

SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

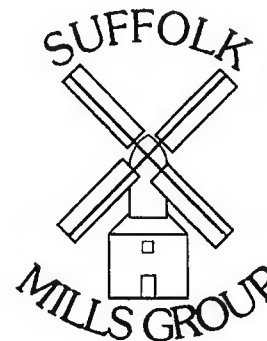
Newsletter

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This newsletter was to have appeared in June, in time for the A.G.M., but the inevitable pressure of time has led to a slight delay. Our events over the past few months have gone well. Geoff Hawksley gave a most enjoyable talk on water power at Ipswich Town Hall at the beginning of March, and on the following day Geoff and his wife Mavis were given a short tour of some local mills, including Thorington Street watermill which looked a treat in the early Spring sunshine. Visitors to Burgh tower mill on our open afternoon in May saw work in progress on the new ogee roof, and some even helped Chris Hullcoop wrestle with the roof ribs in the strong wind! We were pleased with the turnout at the A.G.M., slightly up on last year, and most encouraged that, after the meeting, several members offered their services on our committee.

I would like to thank all the members who paid their S.M.G. subscription following the letter with the last newsletter. In all, over 90% of you have renewed so far. Thanks are also due to those of you who have sent me material for these pages. I cannot always use contributions immediately, but rest assured they will appear before too long. This issue contains the first of a series of essays by Harold Hitchcock on Rattlesden Mills and country milling in general, as seen just after the last war. How times have changed, with more and more mills closing. Please do keep sending me contributions - yet more on the theme of 'how I became hooked on mills' would be great, and you would enjoy writing it too, wouldn't you?

Forthcoming events are summarised below. The next newsletter is scheduled for September.

Suffolk History Festival, MEAL, Stowmarket	July 12th-13th
SMG visit to Rattlesden tower mill	Sunday August 10th
Drinkstone Mills open weekend	September 13th-14th
Herringfleet windpump open day	September 21st
SMG visit to Marston's mill, Icklingham	to be announced

Mark Barnard

VANISHED MILLS Brian Flint

ALDERTON SMOCK MILL

This small smock mill, which stood in the centre of the vilage (Grid Ref TM346416), is marked on Greenwood's map of Suffolk, surveyed 1823-4, and on Bryant's map published in 1826. It was said to have been built in 1796.

However, references to MELLOND (1475), MILLWEYE (1553) and MYLLMOUNT (1586) in the Alderton Hall Court Rolls point to a much earlier foundation. A windmill is first mentioned in an Indenture

of 1589 and in 1613 reference was made to lands abutting the WINDMYLL HILL. A will of 1695 includes, with Alderton Hall Farm, a mill and mill house in the occupation of Richard Peck. Indentures of 1700 and 1710 also mention a windmill, at the latter date in the occupation of Thomas Chandler. These early references pertain to what was probably a post mill, but whether at the above site or at a second site at MILL COTTAGES (TM345424) is uncertain. A windmill is shown on Kirby's map of Suffolk (1766 edition) but could refer to a site near Virtue's Farm in Hollesley as this map is notoriously inaccurate.

Nineteenth century newspaper references for this mill are conspicuous by their absence and I have resorted to trade directories to ascertain the names of millers. Frederick William Fletcher is listed in White's 1844 directory but was replaced by George Cullum in Kelly's directory of 1846. By 1854 the Misses Page were in occupation but had been supplanted by Miles Page the next year. Then, in 1864 and 1868 Thomas Fawcett Beadnell was miller. For some reason there is no miller given in the 1874 directory but thereafter members of the Lacey family took over. J. (John?) in 1885 followed by Frederick Walter who is listed

from 1892 to at least 1912, in this latter year using steam power as well as wind. The last miller was Arthur Edward Kemp who was there from 1922 or before until the mill ceased work, which is believed to have been in 1932. In 1929 he was stated to have been using 'wind and oil'.



Alderton mill in 1936
(photo: S. Freese)

The mill, as shown in photographs back to 1869, had patent sails of seven bays and a vertically boarded conical cap with rear gable. Photographs from the 1930's show two sails to have had eight bays. The single storied tarred brick base carried three floors in the timber smock tower. The six-bladed fly, painted red, white and blue, winded the cap via an iron worm and wheel meshing with a rack on top of the curb outside the roller track. The striking gear for the sails was operated by a rack at each side running on guides and a double-grooved chain wheel on the spindle carrying the pinions.

An iron windshaft bore the clasp-arm brakewheel of 6ft 6ins (2.0m) diameter with only 42 cogs. This meshed with an iron wallower mounted on a two-piece iron upright shaft connected by a dog clutch and extended below the dust floor by a wooden section 15ins (380mm) in diameter. The wooden clasp-arm spurwheel turned two pairs of stones on a hurst frame which were overdriven by wind and could be underdriven by an engine via an external pulley. However it appears from the earliest photograph that this arrangement had been modified as the auxiliary drive pulley was originally mounted about 6ft (1.8m) higher. Governors, belt-driven from the stone spindle, were mounted under the hurst. The sack-hoist and belt drive to an oat crusher were taken from a bevel wheel on the upright shaft below the dog-clutch.

One unusual feature in this mill was the provision of a removable shutter below the top floor which could be slid open to show signal lights to smugglers alighting on the nearby coast!

