotected, and had almost all rusted solid in the wood. We were wondering how to get them out when Chris Wilson suggested a hollow drill, to drill the wood out around each bolt. Such tools are no doubt available, but in the absence of one a brilliant bit of improvising was done by the Chris's Hullcoop and Wilson, using one leg of a stacking chair fixed on an improvised mandrel. When driven by a powerful drill quite rapid progress could be made and all the bolts were out within a few days, to be replaced by temporary bolts put in with plenty of grease.

The other preparation work done was the erection of a scaffold platform to the left side of the buck, to enable work on the roof to be done in relative safety, while still allowing the mill to turn to wind.

Since the work-ins, apart from the door repairs being completed, I have not had much opportunity to work on the mill. I made a case for the proof staff in the mill, and gave this a good clean up. It is badly pitted with rust but seems pretty accurate



Chris Hullcoop with the hollow drill made from a chairleg



Drilling out the sailbolts



Setting up the scaffold for future work on the roof

and works well. One day I will have to have it skimmed on a milling machine but the quote I had for this from a precision engineer has rather scared me off for the time being! Having got the proof staff, I used it to check the paint staffs and have subsequently made a start on dressing the stones.

Work will continue on the mill during the winter and Spring. A 'mini work-in' is to take place on 4th-5th December, when work will continue on the setting up of the stones. Next year's main work-ins will take place on 27th May - 4th June and 5th-13th August. Hopefully the timber for the sails will be ready for use by then. Any help at these (particularly the December one) will be gratefully received. Finally, I must thank all those that have helped this year: Chris Wilson, Chris Hullcoop, Peter Filby, Alan Wallis, Luke Bonwick, Martin Hanson, Sue

Hiddlestone, Chas Dolman, Richard Morgan, Brian Flint, Des Codd, Stephen King, Jack Clover, Alex and Rosy Hayward, and last but not least my wife Melanie and mum Betty (who kept us fed and watered) and the two young millers, Matthew and Gregory, who are beginning to make a useful contribution at the tender ages of nine and seven! Now that the project has the full blessing of English Heritage, I hope that the pace will hot up from next summer and hope to attract more helpers. Together we can put this fine 18th century mill back into good shape to face the new century. (Peter Dolman)

#### SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP ON THE INTERNET

We now have a temporary (but permanent) web site, as part of Mark Berry's excellent 'Just Windmills' site. At present it is limited to a copy of our membership leaflet but this does fully inform anyone encountering it of our aims and objectives, and gives details of how to join. To view it, and masses of other related information, go to:

<http://www.geocities.com/Yosemite/1001/smg.htm>

(Note this is case-sensitive, so type exactly as printed). Peter Dolman is developing web sites for Stanton and Thelnetham mills and will also set one up for S.M.G. in due course. Peter can be contacted by e-mail at: [stantonwindmill@beeb.net](mailto:stantonwindmill@beeb.net) so if you find anything suitable for inclusion, let him know!

### WORK STARTS AT BARDWELL

Thursday September 9th saw the start of the first stage of repairs to Bardwell tower mill, with the craning off of the cap roof, windshaft and brakewheel, and finally the cap frame (photo right). The cap and fly frame have been taken to millwright Richard Seago's premises in Norfolk, where much of the repair work will be carried out. This follows nearly two years of fund-raising by the local community, which have helped to raise funds for the £70,000 project.

On the Heritage Open Days in early September visitors were able to support the appeal by buying freshly baked bread from the mill bakery. A special beer has even been brewed for the mill by Old Chimneys Brewery of Market Weston and is available locally.



### EXPLORING UNDER WATERMILLS

Peter Dolman has recently had the opportunity to investigate the watercourses under two mills on the river Stour. Flatford Mill at East Bergholt is the subject of intensive research by local resident Ian St. John and Peter has become involved in attempts to find out what the original machinery layout was. Ian has found much interesting evidence for the mill's previous layout by studying numerous sketches and paintings by Constable. In all of these the water seems only to issue from one of the two tailrace arches. The mill is said to have had three waterwheels, and only had three pairs of stones as late as 1845. The two arches suggest the site of two wheels but the third is not immediately obvious. However, with the water issuing from only one, does this imply an intermediate stage with one internal wheel driving three pairs of stones? The mill finished with one huge iron wheel mounted on the side, discharging into the millpool by the lock and Peter believes that the earlier third wheel was in this position.

