

SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

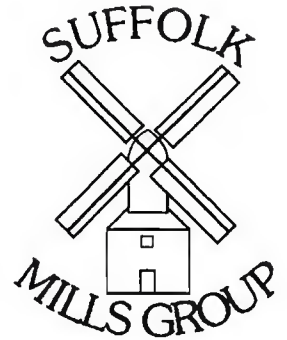
Newsletter

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Our only event since the last newsletter, the social evening on December 13th, saw a disappointing turnout, a far cry from the pre-Christmas get-togethers 10-15 years ago which were the most popular events of the year. If there was any reason why you could not attend, we'd be pleased to hear. Was it too near Christmas, or was there insufficient notice of the date, or would a similar event be better if it was held in the warmer (and lighter) months? It would be good if joint socials could be arranged with neighbouring mills groups, but given the distances involved this probably wouldn't work.

In the current SPAB *Mill News*, John Bedington asks why more enthusiasts do not consider renting a mill rather than struggling to find one to buy. Renting, he argues, makes a mill more affordable, and thus increases the chances of mills getting into sympathetic hands. I certainly would not argue on the issue of affordability. Of the 41 mills advertised for sale in the same edition of *Mill News*, the average price is £546,000, and except for apartments in conversions, there is virtually nothing under £250,000. True, these are nearly all converted watermills, but all too often the asking price for complete unconverted mills without planning permission reflects an element of conversion 'hope value', lifting them well beyond the means of the average enthusiast. However, relatively few mills are available to rent, and given the input of capital required for repair work, or the very modest revenue which can be derived from a working mill, I can understand why renting is perceived as unattractive. Many privately owned and restored mills will continue to be sold into an uncertain future; the best we can do is to seek to guide and influence new owners as far as we are able.

Forthcoming mill events are listed below. Please do make a special effort to support them, starting with our public meeting at the end of this month.

SMG public meeting, Ipswich
SPAB Mills Section meeting, London
National Mills Weekend
SMG visit to Assington mill

Saturday February 28th
Saturday March 20th
May 8th-9th
Sunday May 16th

Mark Barnard

A MILLING FAMILY Joy Croxon

Whilst researching my family history I discovered the interesting fact that my family had played an important part in our heritage. They were millers and farmers, mainly in north Suffolk and also in Norfolk.

My family worked various mills in Suffolk and Norfolk during the 19th century, some were post mills, some tower mills. Firstly, George Dye took over the working of a small post mill at Syleham after it had been moved by horse and tumbrel from an original site at Wingfield. A gentleman, whose family had lived in Earsham Street, Wingfield told me about this very interesting event as told to him by his grandfather, this being a true story. It was stated on the death of George Dye in 1847 that he had carried on an extensive trade at Syleham mill of some twenty years, as was reported in the *Ipswich Journal* at the time.

John Bryant, my great great great grandfather was born in 1802 at Wortham, Suffolk, son of John and Ann Bryant (nee Dye) and came to work for his uncle as a young man. John Bokenham, stepson of George, also worked as a miller and so began a family business which was to carry on for just over a hundred years. After the death of George Dye in 1847 the mill was put up for auction. John Bokenham ran the mill for a year but it was bought by John Bryant in 1848, who had already purchased a neighbouring post mill at Wingfield in 1842.

John Bryant married Sarah Ann Warn at Syleham in 1830 and they had eleven children, eight of which survived. Many of the family worked as millers including five sons and two son-in-laws. The two mills were run as a family concern. A son George tragically died in 1848 as the result of an accident at one of the mills. It seems that after John's death in 1847 at the age of 65, Sarah assumed control. Later James took over Syleham mill and Walter carried on at Wingfield.

John Bryant, the eldest son and my great great grandfather, married Louisa Blake at Weybread in 1853 and they settled at Syleham where John was miller. Their children were born here. However when James took over at Syleham it seems that John was destined to move on. He worked and owned his own mills, moving to Mill Farm at Denham near Eye where he was a farmer and miller and ran the post mill there from 1868. After a few years the family went to Norfolk where John was recorded as Miller Artisan at the Black Tower mill at Saxlingham Thorpe. In 1887 they moved back to Suffolk where John took on the leasehold of the 'tall' post mill at Weybread. My great grandmother Sarah and her husband and their children were also living there.

Maybe after many years of milling, John decided to go back to farming, taking on Pond Farm at Ashfield Green, Stradbroke. He died in 1897 aged 65 years. Remarkably his wife Louisa lived to a great age and died in 1918 aged 86. One of their sons moved to Essex and became a stone dresser.

It seems that milling was 'in the blood' so to speak. Edgar Bryant, brother of John, ran the tower mill at Thorpe Abbots, Norfolk, and others associated with the family worked mills at Billingford, Scole and Horsford. Some were journeyman millers.

Syleham post mill is no longer a working mill, just the roundhouse remains although thanks to the Suffolk Mills Group it has been restored. Sadly, Wingfield mill didn't survive into the 20th century as was the demise of many.

REMINISCENCES OF A COUNTRY MILLER (2)

Harold Hitchcock

We continue the account of country milling written in 1946 by Harold Hitchcock, proprietor of the roller mill at Rattlesden.

After the mill, the miller. Allow me to introduce John Smith as I first knew him 30 years ago. No, this is not a nom-de-plume, my old workmate and erstwhile tutor rejoiced (in company with many others) in the plain unvarnished title as stated.

