

# SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

## Newsletter

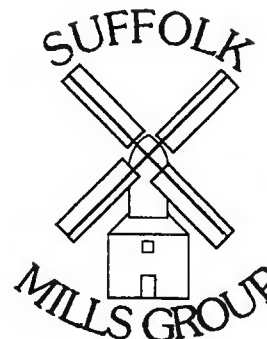
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The main S.M.G. event in the three months or so since the last newsletter was the public meeting in February. Roy Gregory gave an extremely informative and well illustrated account of the role of wind power in the industrial revolution, the fruit of a great deal of research which is still continuing. It was a pity there were so many empty seats in the room (sadly the days when we could fill it now seem over), but we are most grateful to Roy for making the long journey down from Yorkshire (and back again the same evening so he could run his watermill the following day - there's dedication to the cause!).

S.M.G. has been represented at two recent local history events, the Suffolk Local History Council's 'Societies Day' at Mendlesham in March, and a history fair at Bury St Edmunds in early May. We would like to do more to promote the Group and reach out to potential new members. One long overdue initiative this year is a new A4 poster, designed by Luke Bonwick, which has been laminated and will be displayed at most mills open to the public in the county. To the several recent new members who will be reading this newsletter for the first time, I extend a warm welcome, and hope to see you at some of our events.

This newsletter is being 'fast tracked' (well, as fast as my fairly primitive word processing facilities will allow!) to be out in good time for the approaching A.G.M., details of which can be found inside. This and other events are summarised below.

Stanton post mill work-in (1)  
S.M.G. Annual General Meeting  
Stanton post mill work-in (2)

June 1st-9th  
Sunday June 16th  
August 3rd-11th

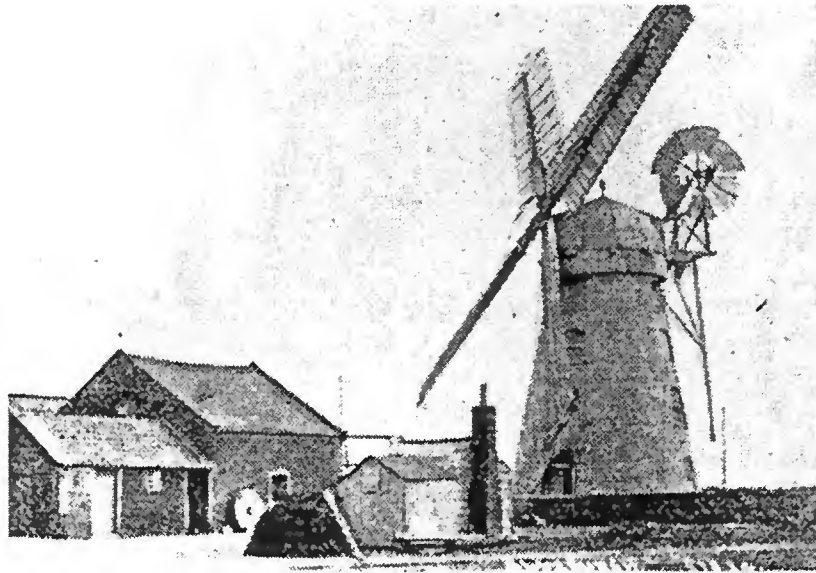
Mark Barnard

## BYGONE MILLS Peter Dolman

### THE WINDMILL AT FORT GREEN, ALDEBURGH

The little tower mill which stands on the seafront at Fort Green (Grid Ref. TM465559) is first marked on an estate map of 1813; it was probably built not long before. In 1823 and 1830 it was worked by Frederick Fletcher, and in 1839 by Frederick Fletcher and Son, millers, corn and coal merchants. In May 1840 it was offered for sale for the benefit of Fletcher's creditors 'That substantial Brick built TOWER WINDMILL, with Patent Sails, two pairs of French stones... coal yard... works herself to the wind; ...capable of making 150 sacks of flour in a week, average 100.' (150 sacks is about 19 tonnes of flour!)

By 1844 William Woods had taken over, but in the tithe apportionment of 1846 it was owned by Thomas Maxwell Bagnold. In



addition to the mill and coal yard there was a lime kiln on the premises. In 1847 Henry Sawyer is listed as miller at the tower mill. By the 1850's William Woods, who was also a baker, was running both mills in the town (the other was a post mill near the station). By 1874 his executors were in charge and in 1885 James Pettit was at the mill. In 1892 Susette Pettit and son were named as millers, presumably his widow. After 1896 only one miller is listed at Aldeburgh (Flintham, Hall & Co), and the tower mill stopped work sometime in the 1890's when the windshaft broke in half. The sails did not fall, being held by the striking rod. The sails were taken off by the millwright Brown, of Leiston. The tower was converted into an oratory in 1902 for Rev. W. Black (known as 'Father Black'), the architect being R.W. Briggs. Black married a Danish woman, which accounts for the Danish inscription over the porch.