After the mill ceased work it gradually deteriorated. By 1938 one sail was off and the others dilapidated. I remember seeing the mill around 1950 but this was before I was really interested so I didn't look at it closely. It was demolished in 1956 and a bungalow development now covers the site. The second site, at 'Mill Cottages', shows nothing either, the attractive part-thatched cottages having been cleared away after 1936.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

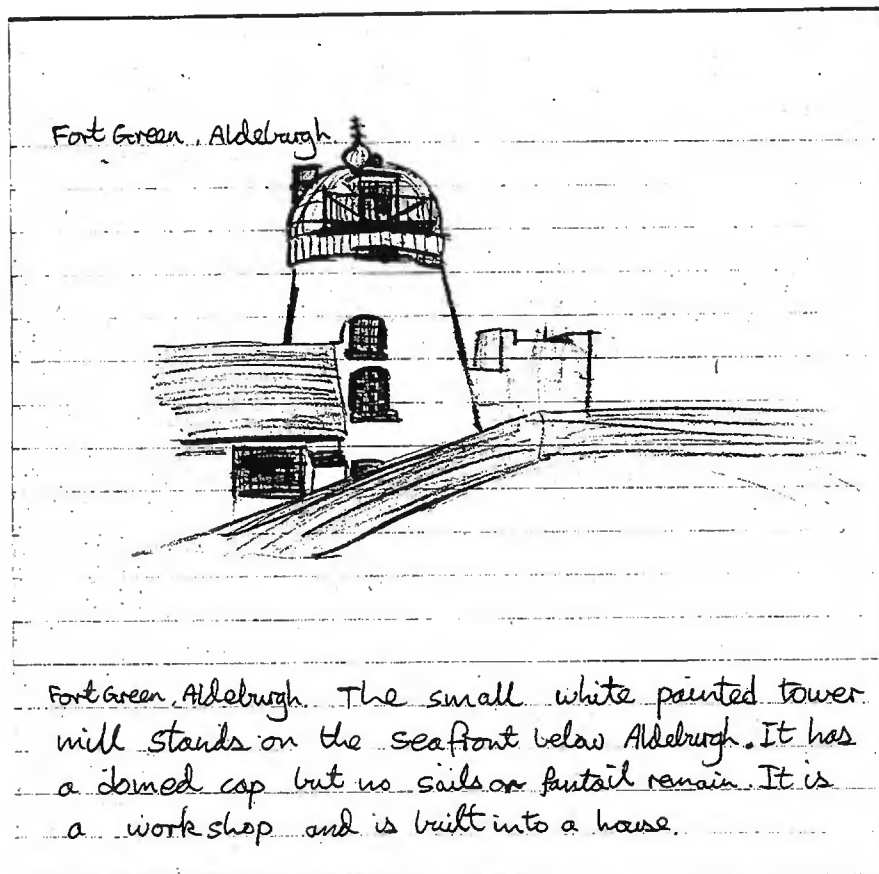
David Barton of Ipswich writes:

The last of Peter Dolman's 'Bygone Mills' studies was of the windmill at Fort Green, Aldeburgh published in the May 2002 newsletter. One wonders how many mills were described in the long running series. These were always well researched and it is extraordinary how the time was found to seek out the relevant information on top of a job and a super-active interest in mill restoration and the grinding of flour. Thelnetham flour can no longer be bought at 'Fruits of the Earth' in Upper Orwell Street. Recently I saw an exercise book shown to me by his father that demonstrated the interest of a schoolboy in mills and included a sketch of Fort Green mill.

In 1902 the mill was converted into an oratory for the Reverend W.H. Black B.A. to the design of the architect R.W. Briggs. 'Father Black' married a Danish lady and over the entrance doorway are inscribed the words in Danish:

HERREN SKAL BE VARE DIN UDGANG OG DIN INDGANG

The words are from Psalm 121, verse 8, 'The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in (from this time forth and forever more)'. The inscription is not entirely correct since BE VARE should be one word, to keep or preserve. I took a picture of it twenty years ago in September 1982.



A page from Peter Dolman's school exercise book entitled 'Windmills in Suffolk 1970'

My last conversation with Peter concerned 'Father Black' since he was a friend of my maternal grandparents in Ufford. My grandfather Johnson had been the gardener at 'The Dower House' adjoining the church which was rented by the Rev. Black's sister. A drawing of the Rev. Black hung in my grandparents' living room and I have a portrait of him made by the Photographers to the Royal Family, Maul & Fox of 187A Piccadilly.

Subsequently my grandfather bought the 'Ironworks Farm' in Chapel Lane, Wickham Market, which was called 'Featherbroome' and had been used for the stabling of Whitmore & Binyon's horses. Many loads of slag were brought up from the foundry to be laid in the yard. This did not help my grandfather as he sought to convert the farm to a market garden with the erection of two greenhouses. I was born at 'Featherbroome' in 1922.