Short, sturdy, with a thatch of iron-grey hair (which I often trimmed for him in the mill during a dinner-hour), small twinkling eyes and possessed of a good fund of quaint wit and humour - where could we find his counterpart today? John had spent perhaps the greater part of his life in the neighbouring county of Norfolk and so his broad accent was in pleasing contrast to our own Suffolk drawl. To a very keen observer, his trade-mark could be seen on his left hand. After many years of stone-dressing the minute particles of steel that fly off the mill bills in their contact with the millstones, become embedded in the outside of the left hand fingers and show a blue tint beneath the skin.

In life and character he was God-fearing, industrious and faithful. A staunch nonconformist and regular worshipper at our chapel he had one trait in common with other millers I have known, he was quite an adept performer on the fiddle. Many a hymn tune we have tried over together, he on his beloved fiddle and I trying to accompany him on the piano. Whether the combined efforts would have proved acceptable to the ears of a musician I cannot say, but we enjoyed the result so what matters, we have no near neighbours to offend!

John buried his wife after he had been with us a few years and I am afraid his home life was not particularly happy afterwards. A housekeeper was engaged by him who seemed also to constitute herself Chancellor of the Exchequer, for John was always short of money from then on, although his wages were probably larger than he had ever previously handled, the First World War now being upon us, with the ever rising costs and wages. The gift of a 'cig-rette' would make the old chap happy for hours, so short was he of pocket money. At stone dressing he excelled, having lived and worked in the time in which all flour was produced on millstones which called for extreme care and the very finest work (as it should still be). Just to look at a pair of millstones John had completed, was a joy to any miller.

One other character I feel must come into these pages is our faithful servant, William Youngman, engine driver on these premises for well over 50 years. Always busy, always helpful, always cheerful, what a fragrant memory he has left behind. William came of a large family, brought up on the princely wage of nine shillings a week and tells of conditions in his early days that would sound strange to the ears of modern youth. Middling dumplings were one of the articles of diet in his young days and as a young man at work on the land he used to put in a

long and hard day's work on bread and apple or bread and onion!

How does an engine driver fit into these pages chiefly given over to windmills one might ask? William's job was not actually a full time job once steam was dispensed with and a suction gas engine installed. Where the old cumbersome steam boiler used to lay, a workshop was evolved with blacksmith's forge, drilling machine, etc. Here William reigned supreme and many and varied were the jobs brought to him for first aid attention or more permanent repair.

One of the failings of a windmill is that every now and again and pretty often in high winds, a sail vane would be blown out and become pretty damaged in its fall and nothing looks worse than a mill at work with several spaces in its sails, like a person badly needing dental treatment. These were brought along to William and in due course they would be repaired, not perhaps as a millwright would turn them out but still quite useable again. Then given a quiet day the ladder would be brought out and these vacant spaces filled up with repaired vanes, and we could present a more satisfactory appearance to neighbouring millers. But this we were sure to find - let her work with one or two vanes out and no more would fall but fix her up completely with every vane in place and one would come out the very next day; incomprehensible are the ways of the female sex!

Leaky kettles, other damaged household utensils, agricultural implements from the farm, were all sent down to William for his attention and to all he would invariably say, "I'll see what I can do with it". I once saw him trying to learn the art of re-setting 'cut-throat' razors, using the method of trial and error and testing them on his hairy fore-arm but at this I do not think he was a conspicuous success.

Besides mending damaged vanes for Sally he always took part in repainting her, in three or four year periods, and as he suffered from a complaint which caused his hands to shake as if afflicted with the palsy, it is a wonder he felt safe in climbing the sails for painting. Yet when over 70 years of age he took the most difficult and dangerous job of all, that of painting the cap of the mill down to the petticoats from the 'cap ladder', a curved contraption suspended by a rope from the knob and terminating in a platform about 18 inches square. To lower oneself over the curve of the cap onto this shaky ladder and down to its little platform was a good test of nerve and although I tackled painting and tarring every other part in due course, I must confess this was one part of the job I never volunteered for.

As I think back and remember these two lovable characters, their cheerfulness, keenness in work, zest of life, with never a complaint or a grouse, it certainly seems they possessed a serenity and contentment with their lot which few more modern workers display today. Perhaps the deep abiding faith of these two is lacking in their contemporaries today?

The millwright from a neighbouring village, who carried out several repair jobs to Sally, ought to receive mention. He was one of the old type village craftsmen who with a few simple tools would carry out his work to perfection. Fashioning a farm



Rattlesden tower mill (Sally) and mill house in the late 19th century, taken from outside the smock mill. The building on the extreme right still stands.

tumbril, fitting new wood teeth to a gear wheel (a job calling for extreme accuracy), making a new sail for a mill, were all taken in his stride. Although well on in middle life when I first knew him he was an intrepid climber and quite unconcerned at working on high on dangerous parts of a mill. He would stand on the cap of a neighbouring mill, 65 feet from the ground, nonchalantly pick up a piece of wood, hold it across his knees and proceed to saw it off to required length; although a slip of the foot on that rounded surface would be instant death.

There was one particular job of work I always admired him for greatly; that was the fitting of a new stock. This of course being the pitchpine baulk which carries two sails and is passed through and secured to the part of the cast iron windshaft which protrudes outside the cap, this shaft being cast with two huge square sockets, at right angles to each other. The stocks of Sally were comparatively small, but even so were 50 feet long, 10 inches by 12 inches in the centre, tapering at each end, and weighing probably no less than three-quarters of a ton. Many mills needed a stock nearly as large again as this and the difficulty of obtaining such a baulk of timber, with good

straight grain and free from knots can be imagined. This difficulty, coupled with the initial cost of same is to my mind, one of the reasons why windmills have fallen into disuse. The only one I actually had to do with was purchased with difficulty in 1916 and cost £1 per foot in the rough log.