The mill started life with cloth sails, but by 1840 these had been replaced with shuttered patent sails. The mill seems to have always had a fantail, one of the earliest in Suffolk so equipped. Its cap is a slightly pointed dome and the tower, of four storeys, is lit by unusually large windows. The two pairs of millstones were driven from below and were placed on the first floor. Despite all the alterations it still retains most of the original cap, with the fan stage. In the 1930's the mill was used as a workshop but originally it had been a residence, and had special curved furniture made for it. In more recent years it has been a holiday cottage.

## **PUTTING MILLS IN THE PICTURE (15) Peter Steggall**

### **TAKING PICTURES OUT OF BAYLHAM MILL**

Ernest Onians, the owner of Baylham watermill in the Gipping valley, must have spent much of his life putting pictures into the mill. After he died in January 1995 at the age of 90, about 500 pictures and many other antiques were found in the mill, the mill house and outbuildings. They were, as I reported in January

1996 (Newsletter 64), auctioned in London by Sotheby's. The pictures were sold on the first day for nearly £1,000,000 including £150,000 for *The Sack of Carthage* attributed to Pietro Testa. Soon after the sale we heard that the buyers of that picture thought it was *The Sack of Jerusalem*, a 'lost' painting by the 17th century French artist Nicolas Poussin, and that it could be worth up to £8,000,000!

In January 1998 the *East Anglian Daily Times* reported that the picture had been restored and that experts confirmed it was *The Sack of Jerusalem* by Poussin and could be worth up to £12,000,000! It was believed that Mr Onians paid just £12 for it in the 1940's!

In February 1999 we learned that the picture, showing the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D.70, had been bought for £4,500,000 by Jewish philanthropist Sir Jacob Rothschild and the Rothschild Foundation, and given to the Israeli Museum in Jerusalem. That resulted in Mr Onians' executors suing Sotheby's for negligence in failing to identify the picture correctly. Eventually the matter was settled out of court and on 4th February 2002 the press revealed that Sotheby's had paid out what was believed to have been a 'six-figure sum' in compensation to the executors.

We have probably heard the last of the pictures, but Suffolk Mills Group is very concerned about the future welfare of Baylham watermill.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Chris Wilson of Over Mill, Cambridgeshire writes:

*I found Don Porter's article in the February newsletter of great interest. The method of weatherboarding Brockhampton Church seems to be satisfactory, but to employ such a system on a post mill would be a certain disaster, as rain beats very hard on the breast of a mill. The result being the early failure of the front corner posts, due to water ingress, no matter how well the joints were made in the beginning. Changing seasons would open up the joints by thermal movement, thus allowing rainwater to be driven in.*

*On a post mill buck, the weatherboarding on the breast extends past the side boarding by at least six inches, likewise the sidewall boarding extends past the tail by a similar amount. With the mill winding it is near impossible for rain to penetrate at the corners. Even stationary bucks can cope surprisingly well. Mill bucks which have not been boarded in the above described manner are poor preservation efforts done by local builders with little or no knowledge of mills. Why this system works well for Brockhampton Church is, possibly, because the church is not exposed to extreme wind conditions like those experienced by mills. Many churches are in nice churchyards, often sheltered from the wind by trees.*

*While on the subject of weatherboarding, I feel mention should be made of the cladding or covering of smock mills. The*

covering, featheredged weatherboarding, is nailed onto the framing of the mill, with usually 50% overlap. Nails in the past were never rustless, this being another problem. Where the boarding met at the corners was the weakest point, as this meant a vertical row of joints. Too little attention was paid to this problem in the past. As well as water ingress causing deep-seated decay, nails rusted thus swelling and cracking the boards where they were fixed.

Four ways of covering the corners can be executed, I will call these systems A, B, C, and D, of which A, B and C were the most common.

SYSTEM A. Boards butted against each side of a vertical fillet nailed down the centre of the cantpost, thus forming two rows of vertical joints to cause two linear leaks instead of just one. A shoddy method.

SYSTEM B. Boards butted directly against each other over the cantpost making one straight vertical joint instead of two as mentioned in the previous system. A slight improvement.