There had been three windmills in the village with Rackham's water and steam mill. The latter had a Whitmore & Binyon single cylinder engine now in the Museum of East Anglian Life at Stowmarket. I used to watch this engine at work through the window when I was sent down to the mill with orders for coal. There is a patent sluice in the watermill which admitted water under the wheel thus creating greater force for driving the machinery. The mill near the church was run by George Runnacles who sometimes ground on Sundays when wind was scarce, hence the

comment 'Miller Runnacles is flying his kite of a Sunday!'. The mill, which was a post mill, was pulled down in 1890 and the house 'Ashe View' erected, later to become the home of the Misses Whitmore. The base of the mill in Mill Lane has now been built into a holiday-let. This was a small twelve-sided smock mill built by Thomas Butcher, a local millwright and worked from 1774 to c.1880. A seven-storey tower mill near the watermill was pulled down in 1868 and the bricks incorporated in the steam mill and engine house. Peter's comments on Wickham Market mills can be found in the second volume of Deben Valley Place Names - Wickham Market, edited by the late Gwen Dyke and published by the Local History Council.

I appear to have had a hand in this study since I have a letter addressed to me by Gwen Dyke dated 10 May 1990 in which she has made a tentative list of the mills in the village in the hope that I could confirm her research. I hasten to add that Gwen was a far more able historian than me so I passed her letter to Peter. He replied on 9 June from St Mary's Close, Bramford confirming her research and providing information on the history of the mills.

On the morning of 19 October 1942 a German bomber dropped seven high explosive bombs on Middle Street in the village, killing three people and injuring seven others. A row of four pretty Regency houses known as Norfolk Terrace was destroyed together with George Dale's house and stonemason's yard. No.120 was occupied by Mr Albert Braddock and his daughter Florence. He had been an engineer at Whitmore's like his father James, who had been chief foreman and who died in 1875. Miss Braddock was away at Lowestoft for the day with a friend and her father was in the garden when the bombs fell. His garden shed was blown over on top of him and his life was spared by the timbers falling across a bench beside the path under which he was pinned without injury apart from shock. As a friend of the family I got to know him well and I would cycle round the area visiting mills in Framlingham, Parham, Sweffling and Saxtead conveying his regards to the various millers. Rex Wailes had lately called at Parham and had been given a mill bill which was the cause of some amusement to the miller Mr Self. Maulden's in Framlingham is now a housing complex but in those days was a steam mill with a Whitmore & Binyon condensing engine.

The entrance to the works can still be seen in Low Street with the flanking buildings and iron gate posts. One item survived by my grandfather and that was a works drawing of a waterwheel, rolled up in a chest of drawers which I passed to the Group for safekeeping. Depicting a 30ft diameter by 6ft wide overshot wheel in elevation and section at a scale of $3/4$ " : 1', it is an example of a lost art, that of making measured drawings on tracing cloth with ink, watercolours and ruling pens and compasses. Adjoining the works was the gasworks which was a fascinating place run by one man. The gas supply to 'Featherbroome' was limited to a single light in the kitchen. An oil lamp was used in the living room and upstairs one took a candle. Perhaps this is an appropriate note on which to end, in the nostalgic glow of the life one recalls in the twenties and thirties of what is now the last century.

Henley Sterling of Sussex writes**:

*I write to you as I am trying to sort out my family history. My great-grandfather was James Tricker, born in Hadleigh in 1829. According to family 'hear-say', this family was associated with 'Trickers' Mills' and connected in some way with the Munnings family of Mendham. I know that Tricker is a very common name in Suffolk so I hope this isn't a wild goose chase! (** Replies via the Editor please - address on p.1)*

John Christiansen (jn.mc.christiansen@paradise.net.nz) emails from New Zealand:

My Great-Grandfather Walter Nichols, who went to sea, was born at Hartest 8th November 1838, son of Jonathan Nichols, Miller, and Martha formerly Kent. I have found their marriage at Saffron Walden on 13th July 1831, and the baptism of their first child, Augustus at Henham, Essex, in 1832, as well as Martha's parents of Great Chesterford, Essex.

It is about the miller Jonathan Nichols that I'm enquiring for assistance, for I have a miniature portrait said to be of him, but can find nothing definite of his origins. I can recall 'family talk' pre-war of his father, said to have been a wealthy miller and benefactor of the poor. My Grand-Parents had two large oil paintings of them that I remember, but their names, apart from Nichols, and where they lived I do not know, for I am trying to compose my family history for my descendants.

I have been almost three years trying to break this 'brick wall' from here in New Zealand, so far to no avail, any help would be gratefully received.

REMINISCENCES OF A COUNTRY MILLER (1)

Harold Hitchcock

We are delighted to be able to publish for the first time an account of country milling written by Harold Hitchcock in 1946, by kind permission of his son Michael. Harold Thomas Hitchcock was the proprietor of the roller mill at Rattlesden from around 1920 until retirement in about 1970. During this time the mill was powered successively by gas engine, horizontal twin cylinder Roby diesel engine, and electricity. His other, elder son Philip gained milling experience at Clarke & Butchers of Soham before joining him at Rattlesden from about 1949. When flour production ceased in about 1965, Philip Hitchcock continued to produce animal feed until the mill closed for good in 1974. After standing disused since then, it is now being converted to residential use. The adjacent mill house and windmill tower were sold off separately in 1974.

A generation or more ago, nearly every village of Suffolk possessed its windmill. Few rivers cross the fertile lands of this county, and these few are sluggish and gently flowing because of the comparative flatness of the country. Consequently little power can be harnessed on these streams. A great contrast

from our Western counties where a small flow of water, but with a huge fall, performs an immense amount of work.

