

SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

Newsletter

www.smg.uk.com

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Having been disappointed with the numbers at some of our recent events, it was heartening to get 40 to the winter public meeting to hear Jack Clover talk about his milling ancestors. Unfortunately, normal service resumed in May when the visit to Assington mill enticed only a handful of members despite beautiful weather and an equally attractive setting. As a way of stimulating interest and hopefully new members, we plan to revise our recruiting poster. We had started to display these in mid 2002, but they soon became out of date following the death of our secretary Peter Dolman. We have also offered a contribution towards a new mills publicity leaflet to replace the one produced by the County Council in 1993.

S.M.G. has agreed to make an annual contribution to the Mills Archive Trust as an expression of our support for this important project. We understand that most of Peter Dolman's Suffolk windmill material is now on the website, and we would urge members to explore the site at www.millsarchive.com. We now hold paper copies of Peter's manuscript notes on Suffolk windmills and will be acquiring his watermill notes shortly.

Mill events are listed below. You will see that an old Suffolk tradition, the work-in, is included, this time to help conserve the nationally important Drinkstone Mills, the jewel in Suffolk's mill crown. Please try to support these events if you can, and make them social occasions.

Herringfleet windpump opening	Sunday August 1st
Drinkstone smock mill work-in	August 7th-9th
Visit to Felixstowe Dock roller mill	Monday August 16th
SPAB Mills Section weekend tour (Devon)	September 2nd-5th
Visit to South Walsham & Thrigby mills	Sunday September 19th

Mark Barnard

WINDMILLS Bob Paterson

I was brought up in rural Surrey and my first windmill experience was when I was about four or five when I was taken to Outwood Common. This was 1975-1976 and the smock had long since disappeared. Several months later I was taken to Wray Common and Reigate Heath. The tower at Wray Common still had sails on at this stage, although they looked like they were going to fall off at any moment. The tower still looks rather forlorn with its unusual fake ogee/conical cap. The post at Reigate Heath particularly fascinated me. I first went there for a Christmas Eve carol service and I walked up that path from the Golf Club not knowing where I was going. Little did I know it was to a roundhouse of an

old post mill, which doubled up as a small chapel! In 1976 or 1977 I went on a day outing with my mother which took in the open post at Nutley and the post at Argos Hill. Before too long I was travelling further afield to Rottingdean, West Blatchington, Rye, Cross-in-Hand, Tadworth, West Kingsdown, Meopham, etc. The hobby had got started. I returned to Outwood post mill and became friendly with 'Windy Miller': the Thomas brothers and helped turn the mill into the wind in preparation for some grinding.



'Windy Miller' at Outwood



Wray Common mill

My first proper 'windmill trip' was in the summer of 1978. My mother took me and our family dog around Essex, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. We just touched Norfolk (Garboldisham and Billingford). It was R J Brown's book that provided the basis of where we were going. I wrote to him and he was kind enough to send me a booklet on Windmills in East Anglia that supplied me with more windmill sites. I hadn't discovered Arthur Smith's books yet.

26 years later I have probably visited and revisited in excess of 700 windmill sites in the UK. Only recently was I trying to find windmills in Wickham Market, Eyke and Gedgrave in my new home of Suffolk. It brings me much pleasure in tracking these mills down. Eyke post mill (or the remains of) is now in the middle of an overgrown wood at the bottom of a garden. I told the old lady who lived in the house there that I think I should return in the winter when it might be easier to penetrate the dense woodland to get anywhere close to the ruined roundhouse walls. The girl at Wickham Market wouldn't let me take a photograph of the newly converted tower mill stump and I know I wasn't going to get anywhere close to seeing the ruinous stump at Gedgrave. Not the

most satisfying of windmill days! My next trip is in August when I drive up to North Yorkshire for a week. There are quite a few sites I haven't visited before.

I have got involved in windmill restoration. I spent weeks over a three-year period at Wicken republic in Cambridgeshire. I was only really good at painting, humping stuff from one place to another and basic woodwork. I really enjoyed being part of a team restoring an old windmill I first saw in 1978. I was there when they took off the temporary cap that Chris Wilson built, and there when they refitted the new cap. I spent a couple of days at Stanton as well.

One day I'd like to have a couple of windmills. One to restore and one to work in. That will be some way off! One day I'd like to write a book, but in the meantime I am happy travelling around - knocking on doors: 'Can I take a photograph of your windmill?', either being refused or turned away or being welcomed in - made a cup of tea and looking at old photographs of when the windmill was working.