Joe, the millwright, made a careful measurement of the poll-head, the cast iron socket mentioned previously, and then proceeded to trim and taper the pitchpine baulk to fit. Now the stock must be a real tight fit and one cannot keep offering up a little piece of wood weighing nearly a ton to see how it fits. Joe could do without such trial. When he pronounced it ready to be put up in place and had all necessary tackle, with two or three extra hands to man the falls of the rope pulley blocks, came the test of his workmanship and accuracy. On one side of the stock is left a shoulder called a 'jog', and to this shoulder it must seat exactly in the poll-head. Up the stock is pulled by the tackle until it is as far up as it will go without persuasion. Now the fall rope is secured to the end of the stock and the sails are carefully turned exactly a half-turn. On each end of the stock before it left the ground was attached a rope and now the stock is settled in place (if it has been prepared correctly) by 'wriggling' it, that is, each rope is pulled in turn giving a back and forward movement to the ends of the stock. This action, coupled with the weight of the stock will soon bring it down to the 'jog' and in its correct place, where it is now fastened tightly by inserting and driving oak wedges between the face of the stock and the front edge of the poll-head. One can see the width of the stock has to be gauged exactly, a little too wide and it will not go into place. A little too much taken off its sides and it is a loose fit. The wedges driven in front of the stock cannot correct this and I do not think one fitted at all loosely would ever be made satisfactory, nor would it last long.

In this case, after several pulls each way, every time the back and forward motion getting less, the stock just came down to correct position and it was a perfect fit. It might be of interest to state this stock erected in 1916 was taken down in 1943 when the cap and sails had to be dismantled, in perfect condition, and was sold to a neighbouring miller to use on his post windmill when required.

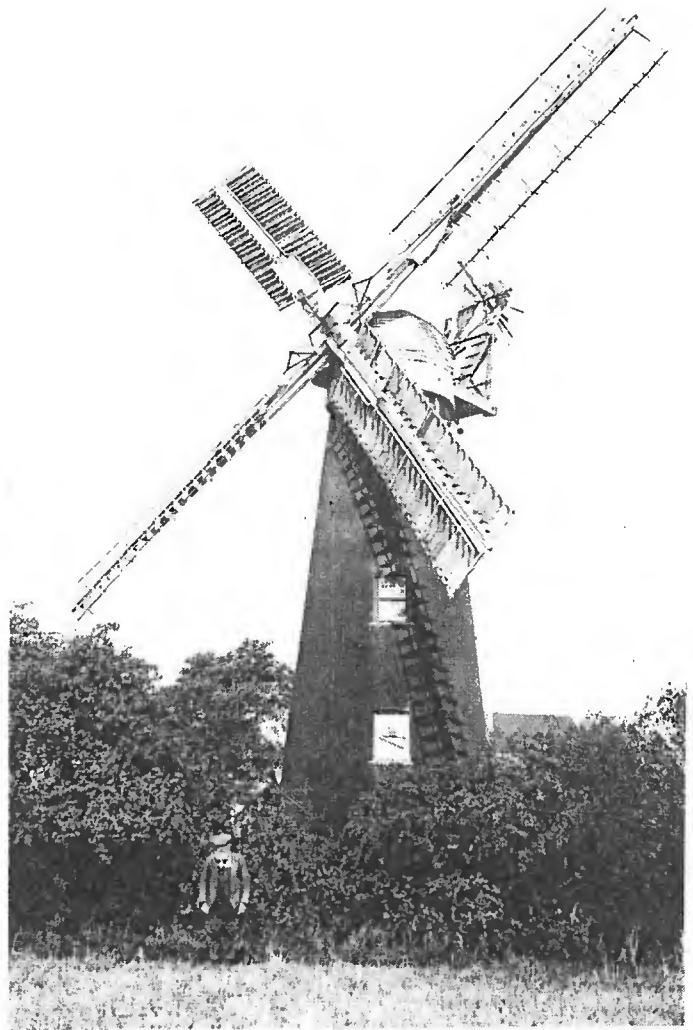
After the stock was in place it was comparatively easy to fit the sails. A set of rope pulleys suspended from the poll-head was used to lift the sail from incumbent position flat on the ground to an upright position, then with a guide rope on each bottom corner of the sail manned by a man on each rope, the sail was pulled up to its proper position. Now to secure it there. A ladder is fetched so that one can climb the sail with three long bolts which go through the 'whip' of the sail (its centre timber) and also through prepared holes in the stock. Once these are driven through and tightened by a nut at the back the sail is fixed, except for the clamps, which can be fixed later. These are substantial pieces of pitch pine bolted to each side of the stock from its centre to about 10 feet down and their purpose is to strengthen the stock in the part which takes most of the strain.

We have however only one sail on the stock and so must

proceed to fit its companion. Naturally one cannot carry a mill sail above the cap of the mill and fix it upside down 70 or 80 feet above ground. So the sails must be revolved a half turn to bring the base end of the stock down to receive its sail. This is not quite so easy as it sounds for there is the weight of the bottom sail to contend with as we turn this up until straight over the mill. In fact, quite a number of men would be required to do this were it not that by lowering the gripe (brake on head-wheel) and turning backwards a bit at a time, the weight of the sail is held as by a ratchet, and little by little the bottom sail is brought to the top position. Now repeating the former process the second of the pair is eventually fixed in place ready for the vanes to be fitted and all the necessary rods to connect these.