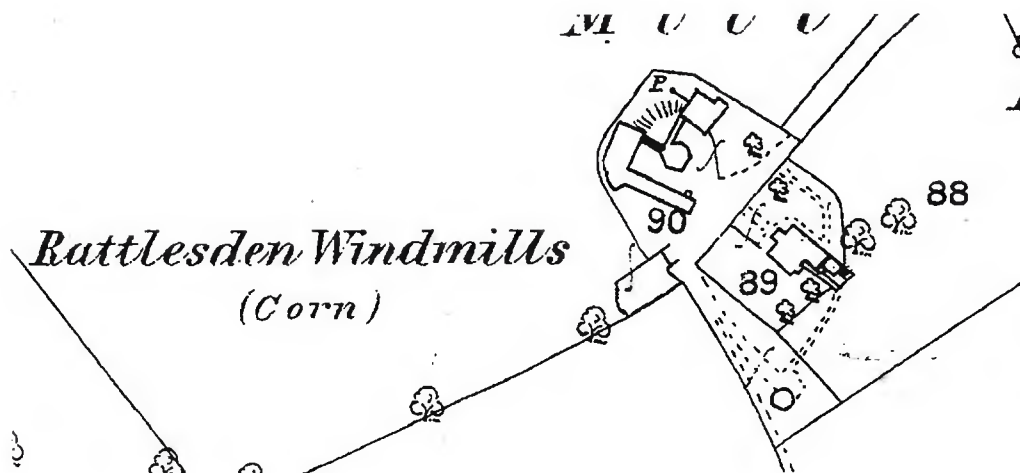
Inventive man in Eastern counties had to turn elsewhere in his need for power to grind his corn and produce his flour and so for several generations the busily turning sails of the windmill gave life and poetry to the landscape and the local miller was a useful and respected member of the community and an acknowledged expert on meteorological matters. Every honest wind-miller had of course the proverbial tuft of hairs growing in the palm of his hand BUT it took an honest man to see them!

Let me try and introduce you to 'Sally' as the tower mill was affectionately styled, in which I worked in my very youthful days and which in spite of perverse behaviour at times, earned and held my affection for many years. Yes, perhaps she holds it still in spite of having passed to her quiet rest these dozen years.

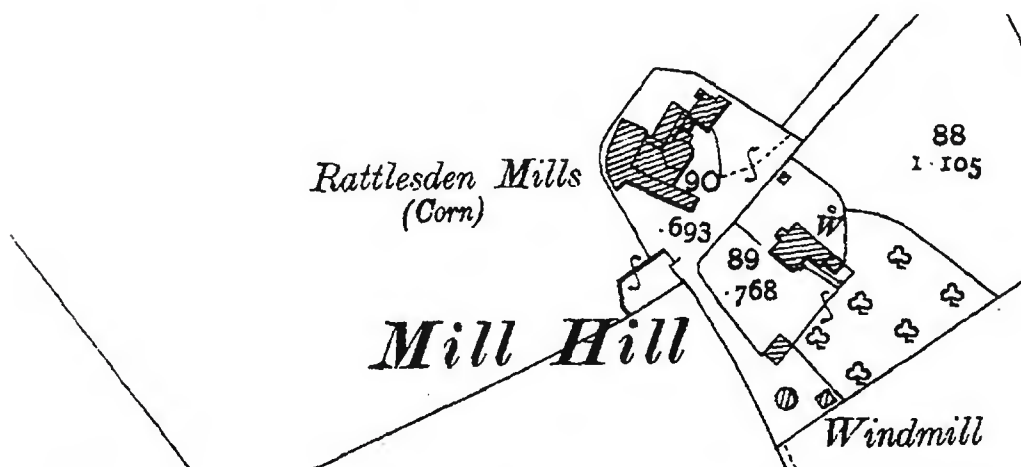
Sally was the small and graceful member of the pair of windmills which together with necessary granary, outbuildings, etc formed Rattlesden Mills for many years. The remaining partner was large in girth and of very robust design, *the* breadwinner in fact while his slim lady stood a discreet distance away and twirled her sails in fine defiance of her neighbour. I can distinctly remember the tower only standing in my very early childhood, in fact a very vivid recollection remains of my father's warning one morning at breakfast time, not to play near the mill, as workmen had then started on the demolition of the tower. Incidentally, for several years this tower housed a small roller flour plant driven first by a steam engine, and later by a suction gas engine.

After the steam engine ceased working the tall shaft was no longer required and one or two elder brothers took me up the mill tower to watch the chimney stack being felled. Bricks had been removed from its foundation after a long rope had been secured to its top portion, and now every available workman was mustered in a neighbouring field to sway the chimney. Now it began to rock on its foundation until with one final heave it crashed to earth, bursting open to strew bricks and mortar over our neighbour's field. Years afterwards, searching through a chest of drawers, I found a brick. Who wanted to treasure bricks in a bedroom I wondered? Some writing on the brick drew my attention and here was the brick which had made the furthest journey across that field, retained by my elder brother years beforehand on which he had inscribed the name of every man who had heaved on the rope.