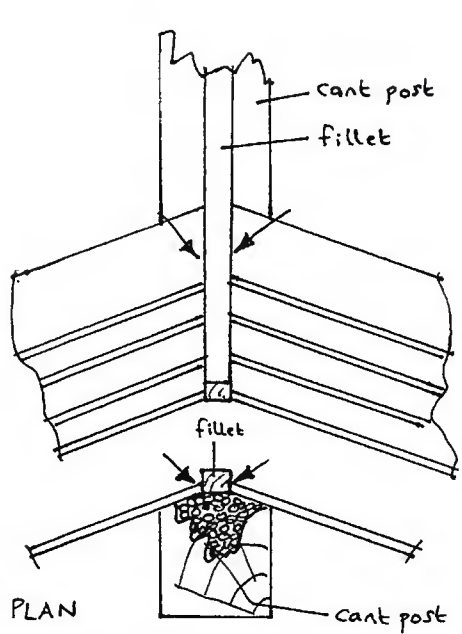
SYSTEM C. Boards where they meet at the corners, are cut flush to the next angle over the cantpost, the board on the adjoining side being cut flush over the previous board, the process being reversed as the work proceeds. This gives a neat appearance but it exposes the end grain of one board at each joint. It must be remembered that end grain of timber can draw water like blotting paper.

SYSTEM D. Boards fixed first as by Systems B or C but with thin sheet metal (can be aluminium or copper) flashings, confusingly called soakers, over each joint. 6" wide boarding would require a soaker to be 6" x 12" to cover each joint, each overlapped by the joint and soaker above, fixed with nails made of the same material, to prevent corrosion or electrolytic action. System D is the only method which is 100% efficient at preventing water ingress. This system is increasingly being used on reboarding smock mills, one of the latest being Shade Mill, Soham, Cambs. This system can cope better through long periods of neglect compared with other systems.

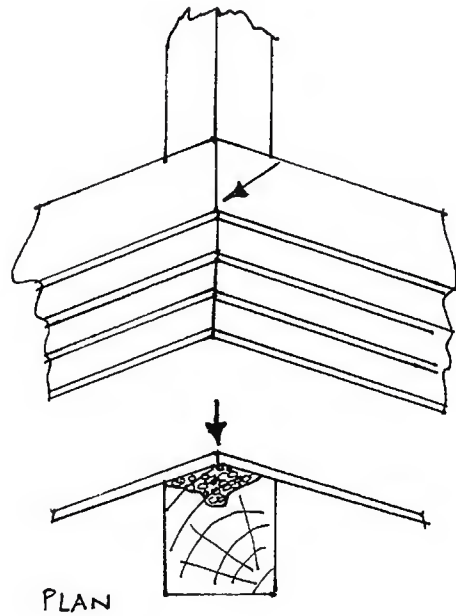
It must be remembered that water penetration is often not apparent on observation inside. Decay can be well advanced, with rot extending down the cantposts and into the sills at the corners, and eventually if unchecked will cause the framing to sink and jam the cap. Often the true extent of the damage can only be seen by removing the external covering during repairs.

Sometimes the study of old photographs of smock mills illustrates the problems with water ingress, by depicting long vertical patches of various materials, including canvas, tin and even corrugated iron on one mill, in an attempt to postpone eventual failure.

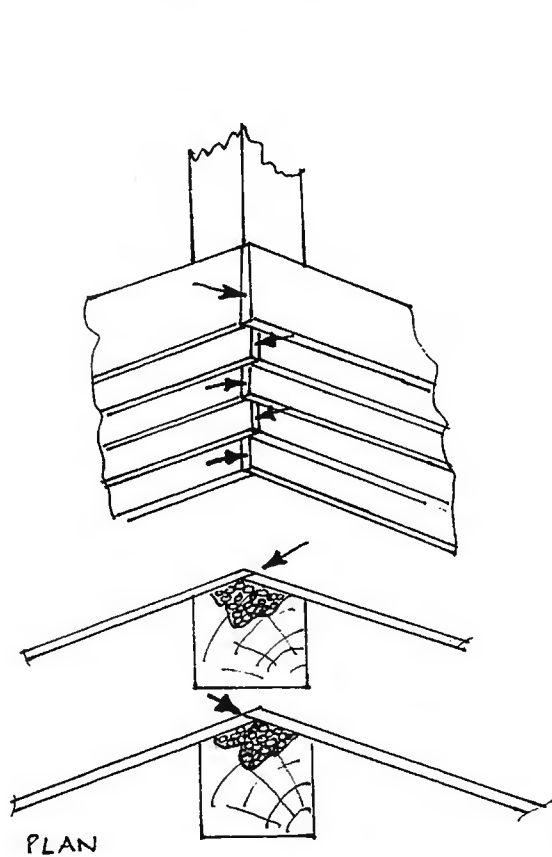
It cannot be too strongly stressed when renewing weatherboarding on a mill, that as much survival value is built in as possible. New boarding should be treated against rot and be free from all kinds of knots (these can leak). Each board should be painted or tarred on the whole of the outside face, the bottom