It truly is an unusual hobby - but one that interested friends of mine get a lot of satisfaction from when I take them to a restored windmill and give them a guided tour. As a colleague correctly said the other day "Bob doesn't mind if it's a pile of bricks or a fully working windmill!".

REMINISCENCES OF A COUNTRY MILLER (3)

Harold Hitchcock

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

I have already hinted at the periodical painting and tarring of Sally (the tower windmill). This was usually done during summer months, not only because this is the obvious time of year to proceed with outside painting but also because, in those days, the drying up of the previous season's English wheat crop made work somewhat slack in the flour mill and extra help could be released for the job.

There is a peculiar fascination about painting a windmill. Whether it is the pleasure in prospect of the finished job, or whether the joy consists of climbing above the ground and occupying a little world of one's own I cannot say but, on the whole, I know of no job I would undertake in pleasant weather with so much relish, as once again climbing the sails with paint pot and brush.

Having travelled a little in earlier days (chiefly at the expense of H.M. Government) and seen something of the beauties of other lands, there are two forms of beauty I have seen in my own Suffok parish that nothing could equal to my mind. One is a field of red-chaff wheat (it must be red-chaff for the white is insipid by comparison) ready to be cut with the tint of burnished gold rippling in waves across the field as the breeze bends and bows the laden straw. The second is the sight of a newly painted

windmill with its gleaming white sails against a background of azure blue sky. Or, if you wish, stand in the garden at pear blossom time and view the sails so gleaming white with the exquisite background of a large pear tree clothed in its spring mantle from crown to toe and you may wonder if the angel's wings can be more perfect than these homely beauties.

To proceed with the painting, the first job is to attach a long rope to the points of two opposite sails to enable them to be turned to any desired position and also by tying them firmly to gate-post, cart-wheel or other suitable object to prevent any movement of the sails while work is proceeding. Wait though, one thing I have overlooked, that is to climb up to the fly wheel and secure that from turning with a stout piece of cord. If this is not done there is sure to be some slight change of wind while we are working on the sails. They will move so imperceptibly that we shall notice nothing until the ladder from ground to sail tip cants and falls and so marooning us from solid ground until help arrives.

John told me of some millers painting sails with all vanes in position. This is a difficult awkward job and cannot be entirely satisfactory. Our procedure was to remove all vanes except three each side of the sail, one near the point, one in the middle and one near the top, these serving the purpose of keeping the striking rods in place as the sails revolved during painting. A mate is needed on the ground with a long cord and a hook. The cord is passed over a crossbar of the sail and two or three vanes, when detached, are placed on the hook and lowered to the ground. This may not be so easy as it sounds for screws become rusty and stubborn out in all weathers and are very difficult to start at times. Each vane has when first fixed been given its number in the sail, also the sail number. This is done by saw cuts on the edge as I XII or IV X Ψ. The strange symbol given in the latter after X is I believe a millwright's symbol for eight, a V with a centre stroke.

Should the vanes become mixed, they can at once be identified and, should they be reinstalled in the wrong position, one is just asking for trouble. There is enough slight differences in the make of the sails that even if they appear to fit, the chances are as soon as they are closed they will stick against the neighbouring vane and will be badly damaged when the mill is stopped and the vanes are opened. In climbing the sails with the vanes out there are the crossbars only to form the steps of a giant's ladder for these are approximately a yard apart. The angle at which the sails hang enable one to stand and work comfortably from these. John was very short in the leg, whilst I myself at 16 years of age was pretty lengthy in the leg. I could therefore go up the sail and down again while my more elderly partner was rather painfully making one ascent.

To stand and work on the bare framework of the sail arouses a feeling of detachment. You are well above ground and can fully concentrate on the work in hand for one thing. No opportunity here for trying to keep two jobs going at once! Then the height gives more view of the fields and one can observe how the corn is coming along, what farmer so & so is doing in his fields on this lovely

day. It is possible sometimes to observe movements of animals or birds and I remember on one occasion spotting along a furrow of the next field some members of the family that do not generally receive attention until the 1st September. I must draw a discreet veil over what happened immediately afterwards, but I remember my father saying at dinner two or three days afterwards "Very nice. You can get some more another day".

To stand on the topmost bar of the bottom sail and paint the stock and clamps from the poll head to the top of the sail is a little trying. One is apt to visualise what would happen should the windshaft decide to snap off owing to one's weight on the sail. A very improbable happening, 'tis true but such thoughts are apt to arise when commencing this work, but familiarity breeds contempt and, after the

first day, I do not remember I had any qualms, except when a paint pot or other article made a sudden slip and looked like falling - that would upset my equilibrium more than anything else.