The original builders and owners of both mills, a family by the name of Winson, fell on evil times and a rather gruesome occurrence blemishes the otherwise stainless character of my first love in mills. This gentleman elected to leave his troubles in a hempen rope and hung himself from the main timbers on the topmost floor of Sally. (*Robert Winson, in 1847*) We like to think his ghost sometimes walks around but honesty compels me to say I have never met it although Sally and I have worked together at dead of night and into the small hours of the morning. Incidentally, although flour has been produced at these premises since the 1820's (*and almost certainly earlier*), they have only



O.S. 25-inch map of 1885 (not to scale)



O.S. 25-inch map of 1904 (not to scale) The smock mill was now sailless and power-driven. Shortly afterwards the body was pulled down and the base incorporated into a new mill building.

been in the hands of three families, the Winson and Clover families and my own father who settled here in 1883.

Probably more flour has been milled here yearly during the war years than ever before for the roller plant, although small, has been continually at work to help in the great task of feeding the people, a task made strenuous through the result of enemy action on some very large mills at our ports.

I am digressing from my subject I fear so we will retrace our steps to Sally and inspect her inside and out. Most are familiar through photographs of the tower and cap mill. Some short and squat, some octagonal, some circular, some of timber, some of brick. Sally has a round, very tapering tower of brickwork 40 feet in height, surmounted (and of course capable of revolving upon the tower) by the usual cap containing the windshaft revolved by the sails, gear wheel for driving stones and, set out on timbers sloping well away from the cap, the fantail, or fly as we termed it to keep the sails pointing into the 'eye of the

wind'. This whole structure kept weather tight and dry by weather boarding nailed to ribs, shaped to form a dome and all joining up to the solid oaken centrepiece called the 'nob'. Four sails or the type known as 'patent', that is fitted with vanes of shutters capable of opening and closing as required, with the necessary gear to control these while working or at rest, complete the picture from the outside.

Come inside and wait a moment until your eyes become accustomed to the dim light of the ground floor. Sacks of corn and a sleeve coming down from the floor above and hanging in an empty sack held up by cords and hooks are about all there is to see here. Step up the ladder if you please and I hope you are nimble and slim for the builders made no provision for stout men when they fitted such narrow stairs and small openings. If you jam a little as you go up, take the porter's advice and 'try sideways, mister'.

Here at once to hand is the hutch into which the meal is conveyed from the stones above by sloping spouts and from which it flows, if required into the sacks below. This is the floor from which the meal is loaded onto a cart or waggon (no lorry please, it does not fit in here). Just above your head is a large



Rattlesden Mills in the late 19th century. The long building in front of the smock mill still stands. This is one of the finest Suffolk windmill photographs known.

beam crossing the centre of the mill and on which rests the iron upright shaft conveying the power generated by the sails to the stones. A large gear wheel known as the spur wheel engages the stone nuts, each of which can be lifted out of gear as required. Count the revolutions of the stone nut with one eye and keep the other eye on the sails swinging by the window (if you can) and you will find Sally is timed up about seven to one, that is, the millstones revolve seven times to one complete revolution of the sails. I always thought she might have been given a little more adverse ratio, say 8 to 1, for in a stiff wind she was like a spirited horse and could not be restrained to a sober, steady pace. Driven off each stone spindle by a leather belt was a pair of heavy ball-governors, the purpose of which was to keep the meal of a uniform fineness. When running fast more corn was automatically fed into the stones and the resultant meal would have become coarse and hard. These governors, always on duty however, lower the runner stone enough to compensate for the extra feed and the meal remains the same whatever speed at which the sails revolve. A simple, but perfectly satisfactory arrangement without which the wind miller's life would be a perfect nightmare.

The next floor is really the most important one in the mill, containing the two pairs of stones, and therefore designated of course, the stone floor. Each stone is 4 feet in diameter and is known as French Burr. These are not cut and shaped out of the solid as Derby peak stones, but are composed of shaped 'burrs' fitted together and held by plaster of Paris. No two stones of this type are alike, each seems to have its special characteristics, more of which we will yarn about later.

Originally this floor possessed three windows, the purpose of which was to give plenty of light for the delicate work of dressing the stones, more specially in the days when wheat was ground here for flour as this work demands the finest, most exacting dress. Not only is this the stone floor, it is also the music room of the mill. Jazz music is not played here but to a windmiller's ears, the finest symphony! Most outstanding is the tap, tap, tap, tap of the beater against damsel. Do not be alarmed, no fair maidens are being administered punishment, the damsel being merely a metal shaft with specially protruding edges which goes down through the eye of the runner stone and sits in two deep notches of the mace and revolves with the stone. The tapered shoe, leading from the hopper and along which the corn travels, has a hard piece of wood firmly fixed to one side and this is held tight up against the damsel by a spring. The motion imparted shakes the shoe and feeds the corn into the eye of the stone. As speed increases, the shoe is vibrated more quickly and a correspondingly increased amount of corn is fed into the stones, vice versa as speed falls off so amount of corn is reduced. This and other devices of the old time craftsmen are delightfully simple yet extraordinarily efficient, and really cannot be improved upon. Modern Barron emery composition millstones are today fed in exactly the same way. I ought to have said that the shoe feeder referred to above is so arranged that the amount of feed is controlled at will. Beans for instance will slide down the shoe very quickly, while oats are sluggish in

movement. Therefore this shoe is suspended at hopper end on a fixed pivot, while the other end is suspended by a cord by which the miller increases or decreases the angle of slope according to the grain he is grinding, as well as the strength of the wind prevailing.

To give the stones the amount of feed that will keep old Sally swinging round comfortably without rushing is quite a delicate adjustment and calls for a kind of sixth sense, which works by a combination of sight, sound and touch.