During the winter previous to fitting the new stock we had worked Sally with two sails only, as the old stock was cracked and unsafe. I cannot say this was very pleasant or efficient. It needed a very strong wind for her to run anywhere near a useful speed and in gusty wind the speed would fall off sharply between gusts. Still, some work was done and it is an acknowledged fact among wind millers that a mill with only two sails will do more than half the work it will do with four. Also by using six sails, as is done in some counties, the power is not proportionately increased. Most probably the greater number of sails cause greater disturbance to air currents; therefore on each increase in their number, efficiency becomes less per sail.

I have wondered why attempts have not been made in this country to modernise the windmill as has been done on the continent, especially Holland and Belgium. With streamlined sails, a roller bearing at the neck, taking all the weight of the sails and windshaft, and perhaps a tapered steel girder in place of the pitch pine stocks, a mill would develop very useful power in any moderate wind.



Sally in September 1934
(photo: S. Freese)

During the past quarter of a century we seem to have lost our thrifty habits, we neglect nature's sources of power rather and prefer to import oil from other countries to provide our sources of power. In the next decade it seems possible atomic energy will displace most of our present sources of power and so once again we shall be harnessing the forces of nature on a scale hitherto undreamt of.

WERE THESE MILLS PHOTOGRAPHED? (1) Brian Flint

Several people including Peter Dolman, Des Codd and myself have been on the lookout for photographs of Suffolk mills for many years and indeed have located images of something like 240 windmills in more or less complete order.

I knew that several mills which worked or stood in a fairly complete state, since the advent of photography, were not represented so undertook a search through my records. I took as a cut-off point 1870, at which time photography was quite well established, and was surprised to find that almost 120 windmills, which could have been photographed since that time, did not appear. Of course, many old photographs have been lost or destroyed but surely there must be some more lying around somewhere waiting to be discovered.

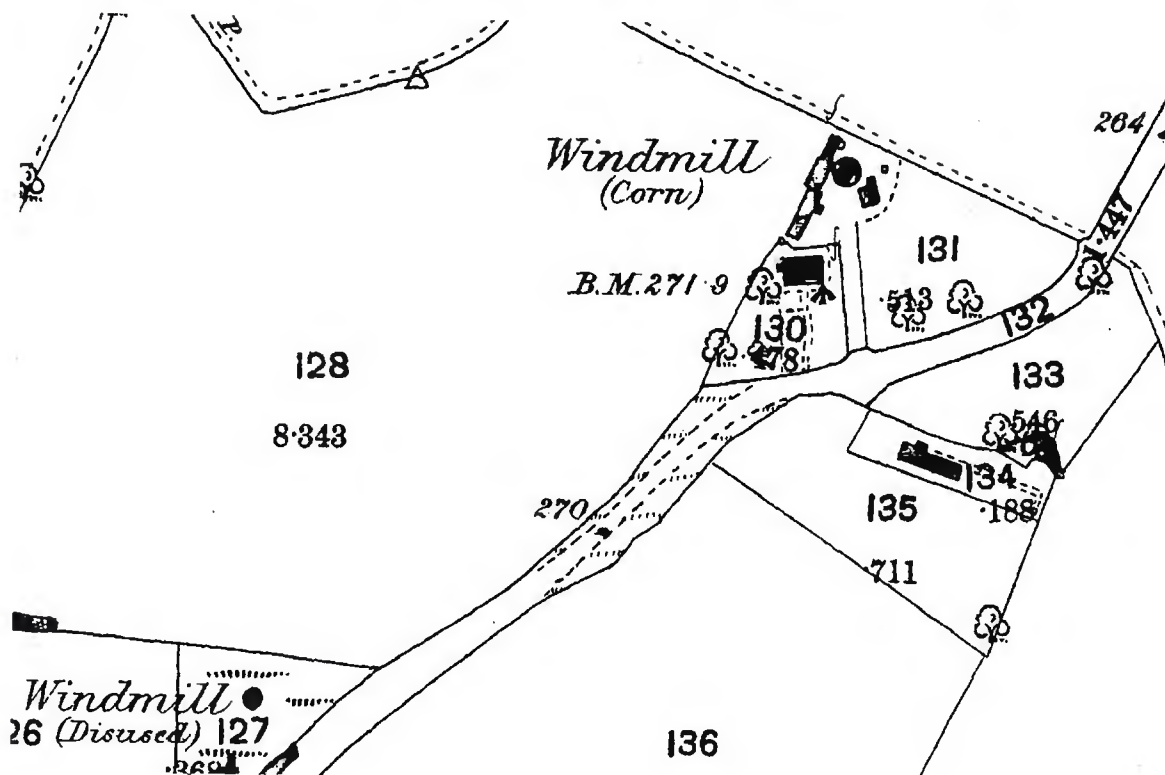
I am going to list these 'missing images' in alphabetical order, starting in this issue as follows. I have used P, S and T to denote post, smock and tower mills, followed by the Grid Reference and date of demolition. Photographs of the roundhouse at Brome and the tower of Chilton Street mill do exist. So far, I have not looked at drainage mills and pumps.