We used to mix our own paint on the spot, buying a hundredweight of white lead and a few gallons of linseed oil and turpentine and when mixed to the consistency of thick cream it was a joy to use. Two coats all over brought all the woodwork to a gleaming white. One point took time to fix itself in the mind, that is every piece of wood on which we worked, whether large or small, has four sides as well as two ends. Only by twisting and contortions is it possible to ensure every face of every part has received its coat of paint.

While work was proceeding on the sails, either William or John would be painting the vanes that had been detached. Rather a monotonous job, but they would be laid on an upturned barrel in a convenient position to work upon. These vanes are a light wooden frame covered with canvas, the latter after several coats of paint becoming a hard and shiny surface.

The cap of the mill with the fly-wheel and timbers supporting same now receive attention. To paint down the sides of the cap a curved ladder with a small platform at the lower end is hung down



Sally in 1930 (A. Woolford)

from the knob, and here William at over 70 years of age quite unconcernedly plied his brush on each section. As each was completed, he would climb up his ladder to the top of the cap, and holding the knob with one hand, hitch his ladder round until it hung right to start again on another.

I thought we ought to give the old lady a little colour so the 'petticoats', which are the boards fixed vertically at the lower part of the cap, were painted a bright blue while John and I painted the fly-wheel with black spokes, and alternate halves of the fan blades red then white. The effect I feel was very pleasing. At a little distance the fly-wheel now resembled a petunia in full flower. One difficulty I found was the bright signal red colour we had used did not hold its brilliancy for long and soon became a drab red and, although I tried different brands, none would maintain their brilliant red after being exposed to all conditions of weather.

When the white painting was finished the tower of the mill presented a rather speckled appearance owing to sundry droppings from brushes and perhaps an overturned paint-pot. The next job therefore was to tar the brickwork of the tower and this was really an exciting job at which we had plenty of fun. How does one proceed to tar a tapering tower 40 feet in height? Necessity is the mother of invention and I suppose the method we adopted was quite the orthodox way. A still and warm day was essential for the job. We fetched out a cradle kept for the purpose, dismantled in a nearby shed. This was just two oblong frames which formed the ends to which were bolted two back rails, and two planks laid along the bottom on which to stand. Then two sets of rope pulley blocks were prepared, the top two blocks of each set being hung just under the fly stage on stout bars of iron. The lower blocks were securely fixed to the two ends of the cradle and having provided ourselves with two brushes and pots of tar we were ready for our upward journey. Help was needed to man the falls and pull us up to the top of the tower and hanging just under the fly stage. Having securely tied the fall ropes, our extra help left the scene and we could proceed with our tarring. The straight edges of the planks forming our platform just rested against the circular tower and as we worked at our brushes the cradle swung gently; this was alright when we became accustomed to it, but I soon found that I was windward of John and sundry splashes of tar seemed to come my way.

After tarring all the surface we could reach, the fall ropes were undone and we lowered ourselves enough to tackle another few feet of tower and so on until we had reached ground level again. We now had tarred a vertical stripe from top to bottom and to recommence another stripe and work round the tower we had to proceed up to the cap from the inside, disconnect the fly-wheel gearing and work the cap round by hand until our cradle was in the right position for another downward stripe. This was repeated all day until the top of the mill had been turned a complete circle and the tower was finished.

How it shone in the evening sun, the contrast showing off beautifully the white of our sails. I now found my face had become plentifully besmeared with tar from John's brush and I decided

paraffin oil was the right stuff to remove it. Yes, it took the tar off and I changed my somewhat dingy clothes and had an hour or two's cricket in the sunshine which was still pretty warm. Did I rue my choice of a cleansing agent? To this day the smell of paraffin reminds me of that evening, my face seemed ready to burst into flame!

Such minor mishaps were all lost sight of when the job was complete, vanes all back in their respective places, and one September morn gave us a good steady breeze. What a pleasure it was to 'cloth' Sally and see our snow white sails begin to revolve. Into the mill and set the stones, hoist corn for grinding and so begin a season's work again.