Another very simple device that always captured my fancy, I might here mention. It is an unforgivable sin for any miller to allow the stones to run, even for a minute, without their feed or corn, or as usually termed 'to run empty'. The corn that is being ground keeps the faces of the two stones from actually touching although they are very, very close together. Should the feed hopper be allowed to completely empty, the faces come together, there is a terribly sickening smell that I find impossible to describe from the stone surfaces being in contact, and what is more important, when these stones come up for dressing again the surface will be extra hard and more difficult to dress. To obviate this happening most mills have a piece of leather about $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 inches wide, tacked at one end to the inside of the hopper, and at the other end a cord is attached and led through a hole in the opposite side of the hopper and with a small bell attached to the other end. The whole contraption is so adjusted that while the hopper is full of corn, the weight of this presses on the piece of leather and keeps the bell tight up to the staple through which the cord is passed. Should the hopper become half empty, the weight is off the leather piece, the bell drops a few inches and comes into contact with the damsel mentioned previously. A good hearty jingling of the bell calls immediate attention to the empty state of the stones and further materials for the ravenous appetite of the 'French burrs' must be supplied at once, or the mill must be stopped.

The only other item of interest on this floor is the stone crane used for raising and turning face upward for dressing the top or runner stone. This swings on a strong iron post and has two stout curved arms suspended from a straight screw. These arms have a round hole at each end and a strong iron pin is fitted into the runner stone, the arms of the crane fit over the protruding part of the pin, and the whole stone raised by the screw until it is high enough to be turned over. As a runner stone of fair thickness weighs anything from 10 to 20 cwts according to the diameter of same, this calls for the exercise of muscle even using the more modern screw provided.

One large bin and two smaller ones occupy all the space on the next floor. I suspect the large one is a relic of the days when Sally's diet consisted of wheat for it holds about 40 sacks and when filled the old mill would swing round for several hours without a great deal of attention. Both pairs of stones can be fed from this bin, while the small hoppers, holding 4 to 5 sacks each are for each individual pair of stones and were needed in the grinding of small lots of farmer's grist, barley, oats, etc., so that each lot could be kept separate. On some of the boards

inside this large bin are written up various pieces of information such as 'H. Self came here October 1878', 'J. Balls came here August 1877' and of a rather different character 'Queen Victoria died Jan. 1901'. I think I can picture the old miller laboriously tracing this inscription, with a heavy heart at the loss of a beloved sovereign, yet feeling he ought to record the fact just where he worked and where he might be reminded of the sad event in days to come.

Passing up one more ladder we come to the topmost floor, perhaps the most interesting of all. Very small it is owing to the taper of the tower, only just room to turn round in, but looking upwards all the cap structure, its main timbers, the massive gear wheel driven by the sails is seen. Of course, all this has to revolve on the tower so that the sails are ever kept in the eye of the wind. Iron segments are bolted down to an oak curb on top of the masonry, and solid, iron rollers carry all the weight of cap and sails, several tons in all, yet the whole is slowly turned around as required by the fantail or fly wheel as the wind changes.

Considering the scanty equipment these old craftsmen worked with, it was no mean feat to construct a perfectly round brick tower, upon which the rollers carrying the cap should track perfectly. At the same time the upright shaft carrying the power down to the stones and pivoting to a main timber in the cap, must always be exactly vertical and the teeth of the head wheel must always engage the driving nut at exactly the same depth of cog.

Michael Hitchcock recalls his own memories of Sally:

I can faintly remember going into the mill with my father whilst it was still in use and seeing the horses and carts coming and going. Once all the grinding was transferred to the provender section of the roller mill and the windmill became obsolete, I can clearly remember playing in 'Sally', climbing up the ladders and out on to the fly stage to drop 'bombs' on to targets below! There was great interest when the elderly millwright arrived (I can't remember his name) to remove the cap of the mill together with the sails and fly stage, also some of the tower. Concrete was then poured on the top floor to make a weather seal with a trap-door in the middle for access. During the war the Home Guard used 'Sally' as a look-out post and straw was laid out on the bottom floor on which those not on guard could try to get some sleep!

NEWS

HERRINGFLEET HILLS CAR PARK OPENS

On Sunday June 22nd a special open day was held at Herringfleet windpump to mark the official opening of a small car park built by the Broads Authority just off the B1074 on the Herringfleet Hills. Visitors can now follow a circular waymarked trail which links with the public footpath down to the windpump. The opening ceremony was performed by Lord Somerleyton and Dr John Packman, Chief Executive of the Broads Authority. Afterwards they strolled

down to the mill which was set going and proceeded to pump continuously for the next 2½ hours in a stiff breeze. Not only did this impress the large number of visitors, it was also welcome because we had chosen this day to make a video of the mill at work, and usually that makes the wind disappear!

I received a surprise the following morning when I was emailed a selection of photographs already on the Broads Authority website, including shots of me hauling the cloths up the sails less than 24 hours earlier! (M.B.)