Having borrowed some chest waders, Peter and Ian went up the two culverts from the old tailrace (the one facing Willy Lott's House). That nearest the mill house had been converted into a concrete channel allowing water into the tailrace to prevent stagnation. The sides had been extensively rebuilt and altered but it was possible to see where the sluice had been and there was some old lime build-up on the brickwork, where this remained. The channel is 38ins wide. The other channel still retains evidence of bearing blocks and the sluice position is clearly visible. There are rubbing marks on the wall from the wheel and a



The wheel culvert under Flatford Mill



The waterwheel position at Nayland mill

much heavier build-up of lime, which suggests that this wheel did indeed run for longer than the other internal one. This channel is also 37-38ins wide. From the rub marks and the sluice position the wheel would have been about 12ft overall diameter, with floats about 16ins deep by about 36ins wide. Would a wheel of this size have enough power to drive three pairs of stones when undershot from about four feet head at most (albeit with plentiful water)? I doubt it, personally. Your views on this would be welcomed!

This was a most unpleasant experience, as the culverts were about 40 feet long, with three feet of silt and water and only about four feet headroom! Research continues and eventually a very detailed analysis of the mill should be forthcoming.

The other mill to be explored was at Nayland, where S.M.G. member Nigel Warren-Thomas is refurbishing the building, which has been rather shabby for many years. It was formerly a shop and before this had a variety of uses. The mill was demolished in the 1920's and subsequently a turbine was used to generate electricity for the village. When Nigel bought the property he did not know it had been a watermill, and was surprised to find the river still flowing underneath it! Peter went to have a look and returned with the waders for a closer inspection. The mill was probably the largest in the county, having six floors and extending for some 140 feet along Fen Lane, with two steam engines, a turbine and waterwheel providing motive power. From inside it was possible to see that the wheel position was still intact, to the extent of having boards in the sluice guides. This wheel was 7ft 3ins wide by 20ft diameter, with 2ft deep buckets, working with a 10ft head. Even now, with lowered water levels, there is about 7ft clear head available. The tailrace culvert, extending the full length of the building (i.e. 140 feet) is beautifully constructed of brick, with a brick paved invert.

The turbine position is more problematic, as it has been reconstructed in mass concrete and when converted to other uses, was capped off with concrete. The original turbine was a 'Jonval' of 30 h.p., but it is not clear if this was replaced when the power station was set up. The tailrace is of similar size to the other, but has been roughly deepened to allow the tailwater to escape better. After a very unpleasant journey through thick silt and deep water in almost total darkness, a solid concrete wall was encountered. Water was gurgling through a pipe underwater so there is still a live supply. Whether or not the turbine is still in situ remains a mystery for now. Nigel is hoping to get a hole drilled through the concrete to investigate. He is impressed by the power available at the site and is looking into the possibility of setting up a turbine to generate electricity, and to perhaps reinstate the waterwheel. Both options would involve much expenditure however. (P.D.)

#### THELNETHAM FLOUR WINS AWARD - AGAIN

Judged 'best flour' in the 1997 Organic Food Awards, Thelnetham mill's organic wholemeal has once again won in 1999. In addition, the organic rye flour was 'highly commended'. (P.D.)

## SYLEHAM SUSTAINED

Work has continued at Syleham post mill through the summer and it has responded very well to the treatment. Once the woodwork repair to the roof was complete (see report in last newsletter) we started to fit the aluminium cladding. Each 8ft x 4ft x 1.2mm sheet was cut diagonally to give two tapered roof sheets. These were fitted using aluminium nails at three-inch intervals along the radial edges and where sheets overlap a trowelling mastic was used as a sealant. Because the sheets are nailed only along their radial edges, on a hot day they are free to expand without pulling on the nails. The 9ft diameter hole at the top once covered by the buck is now protected with corrugated steel sheets to supplement the protection given by the surviving lower floor of the buck, now covered in similar sheets.