WERE THESE MILLS PHOTOGRAPHED? (2) Brian Flint

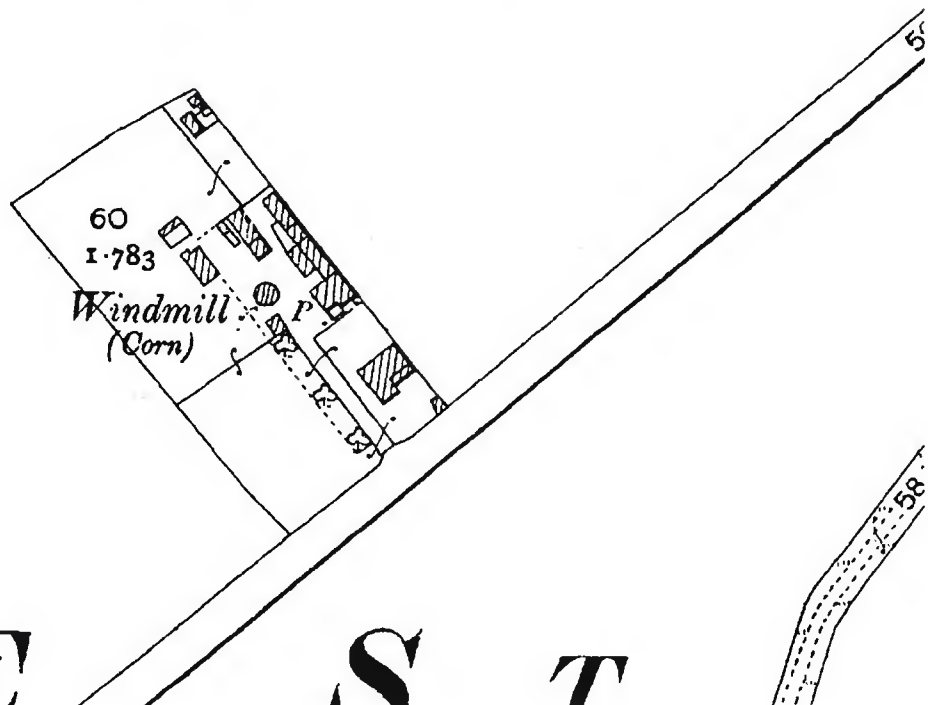
In this issue I am going to continue listing Suffolk windmills which stood in 1870 and for which no photographs are known to exist. Post, smock and tower mills are denoted by the letters P, S and T, followed by the Grid Reference and date of demolition.

CLAYDON	P	132502	After 1899
COCKFIELD	T	904539	c.1890
COCKFIELD (CROSS GREEN)	S	896554	c.1907?
CRANSFORD	S	329651	c.1885 (moved)
CRATFIELD (BELL GREEN)	P	308755	1879
DEBACH	P	248556	1880's
DEBENHAM	P(OT)	171638	1879?
DENHAM	P	195740	1910
DENNINGTON	P(OT)	278669	1879
DEPDEN	P	776575	Pre 1914
EARL SOHAM	P	247644	1903-4
EARL STONHAM	P	090597	} One 1905, the other 1908
EARL STONHAM	P	089598	
ELMSETT	P	055461	After 1880
EYE	T	160736	After 1900
FINNINGHAM	P	067686	1877?
FLOWTON	S	083469	c.1910?
FRAMLINGHAM	P	292635	1884
FRAMLINGHAM	S	265643	1921?
FRECKENHAM	S	662716	c.1910?
FRESSINGFIELD	P	254772	1928 or 1929?
FRESSINGFIELD	P	255774	c.1895
GISLEHAM	P	512867	1911
GISLINGHAM	P	048717	1880's
GOSBECK	P	155546	c.1880
GREAT FINBOROUGH	P	010563	Disused 1884
GREAT WALDINGFIELD	S	906438	1912?
HALESWORTH	P	384769	c.1900
HALESWORTH	COMP	383769	c.1900
HADLEIGH	T	016447	1870-80?

So far my appeal in the last newsletter has brought only one response, from Joy Croxon, who has been hot on the trail of a photograph of Bedfield post mill. Although one is thought to exist so far she has been unable to track it down. Let us hope this latest list will provide some positive response.

MILLS ON THE MAP

The fine smock mill featured in this issue stood at Rushmere St Andrew, just east of Ipswich. It was most likely built just prior to 1840, by Henry Collins of Melton, who is given as owner on the Tithe map of 1840-5. The sails were removed in 1928 and by 1936 although the windshaft and brakewheel were in position there was no machinery below. Demolition followed in 1939. Some of the outbuildings, which included a later steam mill, stood until the 1970's when the whole site was cleared for housing. The map shown is an extract from the 25-inch O.S. of 1904 (not to scale).



REPORT OF 2004 A.G.M.

The 2004 A.G.M. was held on 4th July in Buxhall windmill by kind permission of Anders Mossesson. 20 members were present, with apologies from Chris Armour, Luke Bonwick, Jack Clover, Melanie Dolman, Bob Malster, John Mead, Museum of East Anglian Life and Don Porter.