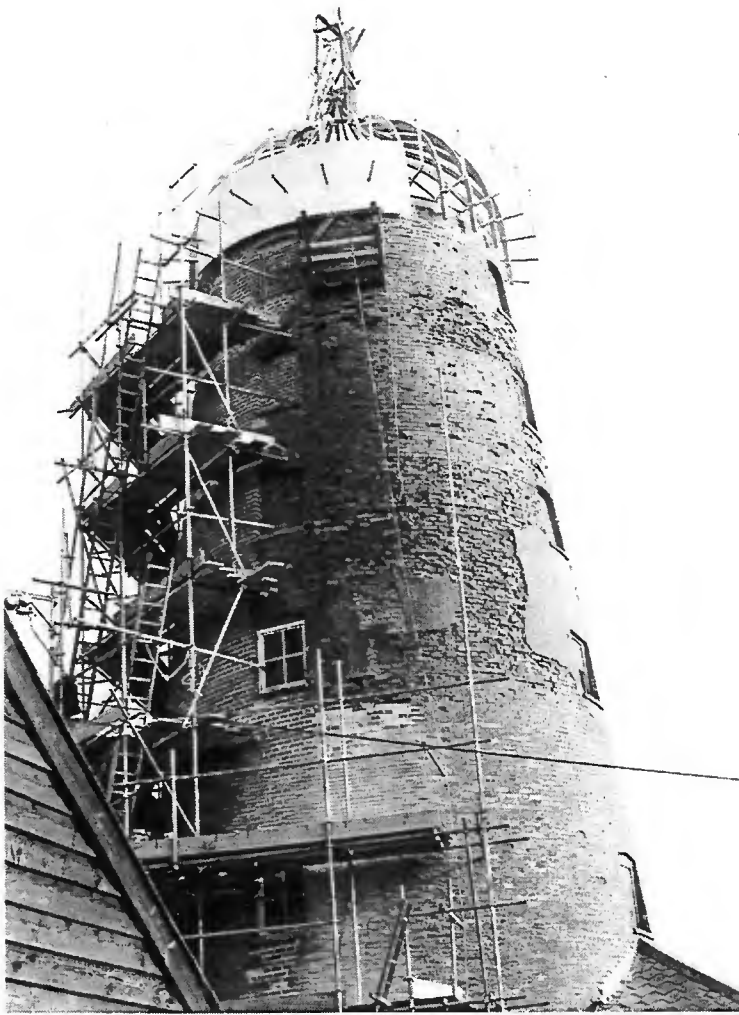
PROGRESS AT BURGH MILL

Just after Easter I resumed work on the new roof on the tower. Burgh mill consists of a tower with floors and the only fragments of machinery to remain are the cast iron segments of the curb, most of which are broken. The aim of the work is not to try to reinstate it as a windmill but to conserve the tower and provide an attractive roof similar in profile to the original. It is interesting though to dream of Burgh as a windmill with machinery again. How could it be done? Today for a professional millwright to provide a winding cap, four fully shuttered patent sails and machinery to drive say two pairs of stones the owner would need a clear £500,000. On a DIY basis an owner of the ability of Richard Seago or the late Peter Dolman could do it. He would start young and the project would see him into middle age - say 20 years - at a cost in materials of some £100,000. Neither option is available or ever likely to be for Burgh.

The green polythene cover was removed to reveal the curb segments and the 26 pairs of brackets for attachment of the steel gallery. This has to be set on brackets raising it above the curb as the cast iron curb segments must be put back in their place as the only remaining part of the machinery. The main gallery components are 26 L-shaped pieces made from square section steel tube welded up and galvanised. They combine the horizontal stanchions which will hold the walkway, and handrail posts extending a yard above these. As well as providing the main components of the gallery the horizontals also locate the lower ends of the 26 roof ribs.

Before the ribs could be fitted a small pylon made of scrap timber was built to give access to the top ends of the ribs some sixteen feet above the existing roof. This roof was fitted about four feet above the dust floor when the cap was taken off in the mid 1920's. It was covered with asphalt and for drainage was built with a slope to a drain hole. In the centre a steel tube was fitted to support a large wind vane. When the Observer Corps took over the tower in c.1940 they removed the wind vane and the top half of the tube, leaving the lower half in place to support their special sighting device. This very strong and well fitted tube remains and now supports the temporary pylon.

The next job was to lift and fit the first four full length ribs. Each rib was well padded with plastic sheet as it would rub against the tower and lifting them from the ground was quite easy. The tops of each of the 13 full length ribs are fitted to a circular boss which must be in the centre if the curb is level and circular and all the ribs are the same length. Fitting the



The tower in mid June with the first sheets in place

first four ribs was tricky but once they were in place all the long ribs could be fitted easily. The 13 short ribs which are two-thirds the length of the long ribs have their top ends fitted to a cross piece or noggin between two long ribs. These are held with brackets rather than being jointed in as I did not wish to weaken the 18ft long laminated ribs in any way.

Now that the ribs are fitted, the acorn finial has to be hoisted to the top. This finial was made for Bardwell mill in 1979 by dear old Cliff Lovett, but was surplus when a new roof was made a few years later. It weights some 100lbs and yet another small wooden rig has been made to allow it to be lifted on and fitted safely.

The aluminium sheet for the covering was delivered a few weeks ago and forms a rather daunting stack. It is being attached to the ribs with aluminium nails with the overlaps sealed with Sikaflex bonder and sealer. Driving these nails is tricky and it's vital to use the correct weight of hammer, rather a light one. The aluminium is being scratch brushed and is quite shiny at first, but the windblown rain of a few English summers will cause it to grey over and eventually its appearance will be like lead.