Like the roof, we had to consider for some time before deciding how to protect the clay lump roundhouse walls. It would be possible to repair the clay lump and replaster, but once done it would need very regular maintenance which is unlikely to be available. We needed to make a very long-lasting repair quickly, easily and cheaply, and like the aluminium on the roof leave something that is virtually maintenance free. Thus we decided to use galvanised corrugated steel sheets with their lower ends set some two feet above ground on the projecting flint plinth and their upper ends tucked up under the eaves. It is not possible to nail to the clay lump and bolting through would be difficult, so we have held the sheets with wires stretched from doorpost to doorpost. No ordinary wire this but multistrand stainless steel rigging wire from large yachts. For insurance purposes this has



Syleham mill (October 1999)



to be replaced every ten years and Mike Dykes who works at Woolverstone marina has kindly given us some of the old wires which for our job are perfect, massively strong and probably immortal! Chris Armour made us some galvanised spikes to supplement the fixing wires at the bottom of the sheets by the plinth. Fitting the sheets was tricky as all between the two doors (i.e. half way around) had to be in place and held by props before the wires could be fitted. Once completed all the metal on the roof and walls was coated with a high quality thick bitumastic paint. I recall Rex Wailes saying many years ago 'The best way to preserve metal is bitumastic paint, put it on hot and you will have no further trouble'. While it was not necessary to heat it, a warm day is required and it certainly can't be used in the winter!

Corrugated steel is a material well suited to working buildings. In a traditional agricultural scene or among groups of boat or fishing associated buildings it has, like a barbed wire fence or thorn hedge, a touch of harshness that blends so well. Contrast this with the fashion to make pretty or gentrify buildings and their surroundings, particularly house-converted barns, almost all of which have lost their character and dignity. I recall nearly 40 years ago Norman Scarfe told me he was answering questions after a talk with slides he had given on Woodbridge. A sophisticated member of the audience praised the colour, patina and chroma of the old buildings, particularly the tide mill, and enquired earnestly as to what the lovely red ochre coloured material was. With all honesty Norman replied 'Rusty corrugated steel!'. (C.H.)

#### WORK UNDER WAY AT PAKENHAM WINDMILL

Thompsons, the Lincolnshire millwrights, have at long last begun work on Pakenham windmill (pictured right).

The sails were taken down on 6th October and the cap was lifted off on the following day. Extensive repairs to the cap frame and fanstage are needed and the sails will be overhauled, with a half-set of shutters. Most of the money for the work has come from the Heritage Lottery Fund. (P.D.)

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### MILLS FROM THE AIR

A fascinating new book full of aerial photographs of Suffolk, with captions by Bob Malster, has recently been published. It is called *Historic Britain from the Air: Suffolk* and costs £14.99. The 160-odd photos include several of mills, with excellent views of Pakenham windmill (1958) showing its farmyard setting to perfection; Thorpeness mill (c.1960's); Hawks Mill, Needham Market (1928); Flatford Mill (1961), and (my favourite because the mill is long gone) Aldeburgh post mill (1920). (M.B.)

### UNUSUAL WIND ENGINE ERECTED IN IPSWICH

During the summer months Christchurch Park in Ipswich has been home to a strange 'wind engine' on the lawn in front of the Mansion (one of the town's museums). A piece of sculpture by Chris Dobrowolski entitled 'Aerial' comprised a small four-sailed windmill, winded by a vane, driving an aerial ropeway from which were suspended solar-powered radios (see photo below). It was all made from salvaged materials and was an interesting spectacle, although I never saw it working. (P.D.)