Mark Barnard read the minutes of the previous A.G.M. in Newsletter 87 and this was accepted as a true record (proposed Chris Wilson, seconded Bob Sharpe). Treasurer Des Codd reported on the accounts for 2003. These showed a surplus of income over expenditure of just under £300. The £60 for the Ixworth mill flyer was to promote the sale of that mill to an enthusiast; Chris Hullcoop explained that the most positive thing we can do to a mill is to help steer it into the right hands. Grants had been approved for three mills, as a way of encouraging their owners. Des was thanked for his work over the year. The accounts were accepted (proposed Brian Flint, seconded Rosy Hayward).

Editor Mark Barnard reported that three newsletters had appeared. Format and length (averaging 16 pages) had been maintained. Mill news continues to feature strongly, with a total of 14 pages over the year. This has mainly been confined to Suffolk due to lack of space, but it was hoped to include notable mill events from neighbouring counties in the future. Mark thanked all contributors, and made the usual appeal for more material. Chris Hullcoop thanked Mark for his work, and his report was accepted (proposed Alex Hayward, seconded John Capps).

Mark Barnard said membership currently stood at 166 (including one Junior); this was slightly down on last year. Some of these had yet to renew for 2004, and we are losing more members through lapses and deaths than we are recruiting new ones. Chris Hullcoop said we struggle on without a secretary, and just about manage to cope, and that many small societies are the same. The average age of the committee is increasing and more young members are needed. Brian Flint wondered whether an honorarium might encourage someone to help. John Capps said that this is done with the distribution of the Norfolk Mills Group newsletter. Bob Paterson offered to help with the newsletter send-outs. The secretary's report was accepted (proposed Chris Wilson, seconded Bill Vincent).

The officers and remainder of the committee had indicated their willingness to serve for another year and they were re-elected en bloc (proposed Bob Sharpe, seconded Steven King).

Under Any Other Business, Mark Barnard drew attention to the Mills Archive Trust, which now has much Suffolk material on its website, and to a possible S.M.G. contribution towards a new publicity leaflet on Suffolk mills to replace the current one which was out of date.

The meeting concluded with a review of the past year. Chris Hullcoop said that the new roof for Burgh mill had taken much of his time during 2003. He had recently been to Willesborough mill in Kent, fully restored only about 10 years ago but now without sails and fantail, and suffering from water penetration. It offered a salutary lesson in the need for 'survival value' to be built into the future repair of our mills.

JACK CLOVER'S TALK

At our winter public meeting, Jack Clover talked about his research into the milling branches of his family. As these extend to about 50 mills on 40 sites, he claims the Clovers to be the oldest and most prolific milling family of all! He has traced the direct line back to 1570, and millers back to the 1400's, although most on his tree are post 1700, reflecting surviving records. All descended from Clovers at Chelsworth and Nedging mills.

At Chelsworth there were two watermills, one a fulling mill. Both were demolished around 1750. The weir of the fulling mill can still be seen in the garden of The Grange. Nedging mill was acquired c.1640 and the Clover connection only ended in 1912. It was copyhold. The first Clover at Nedging was John, who died in 1661, and an inventory of his possessions survives. The Nedging line produced many branches, including Drinkstone. Many girls married millers, and many sons of other branches went into mills also, which is why there are so many!

The Clover association with Drinkstone started in 1773 when Samuel was given the property as a wedding present. Samuel's younger brother Isaac had a son and grandson who were also named Isaac. This latter Isaac was given the burnt out Buxhall mill in 1814 by his father, Isaac of Nedging, at only 14 years of age. In 1815 he built a new smock mill which was replaced by the present tower mill in 1860. Isaac had five sons who went into mills. The second son, John, was at Rattlesden Mills and later went to a mill at Sindlesham in Berkshire before he died aged about 59.

The Ardleigh branch of the family were originally at Chelsworth. There were three windmills and two watermills at Ardleigh; the Clovers were involved with two of the windmills but ultimately were at Spring Valley watermill.

Other Suffolk mills with Clover family connections include Hadleigh, Layham, Kersey, Sudbury, Raydon, Brent Eleigh, Monks Eleigh (all water); Stowmarket, Leavenheath, Walsham le Willows and Brettenham.

Jack concluded with some observations on life in a milling family. He wondered how a small rural mill could ever support two or three families, and often large ones. The miller's wife would help in the mill and with work such as brewing. Worst of all was to be the eldest daughter, who would have to look after all the younger family members as well as do housework. Milling often spawned other trades, especially coal merchants, smiths and joiners/carpenters. Millers held a position of trust and standing in the community and, while they had plenty of opportunity to cheat, contrary to their reputation most were inherently honest.