ASHBOCKING (GREEN)	P	187547	c.1892/6
ALPHETON	P	878494	c.1881
BACTON	P	044664	c.1900
BADINGHAM (LOW STREET)	P	311688	c.1913
BARROW	P	767641	c.1880?
BECCLES (INGATE MILL)	P	432897	1879
BEDFIELD	P	222663	c.1903
BELSTEAD	P?	133411	1895
BLAXHALL	P	369572	1883
BOTESDALE (BLACK MILL)	T	058750	1909
BOXFORD	P	uncertain	c.1914?
BRANDESTON	P	246610	1893
BRENT ELEIGH	P	938476	1895
BROME	P	135762	c.1899
BRUNDISH (UPPER MILL)	P	264698	c.1914-18
BUNGAY (FLIXTON ROAD)	P	337892	1879
CAMPSEA ASH	P	319560	Post 1887
CAPEL ST MARY	S	088381	1886
CLARE (STOKE ROAD)	P?	762446	1875
CLARE (CHILTON STREET)	T	757472	Working c.1883

I would appeal to anyone living in a village or town where one of my 'missing images' stood, to look at the site and see if a mill house still stands and perhaps talk to the owners, or any local old inhabitants who just might have a photograph.

MILLS ON THE MAP

This issue we feature the fine tower mill at Preston St Mary near Lavenham. Built together with the mill house on a new site in 1846, it worked until 1919-20 and was pulled down c.1928. The buildings shown on the photograph can all be identified on the map (1885 25-inch O.S.) - even the tall chimney! The disused windmill some 200m to the south-west was a smock mill, the site of which was excavated in 1998.



THE DEMISE OF CHILLENDEEN MILL Patricia Parr

'Here today, gone tomorrow' goes the saying. And that was in fact what happened to Chillenden open trestle post mill in east Kent on the morning of the 26th November 2003. At around 11.30am the mill suddenly collapsed, having been witnessed by Mr Gibson, a local farmer, who was cutting cabbages in a nearby field.

For some 132 years this white painted post mill has been a very prominent and familiar landmark, although it could so easily have met its fate in October 1987 when many homes and woodlands here in Kent experienced the terrible aftermath caused by the unexpected hurricane that zigzagged its way through parts of Sussex and south-east Kent with 100mph winds. It was a miracle that it just bypassed Chillenden village and mill, whereupon other villages within the immediate vicinity were badly affected. Kent had never ever experienced such storms since records began some 300 years ago.

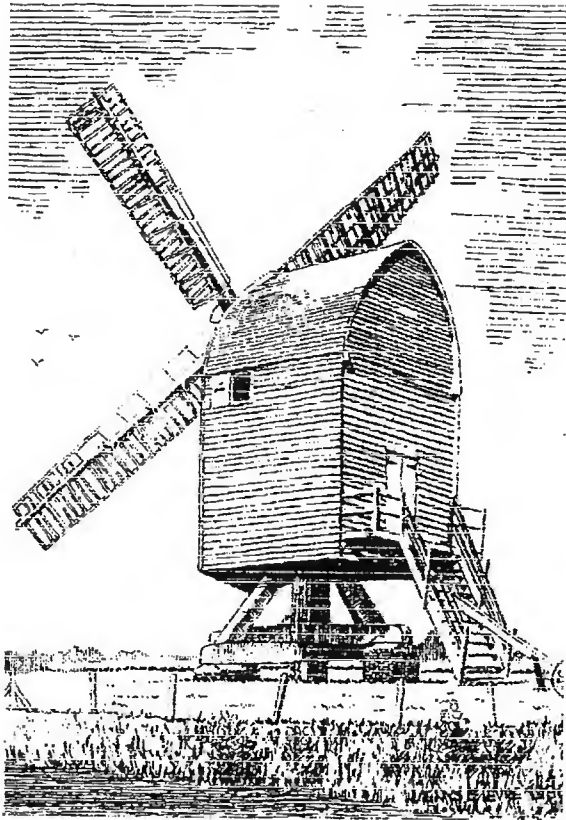
Both Dick and I managed to visit the mill site on Friday 29th November where we were bystanders while a small group of important mill officials assembled for a site meeting, and carried out an inspection of the crumpled broken heap lying prostrated before them. The mill must have thought it was a thanksgiving service held in its memory!

Below is a copy of a report by Mr John George published in the local *Kent Messenger* newspaper. If anyone is interested in obtaining a booklet written by John George on Chillenden mill, it can be purchased for the sum of £3 plus postage, by contacting Mrs Eryl Shaw (01304 841043).

About 11.15am on the 26th of November 2003, we were contacted by Radio Kent and Meridian TV asking for details of wind damage to the mill, this was the first we had heard of it. Later when speaking to Mike Gibson the farmer who has the land by the mill he said he actually saw it fall at about 10.30am, and in the field opposite where he was working the wind was not strong enough to have blown the mill over. Either a freak isolated gust hit it, or as Ray Harlow of Sandwich mill said the mill may have been sufficiently damaged during the night that a lighter wind was able to finish the job in the morning.

Until last year my wife and I were the local managers of the mill for Kent County Council, so it was quite a shock to hear that the mill had been damaged. My first reaction was to mind my own business since we were no longer involved, but having looked after the local requirements of seeing to the opening rota and keeping the site clean and tidy, I felt I just had to see what had happened to the poor old fellow. I like many more went in the pouring rain to find he had collapsed completely. We took photographs under poor conditions, even a BBC cameraman was having problems with wet in his highly expensive camera. It was indeed a very sad sight.