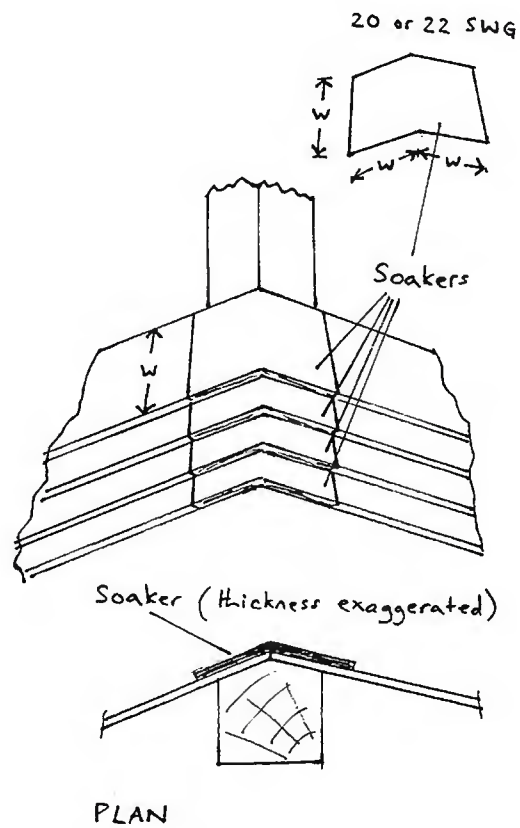
SYSTEM 1



SYSTEM 2



SYSTEM 3



SYSTEM 4

SMOCK MILL CORNERS: FOUR METHODS OF BOARDING OVER THEM

→ = points of water ingress  
 ☒ = areas of decay

edge and halfway up the back (to prevent damage by capillary action), soakers fitted over the corners and flashings round the windows. Boards should run the full width without intermediate butt joints between the corners. It is to be recommended that a second coat of paint or tar is applied to the boarding as the work proceeds. Nails for the boarding should be of stainless steel or galvanised, or of some other rustless material.

Alan Gifford of the Midland Mills Group has written the following piece, entitled 'Saxtead Mill and Me'.

*I read with great interest the article 'Mills and Me' by Peter Steggall, in the February issue of the newsletter. I have titled my response slightly differently!*

*In 1975 with my wife and two small children we were caravanning in Suffolk for the first time. The weather was perfect and we were looking for things to do (which did not cost much). We had received a pass from, I believe, the then Department of the Environment, as a present. This enabled the whole family to enter properties under their control, at no cost, for one year. A check in the guide showed there was a windmill not too far away that was included in the scheme and it seemed a good idea to look so we headed in that direction.*

*Now for years I had been interested in 'old engineering' matters but had not found anything that really captured my attention. As we approached the village we saw this magnificent structure, gleaming white in the sunshine. Our first impression was of a tall round brick structure, on top of which was a very large white box which had four huge, turning, sails stuck on its front. There was a long flight of steep steps up to the box and from these, supported on a timber structure, was a fan like wheel device, painted blue I think. What was it all for and how did it work? I suppose if we had previously noted windmills they must have all been tower mills.*

*We used the pass, bought what I now know was Rex Wailes' guide to the mill, and entered into this new world of gentle noise, turning gears, moving machines and belts, above all smells! Both children found the steep ladders and steps a challenge they could enjoy and roamed round with us. Everything was new to us. We just wondered how it all appeared to work so smoothly.*

*This one day set the scene for the rest of the holiday. We chased after every windmill we could find!*

*I sorted out in my mind how I thought things worked but knew we needed to know more. On our return to Derby we called in the local Reference Library and found John Reynolds' book 'Windmills and Watermills' and our eyes were opened. So much so we called at a book shop and ordered a copy - to be first of many such books!*

*And so it went on - we kept travelling to look at them and then one day in about 1977, in the Science Museum in Birmingham, my son Ian found a notice calling for new members for the newly formed Midland Wind and Water Mills Group. Until then we had not recognised that there were people, other than us, who really enjoyed windmills!*

*The rest is perhaps history. I've subsequently visited mills all over the world (some, including one in Alaska, on business) and now, over 25 years after that fateful visit, I'm a member of the SPAB Mills Section committee, still a member of Midland Mills Group and many other similar organisations and deeply involved in the restoration of Heage windmill, in Derbyshire. One of my original slides of the mill still features in talks I give to local groups.*

*Saxtead has a lot to answer for! She changed our lives and even now, to a lesser or greater extent, all four of us are still captivated by these wonderful machines!*

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How did you first catch the mill bug? Was there a particular mill, or mill event, which started you off? Write and tell us!!