NEWS

CHARLES DOLMAN (1923-2004)

Charles Dolman was born in Ipswich, one of four brothers. On leaving school he trained as an electrician with the famous old Ipswich firm of E R & F Turner and during the Second World War he joined the R.A.F., serving in North Africa.

After the war he lived in Bedfordshire and I first met him nearly 30 years ago when he and his family moved back to Ipswich. Peter his son had sold me a ticket for an orchestral concert in which he was playing viola and afterwards I was introduced to his parents. Charles told me of a post mill model he was making and although it was past 11pm suggested an immediate inspection. I subsequently left his home well after midnight!

He had always been interested in windmills and when Peter started to show an interest too he gave him every help and encouragement. A major project came along when Peter together with a group of mill enthusiasts formed a trust to buy and restore the tower mill at Thelnetham. Charles became a member of the trust and worked many long hours at what became one of the best windmill restorations in the country.

When Peter and his wife Melanie bought the mill house and post mill at Stanton, Charles again worked very hard to help with the modernisation of the house where his electrical, plumbing and DIY skills were vital. Once the house was in order he turned his attention to the mill, joining the working 'holidays' there organised by Peter and also working many long weekends. He took a keen interest in the flour production and made small scale cleaning and sifting machines which he was always improving. He was a very practical man and also a good artist and many of us have examples of the lovely ceramic tiles depicting windmills which he was able to make to order.

He really enjoyed his retirement but in 2002 his wife Betty died in January and just a few months later he lost his son Peter in the most tragic of circumstances. He countered this devastating loss by selling his house, buying a smaller one and taking on its repair and modernisation. He had just completed this when he died suddenly in February.

Over many years Charles Dolman made a great contribution to the study and preservation of our old mills. In particular he gave great help to his son Peter who became Britain's foremost authority on old windmills. Like his son Peter, Charles will be greatly missed. (C.H.)

DISAPPOINTMENT AT PAKENHAM

At Easter local newspapers were full of optimistic reports about the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for over £1M for Pakenham watermill. The Fund's decision was expected any day and if favourable would allow the development of the mill and the adjoining miller's house and farm buildings into a major attraction with a full range of facilities.

Sadly, when the decision came the application was turned down, and the Suffolk Buildings Preservation Trust who own and manage the watermill are now faced with the task of finding other sources of funding. There is no threat to the mill itself, but the restoration of the house and provision of other facilities such as a car park, educational displays and a tea room are urgently needed to develop the site's full potential. It is unlikely that the full amount the Trust hoped for will be forthcoming and so the plans may have to be scaled down, but a variety of options are

being explored. Among them is the possibility of support from DEFRA for the conversion of the farm site associated with the house into visitor facilities. These and other negotiations are still at an early stage but the Trust is optimistic.

Meanwhile, several new volunteers have joined the team who work at the watermill every week, looking after the site and producing flour which is sold in several local shops and at the Rickinghall farmers' market. The mill is open to visitors at weekends and bank holidays during the summer from 2pm-5.30pm. (David Eddershaw)

FRISTON MILL FULLY SUPPORTED!

The two 10m high steel frames either side of the mill, and the two pairs of needle beams they carry, were lifted into place on June 3rd-4th. The structure had been purpose-made by DGT Steel & Cladding Ltd of Lenwade, Norfolk and apart from the usual minor hitches the operation went smoothly. The weight of the steelwork was reported to be 12.4 tonnes. Two weeks later DGT lifted the buck using a series of hydraulic jacks acting on needles under the sheers and side girts, and owner Piers Hartley reports that the crowtree and main post are now 1½ins apart! The work was considered necessary because of the weak condition of the trestle, especially the crosstree-quarter bar joints. It is reassuring to know that the mill is not in danger of toppling over (especially given the recent high winds) and that there is now time to plan (and fund) the next phase of the repairs. (M.B.)



PLANS FOR ASSINGTON MILL

Assington mill is mentioned in the Domesday Book. The oldest part of the present watermill building appears to date from the 17th century. It stopped working in 1868 when the squire took the water for his own use. Mr Pollard, the tenant, then bought a windmill in Sudbury and had it transported to the site 'with the aid of 21 horses'. This mill was still standing in 1902 but has since disappeared. Thirty years ago all the floors were removed in the



Assington mill (right) and former cottage (left)

watermill to create space for storage of grain. Sadly, there is no sign of any machinery.