The history and those involved with its running over the years since it was built in 1868 came to mind. The six millers who ran it over the years. The daughter of the last miller Chris Dawkins nee Laker still lives in Woodnesborough and has known the



Chillenden Mill

mill since she was a little girl when she played there with her cousins, there was a chalked sign on one of the timbers saying Chris Laker stood here, with the rain this is probably gone now. One milling family is buried in Chillenden churchyard, the son was killed at Amiens in the first war in France, he has a memorial by the pulpit in the church. The recent restoration and cost was commented on, but this was of secondary importance now the old boy is in ruins. If rebuilt it will not be the same, or bear the history, like Rye mill it will never have known the bustle of the milling business or the smell of hot meal, or all those old timers who worked there, some writing names and dates on the timbers.

Chris's father Norman the last miller died only in November of 1997, and in October of 1997 Ron Holyer also died; he was the husband of Margaret one of the friends of the mill.

Ron worked there when in his twenties before joining the RAF; there have been many including six milling families who spent their working hours there. Robert Hobbs who spoke on TV reminded me of when his father Malcolm who as a school boy learnt his milling with Albert Henry Laker, Norman's uncle. Malcolm later restored Sarre mill, and still recalls playing truant from school to go to Chillenden.

Having reminisced on the past, I should mention the present, the considered cause of the collapse and what is to become of the mill. The experts spent much of last Friday afternoon (28th November) at a site meeting at which I was present, and the conclusion was that a severe gust of wind hit the mill on its eastern corner lifting the base structure sufficiently to dislodge the foot of the centre post upon which the mill body is mounted, allowing it to pivot over on its mountings.

Static mills are usually left facing the prevailing wind, but when they were working they were always turned to face into the wind, even if it meant the miller getting up in the middle of the night to turn it. Modernised mills had automatic gearing to keep them facing into the wind, this is essential as the structure is braced to take high wind only from the front.

Being a Grade II listed building it has to be rebuilt, it is heavily insured to enable a complete rebuild should the wooden structure have caught fire. All salvageable parts are being stored off site locally, and apart from the brick piers the

debris will be completely removed. It is not yet possible to say when the mill will be rebuilt as it depends on availability of the millwrights, and can only take place after much planning and detailed costing, plus obtaining a new windshaft, which will probably be a new casting. The central post will have to be renewed which is in itself a major problem as good timber of that size is near impossible to obtain. It may even have to be fabricated by laminating about four pieces of smaller timber to obtain the two foot plus square section.

No doubt many people who read this will have memories of the mill which has become our friend and landmark. Perhaps some would like to write to East Kent Messenger and share these memories, which could very usefully be recorded in a future edition of the booklet which has been currently sold at the mill. We will inform you of developments and when the rebuild is likely to take place.

NEWS

LEN BALL

It is with sadness that I record the fact that Len Ball died on December 2nd at the age of 70 after a short severe illness. Len had been a member of S.M.G. since 1979 and was a regular at many of our events.

He was born in Isleworth, Middlesex in 1933, and was brought up in Hayes. During his teenage years he met Sylvia his future wife and shortly after completed his mechanical engineering apprenticeship with a firm called Cramic engineering. With his apprenticeship completed he and Sylvia married and shortly afterwards Len was called up to do his two years of National Service with the RAF. Although not expecting to, he enjoyed this experience. Returning to 'Civvy Street', he and Sylvia moved to Basingstoke where he took up a job with Lansing Bagnall as an engineering draughtsman. Here, he became interested in steam traction engines, and went as far as crewing for a friend who owned an engine. Sylvia remembers him with their young son and daughters arriving home blackened and grimy after a day's stoking. His passion for traction engines lasted until his death; he attended the Great Dorset steam fair every year, and in recent years, the meeting at Barleylands, near Billericay. Whilst living at Basingstoke another of his lasting enthusiasms was born, that of wind and water mills. He nurtured it by joining the Hampshire Mills Group.

In 1984 the family moved to East Anglia, buying a house in Acton, near Sudbury. It was on a S.M.G. visit to Wiston mill, near Nayland, that I first met him. Just as the visit was about to begin two cyclists were spotted coming along the dry, dusty lane leading to the mill and in a few minutes joined us. They turned out to be Len and Sylvia. One of Len's talents was that he was good at crossword puzzles, and always completed the crafty ones devised by Mark Barnard for the S.M.G. newsletter. As well as supporting many Essex and Suffolk mills group events Len was a SPAB Mills Section member and an attendee at the annual meetings devoted to wind or water mills.

Eclipsing his interest in mills and steam, cycling and bicycles were his main interests. He rode and repaired them as often as he could. He salvaged many children's bikes from rubbish tips and took on old, discarded or outgrown machines, and refurbished and rebuilt them before donating them to Ryes School at Little Henny which is a boarding establishment for disadvantaged children. At least once a week Len went cycling, most often with Sylvia. During one of those rides he began photographing the picturesque and sometimes amusing village signs that were beginning to appear across Britain. Before his death he had amassed quite a collection of these pictures. He often attended parish meetings in Acton as a spectator.

I wondered if I could claim that he and I were near neighbours, but decided not. He and Sylvia lived on the north-east side of Sudbury whereas Penny and I live on the south-western side at a distance of some five miles. However, it was not at all unusual for them to drop in on us for a cuppa towards the end of a cycling jaunt. He also often accompanied us on Essex Mills Group visits or when attending SPAB events.