## THE DRINKSTONE RAILWAY CARRIAGE Mark Barnard

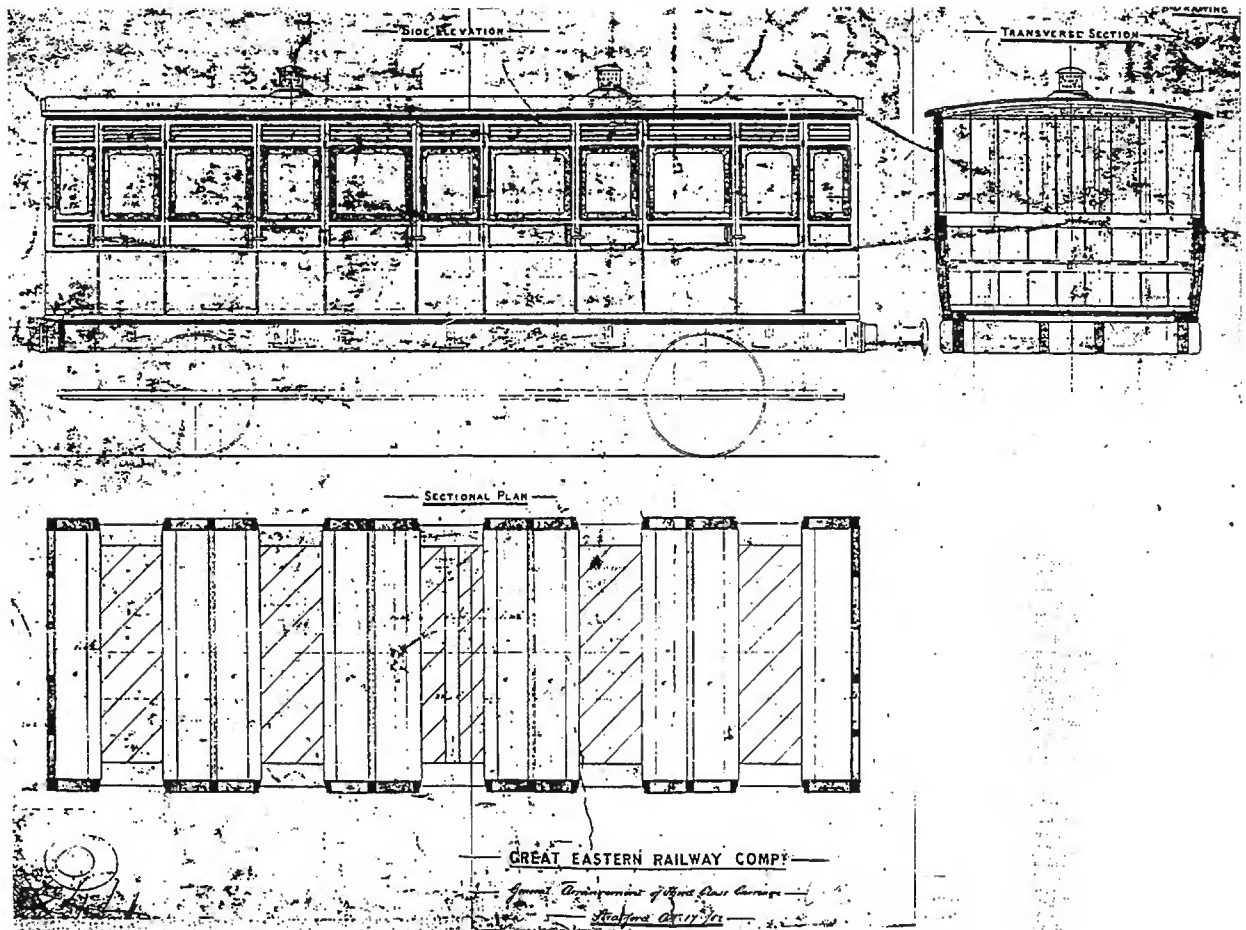
This is the second part of an article based on notes from John Watling, a railway historian, to whom I extend thanks. The first part described the carriage at Pakenham windmill (see Newsletter 79).

Among the range of traditional outbuildings which provide such a splendid setting for the two windmills at Drinkstone is a railway carriage body. In keeping with the exceptional interest of the site, the carriage at Drinkstone is very old and must be quite rare. It was a Great Eastern Railway third class carriage, of a design introduced by Robert Sinclair for the Eastern Counties Railway in 1859. Sinclair continued as Locomotive Superintendent after the creation of the G.E.R. in 1862 and his carriage designs remained unchanged. The Drinkstone carriage, No. 360, was part of a final order for 100 carriages, numbered 360-459, accepted in September 1863 and built during 1864-65 by the Railway Carriage Co. of Oldbury, near Birmingham. Each one cost £187. No.360 was probably delivered by June 1864.