Our original intention was to buy a fully-equipped watermill with the aim of restoring it to working order, as a retirement project. In the event, after four attempts at other mills, we acquired a mill with no machinery, together with a farm and its outbuildings in January of last year, on the grounds that it was irresistible! All 10 buildings were in a semi-derelict condition. Since someone had stolen half the tiles off the roof of the mill, it was re-roofed immediately using the old tiles on the front elevation and new hand made clay plain tiles on the back. Two other workshops have now been rebuilt, one using straw bales and clay render, both from the farm. The long-term aim is to mend the fabric and structure of the mill, and to replace the 20th century iron waterwheel shown in the only photograph available, but only as a feature and to generate some electricity. The dimensions are given by the size of the wheel pit. Long-term plans are to use the buildings for running courses on crafts and the farm for the study of wildlife. See the website assingtonmill.co.uk for details in the future. (Bob Cowlin & Anne Holden)

DRINKSTONE MILLS NEWS AND SUMMER 'WORK-IN'

National Mills Weekend went well with 140 visitors and over £450 raised through donations and the sale of teas. For the first time in around 30 years the long belt was attached from the Ruston oil engine to the large pulley driving the hurst frame in the smock mill. Everything ran freely, so we can look forward to doing more work on this in our summer work-in. Then we can start milling again at Drinkstone.

The smock mill summer work-in planning is well under way. This will take place from Saturday 7th to Monday 9th August 2004. There

will be jobs for all levels of ability and we aim to make it a fun gathering as well as getting a lot of much needed work done. For those who wish to stay overnight we have a spare room and plenty of camping space in the garden or billet hut. Phone Rosy or Alex on 01359 240220 for more details. Please let us know if you are coming - whether for part of a day or longer - so that we can plan ahead.

Our post mill restoration plans are, we hope, back on track with a new grant application in to English Heritage which will be considered at the end of September. If all goes according to plan, work will begin in Spring 2005. We still need to raise at least £25,000 towards this phase of the project so all ideas - and donations - are welcome. Following Jack Clover's fascinating talk about the Clover family's mills to the winter S.M.G. meeting, a collection was taken for Drinkstone Mills. We are delighted to record that £51.40 was raised through this and we are very grateful to all who contributed.

The next open weekend will be 11th and 12th September 2004 from 1-5pm. We have some very nice packs of 8 note cards with envelopes for sale to raise funds. These are £1.90 + p&p per pack. Anyone who can offer help with fundraising ideas and events and/or would like to join the Friends of Drinkstone Mills, please contact us. (Rosy & Alex Hayward)

PROGRESS AT BURGH

Repairs to the mill tower and granary are now almost complete, one of the last tasks being to reinstate the matchboarding around the internal walls of the upper chamber of the granary. This is now a fine space, utterly transformed from its sorry state a year ago. The former engine shed attached to the rear of the tower has also been repaired and given a new window of more sympathetic design. The final job will be to reinstate the balustrading around the original stairtrap on the second floor. Unusually, the stairtrap is almost in the centre of the floor, but is clearly original as the mortices in the floor are precisely cut. This work will enable the sack-trap (through which the ladder currently passes) to be reinstated.

A display will be mounted on the first floor of the tower. This will include items such as the 1920's wind vane and part of a sail whip as well as information boards on the mill's history and the recent repair work; the millwright (John Whitmore); and the Royal Observer Corps who utilised the tower during the war. (M.B.)

SYLEHAM MILL - WHAT NEXT?

As we had not seen the sad remains of Syleham post mill for some years we thought we had better check it out. While the work to the roundhouse has survived well, the buck remains are now in a very bad state. Some years ago I had made a series of plans, sketches and specifications showing how the buck remains could be conserved. I was younger then and it was far too optimistic for several reasons. It would be costly in time and money and not much of either are available. It would be vulnerable and require maintenance which would not be there and its inevitable decline would eventually threaten the roundhouse.

There are three listed post mill roundhouses in Suffolk, Saxmundham, Thorndon and Syleham. Thorndon and Saxmundham are likely to be house-converted while Syleham remains as original with some interesting and indeed unique machinery while close by is the engine in its shed which drove the roundhouse machinery. This makes it the best of the three by far and well worthy of preservation.

Not a lot is left of the buck. The crowntree and one side girt, the sheer trees and lower side rails, and the head and tail lower transverse beams. The doorposts supporting the steps and the steps themselves and the carriage also remain. Only the crowntree is sound but unfortunately it is being dragged away from the top of the post by a lean caused by having a side girt on the left and nothing on the right hand side. Only some iron rods into the sheer trees and some diagonal braces fitted by us prevent its fall. If the buck remains collapse onto the roundhouse roof then that will be the end and the site will become rather like the last years at Eye post mill, a romantic old ruin enveloped in a vast bramble bush.