Sometimes appearing morose and cynical, Len nevertheless had a heart of gold and will be sorely missed. (Roy Berry)

FRISTON POST MILL

Plans are well advanced to put in place temporary support for the buck, prior to permanent repair of the trestle. It is proposed to erect a steel frame around each side of the mill, anchored to concrete ground pads. This will support steel needle beams under the sheers and side girts, allowing the buck to be lifted up to seven inches on hydraulic jacks. Grants towards the work have been offered by English Heritage, Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council. It is hoped that preparatory work on site will commence later this month. (M.B.)

TIDE MILL QUAY OPENING

Recently completed enhancement works to the tide mill quay at Woodbridge have greatly improved the setting of the mill, tidying up what was a rather scruffy area. The face of the quay has been reconstructed, and the whole area resurfaced, with timber bollards for tying up vessels, and simple seating. The £100,000 project, largely paid for by the Heritage Lottery Fund, will be officially opened at midday on Friday April 16th. Afterwards there will be a mini parade of horse-drawn wagons to the museums on Market Hill and onward to Buttrum's Mill, and back again, the aim being to help publicise these visitor attractions. Look out for publicity nearer the date - and the name of the mystery celebrity who will do the honours on the quay!

The Tide Mill Trust is considering a further application to the HLF for improvements to the tide mill itself. Plans are still at an early stage but the work could include opening up the second floor to the public, getting more of the machinery turning and improved access for the disabled. While it is tempting to try to get the mill grinding again, this would require a much larger pond and would be a major project. It is sobering to think that in the mill's working days the pond extended to 7½ acres! (M.B.)

NEWS FROM DRINKSTONE

Following a very successful Open Weekend in September 2003 (enhanced by a working vintage farming event in a field opposite the Mills) we had great hopes of hearing positive news from English Heritage about grant aid for the restoration of the post mill. They did indeed offer a grant of £150,000 in November which was encouraging although unfortunately there were stringent timescales and match funding deadlines to meet. Despite great efforts on both sides to find common ground, the grant offer finally faltered in January as the millwright we hoped to employ could not fit in any work before the October 2005 deadline. The grant offer has now been withdrawn.

This has been a huge disappointment but we are determined to press ahead with a new strategy aided by Mark Barnard and the S.M.G. committee. We do, now, also need to fundraise seriously in all quarters. Does anyone out there have Dad's Army Appreciation Society connections, or even just good web site skills? We think the fact that the post mill featured in the episode of Dad's Army 'Don't forget the Diver' where Corporal Jones got caught on the sails of the mill should be a great selling point for getting donations for its restoration. All other help with fundraising would be greatly appreciated.

The smock mill has not been forgotten in all this. We intend to have a work-in week during the summer to paint the exterior and renew floorboards and stairs inside the mill to improve access to it. We will also start work on the hurst frame with the aim of driving the millstones again with the 1929 Ruston-Hornsby oil engine. Look out for dates for the work-in in the next newsletter or phone Rosy and Alex on 01359 240220 to be kept in touch.

In the meantime, by the May Mills Open Weekend (when Drinkstone Mills should again be open on Saturday and Sunday, 1-5pm) all the main outbuildings (stables, oil engine house, pig sty and chicken shed) should be looking better for a coat of paint. Come and see us soon - or even better, come and lend a hand. Drinkstone Mills need your help. (Alex & Rosy Hayward)

PROGRESS AT BURGH

Repairs have been completed to the timbers of the granary roof and new sarking boards fitted, together with new soffits and fascias all round. The roof has been temporarily covered with plastic sheeting to protect it from the winter weather and allow the interior to dry out. The new granary windows and door frames have been fitted, following the completion of repairs to the exterior brickwork, and the building is starting to look as smart as the mill tower. Inside the mill, work to the floors is well under way. Oak corbels have been fitted under the decayed ends of some floorbeams, similar to the ones at Thelnetham mill. A number of common joists have also rotted where they go into the walls, and these will be reinforced by bolting matching new timber beside them, as was done to some joist ends in the working life of the mill. Patch repairs will be carried out to the floorboards. By the time the work is completed, builders Chapman & Pleasance will have been on site for around a year! (M.B.)

STANTON MILL FOR SALE

Stanton post mill and mill house have just been put on the market, having been sold as recently as 2002 following the death of Peter Dolman. Agents for the sale are David Burr (01359 245245) and the asking price is £365,000. The importance of this working post mill - listed Grade II* and a Scheduled Ancient Monument - cannot be stressed enough, and S.M.G. will be doing all it can to help find an owner committed to its long-term future. We must ensure that all the good work accomplished by Peter and his helpers is not wasted.

CRANFIELDS APPLICATION IMMINENT

We understand that the planning application for the redevelopment of the site of Cranfield's roller mill beside the Wet Dock in Ipswich is about to be submitted. It promises to be an exciting scheme, incorporating several studios for Dance East and residential development around a central open space which will be accessible to the public. The red brick mill buildings fronting the dock, and those at the eastern end of the site, fronting Key Street, will be retained, together - we hope - with the four millstones at present set into the boundary wall on the road frontage. The fine office building of 1899 at the corner of College Street and Foundry Lane will however be lost. (M.B.)