In the last few weeks about one quarter of the tower has been scaffolded so that builders Chapman & Pleasance of Wetheringsett can start the repair of the brickwork. This is a big job and the bricklayers are working their way down the tower, cutting in new bricks, rebuilding window arches and repointing. The 7000 or so Suffolk white bricks bought last year are being used together with a hydraulic lime mortar mix well suited to the old tower. Mark Barnard who is overseeing the whole project has designed the new windows based on their appearance in old photographs and they are now being made by a specialist joinery firm.

When the work is completed there will be a little exhibition on the first floor showing the mill's history including its wartime occupation by the Observer Corps. We can look at the old photographs and dream of it working again, but the reality will be pleasant and hopefully not too onerous to maintain. (C.H.)

STANTON POST MILL

New owners John and Alexis Craven are now settled in at Stanton mill and John is milling regularly and selling the flour in the locality. As well as generating revenue for future maintenance, flour sales help to make the mill better known in the area, hopefully leading to more visitors. The mill is open to the public at weekends and on weekday afternoons. It will be re-painted this year with lead paint, and some new boards fitted at the top of the buck. John also has plans to get the second pair of head stones running, and is looking into replacing the gravel winding track with brick. S.M.G. congratulates John and Alexis on their positive start, and will give every encouragement to them to build on Peter Dolman's work.

NEWS FROM DRINKSTONE

Fund-raising for repairs to both mills continues apace. Nearly £300 was made during National Mills Weekend, when there were 120 visitors. Members of FODMAM (Friends of Drinkstone Mills and Meadow) have devised a cryptic quiz competition around the words 'wind' and 'mill', and packs of greeting cards are for sale. The main open weekend of the year will be on September 13th-14th (see 'Events' below). Firm plans for the start of work on the post mill are still on hold pending a decision on the English Heritage grant. Some repair to the felt cladding of the smock mill, which is leaking in places, may be attempted next year. Now that the oil engine is running again, it should be possible to mill again in the smock tower with relatively little work.

GREAT CORNARD MILL CONVERSION BID

An outline planning application has been made for residential development at the old Baker's mill site at Great Cornard, now owned by Nestle Purina. The watermill and 1911 roller mill buildings would be refurbished and converted. The complex was last used for the manufacture of petfood but this activity has been transferred to a new building on a nearby industrial estate. The watermill has been gutted internally, and a vertical slice taken out of the middle to form a fire break. (M.B.)

LARK MILLS CLOSES

We understand that milling has now ceased at Parker Bros. mill at Mildenhall, bring to an end probably over 1000 years of milling activity at the site. The impressive mill buildings (a roller mill of 1887-8, and a second range of 1908, incorporating parts of a 18th-19th century timber-framed mill) are likely to be retained and converted to a new use, probably residential. Both are largely empty. The mill is not listed, but is within a conservation area. Recently an application was made to demolish the small office building on the road frontage. (M.B.)

EVENTS

SUFFOLK HISTORY FESTIVAL: MUSEUM OF EAST ANGLIAN LIFE, STOWMARKET; SAT. JULY 12th, 10am-5pm, & SUN. JULY 13th 11am-5pm

S.M.G. will be participating at this major event, with a stand inside Alton watermill. Although this tends to be a bit peripheral to the main museum site, the lure of transport down to the mill and chapel on a Ford Model T bus of 1927 vintage should help to ensure we do not miss out on visitors.

Among the many attractions over the weekend will be historical re-enactments in period costume, craft demonstrations, a working Suffolk Punch and steam engines, archive films, a book fair and of course many local history displays.

VISIT TO RATTLESDEN TOWER MILL: SUNDAY AUGUST 10th from 2-4pm.

This visit will provide an opportunity to see the conservation work carried out by Chris Hullcoop last year on Sally, as the little tower is still affectionately known. Enough of the machinery and fittings remain in place to be able to imagine the mill in its working days, as described by Harold Hitchcock elsewhere in this newsletter. We visit by kind permission of S.M.G. members David and Paddy Blackburn.

During the afternoon we hope to be able to show the short video film of the roller mill taken last year by Marcus Cook. Work on the conversion of this is now well advanced, so the video is a good record of the buildings in their last days of disuse.

The mill is just under a mile south-west of Rattlesden village, down a turning off the road leading to Hightown Green (Grid Ref.968584). It stands in the grounds of the Mill House, opposite the roller mill buildings.

DRINKSTONE MILLS OPEN WEEKEND: SEPTEMBER 13th-14th, from 1-5pm

The main opening of Drinkstone Mills this year corresponds with the Heritage Open Days. As well as the two mills, visitors will be able to see steam threshing and heavy horses in the field opposite, so it should be well worth going along.

HERRINGFLEET WINDPUMP OPEN DAY: SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 21st, from 1-4pm

This will be the third and probably final opening of this unique working windpump in 2003, so do get along if you can.

VISIT TO MARSTON'S MILL, ICKLINGHAM

Marston's mill at Icklingham is one of the largest flour mills in the region. We have been offered a guided tour on a weekday evening for up to 20 people, followed by an adjournment to the nearby Red Lion for a meal. We are thinking of early October, with a 6.30pm start. We would be grateful to hear from members wishing to come on this visit, so we can be sure of a reasonable number before confirmation. Contact Mark Barnard (01473 727853 or email mark.barnard@et.suffolkcc.gov.uk)