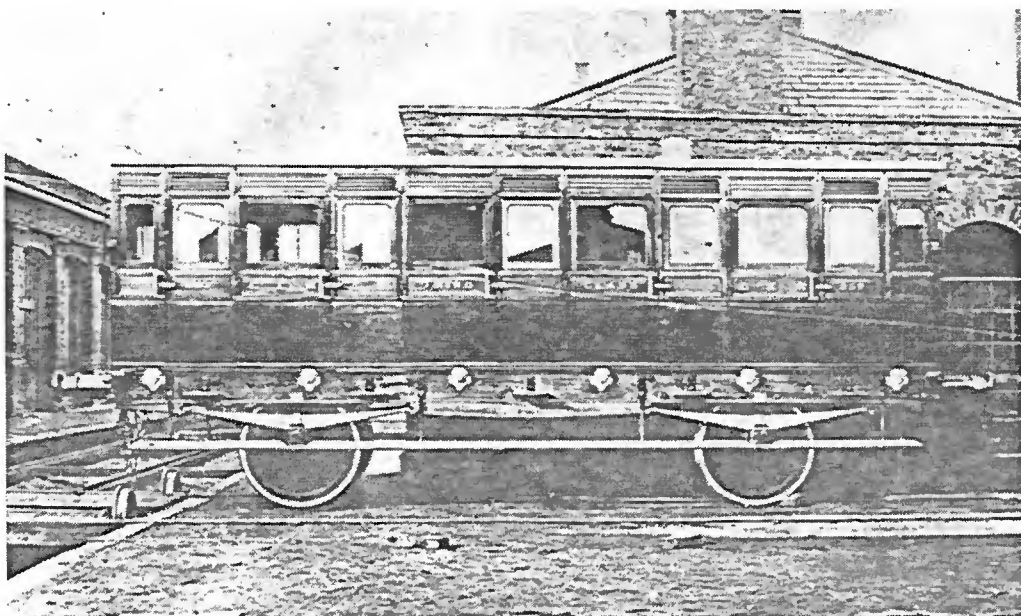
Although the carriages were for main line use, many were later down-graded for London suburban services. No record exists of when No.360 was withdrawn but it was replaced by early 1890 and undoubtedly last saw service in 1888 or 1889. Old carriage bodies were sold off by the railway companies for a variety of new uses (see advert on left).

The carriage is marked on its present site on the 25-inch O.S. map of 1904, and was almost certainly

GREAT EASTERN RAILWAY.
FOR SALE.
O L D (RAILWAY) CARRIAGE BODIES.
SUITABLE FOR SHELTERS, SHEDS, TOOL AND STORE-HOUSES, COAL- YARD OFFICES, FOWL-HOUSES, &c.
DELIVERED FREE AT ANY G.E.R. STATION.
Price £5 each.
Application for form of tender and for order to view the Carriage Bodies at Stratford to be made to the undersigned.
J. HADFIELD, Secretary.
Liverpool Street Terminus, London, E.C., July, 1888.



G.E.R. drawing of Third Class Carriage dated 17.10.1862



Carriage No.357 when new





The Drinkstone carriage in 1979 (photo: Peter Dolman)

brought here direct from the railway. In a photograph of c.1930 it appears to be in good condition, no doubt maintained along with all the other outbuildings. By the 1980's its condition had deteriorated and emergency weatherproofing work was carried out by S.M.G. in 1982. A new layer of felt was put on the roof, and the side walls were clad in plywood and heavy-duty black polythene. Today it continues to provide valuable storage space, so much so that I was unable to see much of the interior!

The carriage was lit by two oil lamps in ventilated housings above the roof. The holes for these can still be seen. Gas lighting would have been fitted if the carriage was used on suburban services. The fine G.E.R. drawings reproduced (at greatly reduced size) on p.8, dated 17th October 1862, give very precise details of the accommodation. There was seating for 50 passengers in five compartments, with each passenger assigned 21.4 cu.ft of internal space and 161.26 sq.ins of window glass! Some of the seating apparently survived at Drinkstone into the 1960's.

It is hoped to clear out the interior of the carriage later this year, when the question of permanent repair and external finish will be given further thought. Its future however is quite secure. I wonder how many other mid 1860's examples remain?