### WETHERINGSETT MILL UNDER REPAIR

The fine roundhouse of Broad Green mill, the last new post mill to be built in Suffolk (1882-3), which has been in a lamentable state for many years, is now being restored by a family from London as a weekend and holiday home. Planning permission exists for full house conversion with links between the various buildings, but instead each building is being restored to something like its former state, which will involve walking outside to get to different parts of the dwelling spaces! The hole in the roof is being filled with a large conical rooflight and the downstairs is being used as a kitchen. Unfortunately the drive to a pair of stones on the first floor had to be removed as it was in the way (as well as being decayed) but all parts have been saved and will be kept for display. The site has been cleared of scrub and undergrowth and when finished, the whole project should be a good example of preservation of a minor mill remains in its original setting. (P.D.)

### SUFFOLK MILLS FOR SALE

Two substantial mill properties are currently on the market. Mendham watermill on the Waveney was converted in 1938, soon after it closed, and although the main machinery has been removed the waterwheel is still in situ. As well as the mill there are three other properties, plus outbuildings and seven acres. Strutt & Parker (Ipswich office) are inviting offers in excess of £650,000. The mill is famous as the birthplace of the artist Sir Alfred Munnings.

At Burgh, near Woodbridge, the Mill House, seven-storey mill tower built by John Whitmore in 1842 (floors but no machinery), two cottages, an equestrian facility and 13 acres are on offer for £650,000 through FPD Savills. (M.B.)

### YEAR 2000 MILL CALENDAR

Having produced a successful, if limited edition, calendar for 1999, Peter Dolman is offering members the chance to have a Suffolk Mills calendar for 2000. It will be a simple black and white laser printed affair, A4 size, and will feature pictures from the Group's mills archive, one for each month. This is a fund-raising effort for Stanton mill, so the price will be a whopping £3, including postage. To order 'phone 01359 250622.

### LOTTERY GRANT MADE TO S.M.G.

Suffolk Mills Group has been awarded a grant of £4,300 from 'Awards for All', part of the Heritage Lottery Fund. Application was made in conjunction with St. Edmundsbury Borough Council, and the award will cover the cost of producing a 'Miller's Trail' leaflet about mills and other places of interest in the eastern part of the west Suffolk area. More details of the leaflet (which features a specially commissioned map) will be given in later newsletters. (P.D.)

## BEYTON STEAM MILL LISTING REJECTED

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport has refused to confirm a Building Preservation Notice served by Mid Suffolk District Council on the steam mill building at Beyton (see last newsletter). This means that the building will not be listed. It is however protected from total demolition by being within a conservation area, and we understand a revised proposal, for a conversion to residential use, has now been made. (M.B.)

## **EVENTS**

### S.M.G. MEMBERS' EVENING: SATURDAY 27th NOVEMBER, from 7.30pm

Once again the members' evening will be held at Stanton mill, courtesy of Peter and Melanie Dolman. Contributions towards the catering are welcomed; soft and alcoholic drinks will be provided. Bring along slides and/or videos to show other members.

We wonder whether any other members might like to host this event in future years. The basic need is for a room (or combination of rooms) sufficient to hold up to 30 people, and allow the setting up of slide or video presentations. If any member would be able to help, or knows of a suitable venue that could be used at modest cost, please let the committee know.

### Essex Mills Group Social Evening: Thursday 2nd December from 8pm

S.M.G. members are welcome at the above social evening, which is being held at Moulsham Mill, Chelmsford. You are asked to bring some food or drink with you to be shared out, as well as slides. Further information from Roy Berry on 01787 269724.

### HERRINGFLEET 2000: A WORKING DEMONSTRATION; SATURDAY JANUARY 1st

What better way to put the 'mill' in the new millennium than by taking a walk across the grazing marsh to visit the last working smock drainage mill in Broadland! We will be at the mill from about midday until 4pm, including setting up and packing away times (lend a hand if you like). Please note that this event will only take place if weather conditions permit, and you are advised to confirm beforehand with Mark Barnard on 01473 727853.

### S.M.G. PUBLIC LECTURE: SATURDAY 19th FEBRUARY 2000

Our annual public meeting will be held at Ipswich Town Hall and the guest speaker will be Michael Harveson, whose subject will be 'The Mills of the Muslim World'. This will include the extraordinary vertical axis windmills and horizontal watermills of the Middle East and north Africa, and will provide a contrast to what we are used to in this region. Further details in the next newsletter.

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