EVENTS

S.M.G. PUBLIC MEETING: 'MILLING IN THE FAMILY'; SATURDAY
FEBRUARY 28th at 7.30pm; SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL STAFF CLUB,
ROPE WALK, IPSWICH

Main speaker at this year's public meeting is Jack Clover, who will be talking about his research into his family's milling ancestors, going back hundreds of years. Among the well known Clover mills in Suffolk are Drinkstone, Rattlesden, Buxhall, Brettenham, Sudbury, Nedging, Kersey and Hadleigh, but Jack has identified at least 40 mills, mainly in Suffolk, Essex and Norfolk, with Clover connections. Jack is an excellent speaker and well worth hearing. Supporting him will be contributions from Chris Hullcoop and Alex Hayward on Drinkstone Mills, and video film of Wilfred Clover working Drinkstone post mill in the late 1960's and the famous sequence from Dad's Army.

The County Council social club building is on the eastern edge of the town centre, not far from the Suffolk College campus. It stands on the north side of Rope Walk, directly opposite St Edmund House, a red brick office block. There are several surface car parks immediately off Rope Walk, within a couple of minutes walk of the venue. Unlike the Town Hall, you will not have to endure a long walk, or run the gauntlet of the local youths at the end!

Please do make a special effort to turn out for this, our main indoor meeting of the year. If you receive a poster with the newsletter, make sure you display it, and tell others about the meeting - Jack's talk would be of special interest to anyone carrying out research into their own family history.

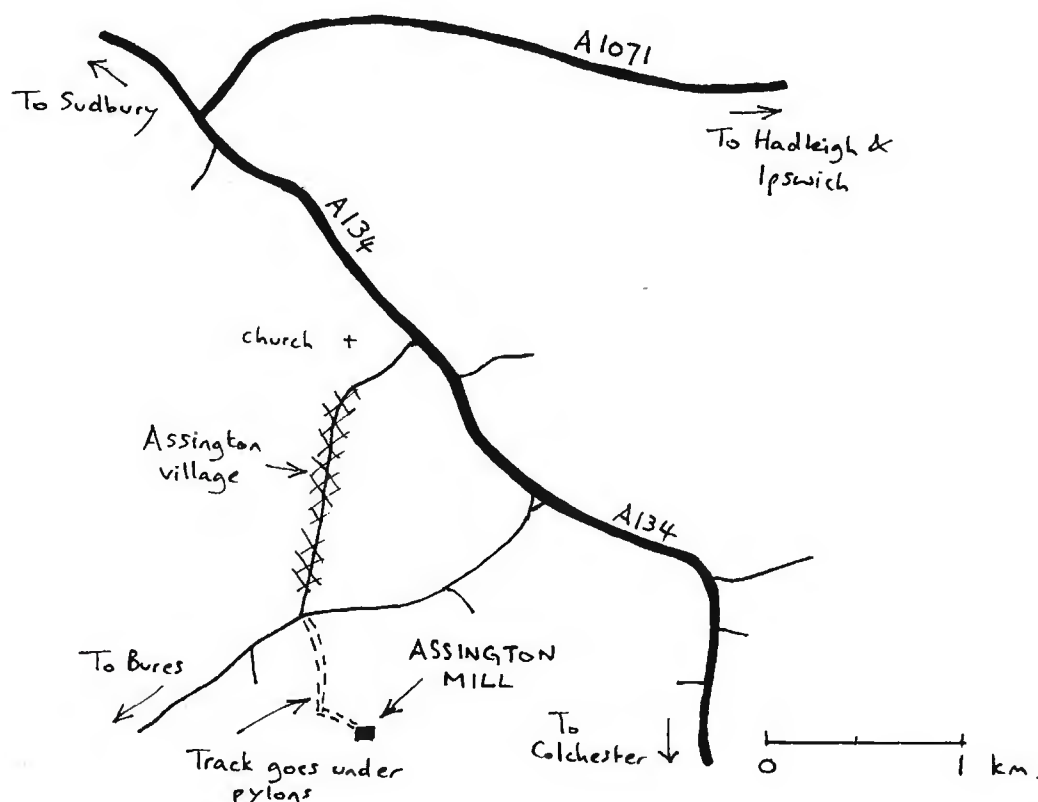
HERRINGFLEET WINDPUMP OPEN DAY: NATIONAL MILLS SUNDAY, MAY 9th

Herringfleet marsh mill will again be open to the public on the Sunday of National Mills Weekend, from about 1pm-5pm. Wind permitting, it will be running, allowing a rare opportunity to see water being raised by a traditional windmill. Members are welcome to come along and lend a hand - getting the mill going takes at least an hour's hard work and any help would be greatly appreciated.

S.M.G. VISIT TO ASSINGTON MILL: SUNDAY MAY 16th, from 2.30pm

Assington watermill has recently been purchased by S.M.G. members Bob and Anne Cowlin, who have invited us to visit this delightful and secluded spot on what we hope will be a glorious Spring day. The mill is relatively little known, probably because it ceased work in the mid 19th century when the owner is said to have cut off his tenant miller's water supply! It was subsequently gutted and used as a farm building. In more recent years the floors have been removed and it has functioned as a barn. However, careful study will reveal subtle clues about its past milling use, including the location of the original waterwheel. Attached to one end of the mill is a slightly later former cottage, now also largely gutted but which was fitted with an external waterwheel during the last war. Bob and Anne have plans to repair the buildings (they have already been re-roofed) and build another wheel where the 1940's one stood.

Assington mill is down a long track at the south end of Assington village. Follow the map below.



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