## **NEWS**

### **STANTON MILL NEWS**

As this newsletter hits the doormat we will be into the first of the work-ins. In case you have forgotten, the first work-in is June 1st-9th and the second is August 3rd-11th. The usual arrangements apply, with accommodation in the house available to those that get in early, or space to camp or park a caravan in

the garden. All the facilities of the house are available and some food/drink is provided. If you have not given it a go yet, how about coming along for a day, or maybe longer?

The wet weather of most of the last year has held up the painting of the refurbished sails but they are just about ready to go on now. Whether or not we put them up by hand or with a mobile crane depends on the number of helpers we get. The limited budget demands the manual approach but a crane is quicker, and much safer. We shall see! Other jobs (apart from finishing the sails) are to complete the stone tun and spout, and to adjust the brakewheel (again) and repair the sack hoist. The aim is to produce flour by the end of the first work-in.

The August work-in will no doubt have to continue with any left over jobs from the first, but we also hope to make a start on Phase 2 of the restoration, which will be the repair of the left side of the buck. At present we are still waiting for permission from English Heritage so are unable to order materials, but the work-in will go ahead come what may, so if the Phase 2 work is delayed we will find something else to do.

Hope to see some of you at the work-ins; please let me know if you intend to come along (telephone 01359 250622, email [stantonwindmill@beeb.net](mailto:stantonwindmill@beeb.net) (Peter Dolman)

#### LITTLE GLEHAM MILL CONVERTED

Last year we highlighted the deplorable state of the watermill at Little Glemham, and the application for conversion to ancillary residential accommodation (see Newsletter 80). The application was approved, and work to implement it has been progressing well and by now should be externally complete. The roof is covered in new clay pantiles, replacing the corrugated iron sheeting which had been in place for many years. The minimal overlap on the



Little Glemham mill (13th April 2002)

weatherboarding and new double-glazed sash windows do not impart much authenticity, but we should be grateful that the mill was not entirely lost, and that all surviving machinery has been retained. (M.B.)

### BARDWELL MILL'S CAP BACK ON

After being missing for nearly 20 months, the cap of Bardwell mill was brought back to Suffolk from the Oxfordshire workshop



of IJP Building Conservation Ltd and lifted into place on April 3rd, a perfect sunny and calm Spring day. As reported in the last newsletter, the brickwork of the upper part of the tower had to be rebuilt before the cap could be replaced, but apart from this, and the re-fitting of the curb, most of the action has been off-site.

The reinstatement of a winding cap (see photo on left) marks the end of Phase I of the restoration, at a cost of around £105,000. Attention will no doubt now turn to the sails, for which over £30,000 will need to be raised, presumably on the assumption that English Heritage will be able to offer further grant aid. We hope that the opportunity to restore the machinery removed in the 1970's will not be lost, as this would greatly enhance the mill's historic interest. (M.B.)

### THELNETHAM MILL NEEDS FRIENDS!

The owners of Thelnetham mill, many of them S.M.G. members, have been worried about the increasing difficulty in opening the mill to the public and carrying out essential maintenance work. This is an increasing problem as we get older and have more and more demands on our time. The long term future of the mill also concerns us and some of you will know that we recently tried to hand the mill over to the Suffolk Building Preservation Trust. However, SBPT is embarked on a lengthy and potentially costly development at Pakenham watermill and is unwilling to make the necessary commitment to Thelnetham as well. While we were prepared to give the mill to SBPT, we do not want to put it on the open market, as its future would be much less secure. Visitor

numbers to the mill last year were very poor, with weather, family commitments and the dreaded Foot and Mouth all conspiring against us. The mill made a large operating loss and this is not sustainable. Many other privately-owned mills are in a similar predicament and unless something is done by Government to help such mills they will be at risk of being lost. Fortunately Thelnetham is still in good condition and able to work, which potentially brings in some income. Its isolation and increasing list of maintenance work make it vulnerable however, and opening it more often is one of the best ways to raise money to pay for maintenance.

We therefore appeal to S.M.G. members (and non-members) to consider registering as helpers at the mill. If we can get a good gang together the mill could be open more often, and once trained in the operation of the mill members would be trusted to work it, or at least to set the sails going. One of the most important aspects of opening the mill is to put road signs out to draw people from the main road to the north. In recent years we have had to open the mill with one person only. It is much better, from many points of view, to have at least two people on duty.

To address the maintenance work we propose to hold a Thelnetham 'work-in' next year, to allow some of the largest items to be attended to (work to sails, fantail and machinery) plus the all-important repainting and tarring. Site development work is also needed, with improved visitor facilities and some sort of display area a high priority.

Thelnetham mill is still the best-known S.M.G. project, both inside and outside Suffolk, and it would be a terrible shame if we allowed it to fall into disrepair, or disuse. Please consider registering as a helper; if this takes off as we sincerely hope it will, then a 'Friends' type organisation will be formed, and maybe the mill could be put on a charitable footing. Please send expressions of interest to Peter Dolman or Mark Barnard, or email [windmill@thelnetham.freeseve.co.uk](mailto:windmill@thelnetham.freeseve.co.uk)

### **A WIND TURBINE FOR SUFFOLK - AT LAST!**

Permission has now been granted for the 3.2MW wind turbine at Ness Point, Lowestoft, described in the last issue. Work is now under way, and it is hoped to have it up and running by early autumn 2002. Look out for progress reports, as what is said to be the world's largest wind turbine (and Suffolk's first) is sure to make the news in an equally big way.

2001 was the best year yet for the wind power industry. Global capacity grew by 31% to 23,000MW. Top of the league is Germany, with 8,750MW of capacity (up by 43% on 2000), and accounting for nearly half of global installations (11,500 turbines). 2.5% of Germany's electricity is now produced by wind power. No.2 in the world is the USA, with 4,258MW (up by 6% on 2000). The cost of US wind-generated electricity has continued its downward trend, becoming nearly competitive with fossil fuel sources. Third is Spain with 3,300MW, and fourth is little Denmark, which accounts for over half the world's wind energy market. Denmark now produces about 13% of its electricity from the wind, and plans to increase this to 50% by 2030. Offshore

schemes are fast becoming a reality with projects planned in Holland, Sweden, Denmark and Ireland as well as the UK. In China there are 160,000 small machines in remote areas away from the national grid. Internet sites worth looking up include [www.britishwindenergy.co.uk](http://www.britishwindenergy.co.uk) (British Wind Energy Association); [www.offshorewindfarms.co.uk](http://www.offshorewindfarms.co.uk) and [www.windpower.dk](http://www.windpower.dk) (Danish Wind Energy Association). (Information from *Energy & Environmental Management* published by DEFRA; March/April 2002 edition.)

### RATTLESDEN ROLLER MILL CONVERSION BID

A planning application has been made by Hartog Hutton Construction to convert the disused roller mill at Rattlesden into six dwellings. Dismantled in the 1960's or early 1970's by the Miller's Mutual, the mill was later bought by Jordans of Biggleswade with the intention of bringing it back into production, but this never happened. Although not listable, the buildings have an interesting history, standing on a very old windmill site (there is a large mound), last occupied by a smock mill of c.1820. Roller milling started c.1890, initially in the windmill. Around 1905 the smock mill was taken down and replaced by the present Fletton brick buildings. Alternate walls of the octagonal smock mill base remain in situ, together with two first floor beams. Elsewhere, other components have been incorporated, including both cap sheers (very well preserved), a section of wooden curb, and a wooden windshaft, said to be from Wetherden post mill, used as a supporting post. Although most of the plant has been stripped out, an incomplete E R & F Turner roller mill of c.1905 is worthy of preservation, as are some other items.



The roller mill buildings at Rattlesden. Part of the tarred smock mill base is visible each side of the door of the three-storey building

## A POOR BUY

*Watermills of East Anglia* by Pat O'Brien (Tempus Publishing, 2001; £10.99) is an attractive looking book, packed with good and interesting old photographs, including many of Suffolk mills. Unfortunately the author appears to have written the captions by remote control, without ever having visited the area, or researching the subject. Almost every one has some sort of error; one of the worst being the caption of a picture of the burned out Dedham mill in 1908 as being of Flatford mill. Apart from the worthless captions, the book is further spoiled by poor typesetting by the publisher. Don't bother to buy it. (P.D.)

## EVENTS

### S.M.G. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AT EARL SOHAM POST MILL ROUNDHOUSE & VISIT TO SAXTEAD GREEN POST MILL: SUNDAY JUNE 16th (A.G.M. commences 11am)

This year we are returning to the fine post mill roundhouse at Earl Soham (the venue for the 1990 A.G.M.), by kind permission of Mr and Mrs Vincent, who are members. The mill was taken down just after the last war, leaving the roundhouse, trestle (with a fine 18th century date) and full-height main post.

The mill is close to the main A1120 about 400 yards out of the village (see map below). Some parking is available on site, plus 2 or 3 spaces in a field entrance opposite. Please take care as this is a dangerous stretch of road with limited visibility.

In the afternoon we have arranged a visit to Saxtead Green post mill (normally closed on Sundays), by kind permission of owner Jonathan Sullivan and Anita Baldry, the English Heritage custodian. Surprisingly, we have never visited this famous mill before!