We need to sacrifice the buck remains to safeguard the roundhouse, but it would be possible to keep the crowntree on the top of the post. It would have to be drawn back to its horizontal position and secured to the post with steel brackets. It would then have to be encased in aluminium with a skirt projecting a foot or so below it. This would leave the post in the centre of a 9ft hole in the roundhouse roof which was originally covered by the buck. This would have to be covered and the post would need protecting. It would be of little use extending the roundhouse roof at the same angle until it met the post (as for example as Earl Soham) as it would not be long before the top half of the post started to decay. The best solution would be to fit 12 to 15 4"x2" timbers extending from the post top to the top rim of the



Syleham mill in October 2003

roof and forming a steep cone, again covered in aluminium. This would be very strong and maintenance free and it would look rather quaint. Another way would be to remove the crowntree, but this would require a crane and the crowntree would need to be stored under cover. Of course this may never happen. All of the Syleham remains are listed and permission from the District Council would be required. And I'm not getting any younger!

It is certainly worthwhile to preserve the Syleham roundhouse. Miss Jillard produced flour from the roundhouse stones driven by the oil engine and it could be done again. Good measured drawings of the whole mill by the late Peter Dolman exist and it would be possible to build a new buck and re-create it as a windmill. People of the knowledge and skill of Richard Seago and Vincent Pargeter could do it, but the chances of such a person owning it in the future must be slim. Perhaps we need to adopt the National Lottery slogan, where a ticket holder with a faraway look in his eyes says 'Maybe, just maybe!' (C.H.)

PROGRESS AT WICKEN CORN MILL

Over the past year repair work at Wicken has concentrated on the mill's internal machinery and on maintenance.

In August 2003 we hired a 'cherry picker' hydraulic lifting platform for five days, to allow work on the mill roof. Loose paint and dirt were wire-brushed away. Additional coats of paint were applied, and strengthening blocks fitted to the roof's lower rim. The cherry picker was also used for access to the high braces of the fan trestle, which are otherwise difficult to paint. Meanwhile the fantail was painted, from the fan trestle. We were fortunate in having good painting weather and, although the roof work was very time consuming, we were able to paint the rear faces of the main timbers of one sail from the cherry picker.

Inside the mill there has been much work on the wire machine, being built new to replace a dresser which was stripped out after the mill stopped grinding. The new machine is suspended from the 'ceiling' of the ground floor, as was the original. Recently the team has worked on the machine's end panels and on the side doors, and the stainless steel mesh has been fitted to the inside of the sieving cylinder. Three grades of mesh have been used, and a start has been made on setting up the drive system which will drive down from the spur gear (which is in the hursting over the meal floor). The new oak layshaft which will be driven directly from the existing gear ring on the underside of the spur gear is already in place, together with a large wooden pulley (based on the sack hoist pulley at Thelnetham). At least temporarily this will be driven by a bevel pinion fabricated from plywood, though ultimately it is likely that we will replace the pinion by a cast wheel with wooden teeth, of the type still to be seen nearby at Haddenham mill.

National Mills Weekend 2004 was very special, in that both Wicken windmills were in operation. The National Trust's little mill, the last complete pumping mill in the Fens, had not worked for several years. The Wicken Windmill team carried out some remedial work on the Fen mill in the weeks prior to the Mills Weekend: the cap was seized up and could not be turned to wind.

The cap had to be jacked up one 'corner' at a time to allow lubrication of the dead curb (wood on wood). On the two working days Chris Wilson, Rob Bramley and Andrew Kite ran the mill. There is a location on the Fen where both the Corn Mill and the Fen mill could be seen turning simultaneously: because of distances the Corn Mill looked about the size of a postage stamp!

Grinding at the Corn Windmill has been spasmodic recently: in common with the rest of the country we have had very poor wind resource so far this year. Too often there has been very little wind, or occasionally too much, as with the great storm of 20th-21st March.

This year's summer work-in will be held from August 21st-30th. Work will continue on the wire machine and its drive, and we need to complete the rebuild of the eastern pair of 4ft 6ins French stones. We will continue the ongoing sail and fantail painting programme, and with milling. If we have enough volunteers we will go on with tower tarring and will make a start on rebuilding the wood shed. Of course volunteer helpers are always very welcome, and are extremely important in keeping our remaining working windmills in operation. So if you would like to help at Wicken windmill, or for that matter at Thelnetham, please contact me on 01664 822751 or email dave@pearce52.freemill.co.uk (Dave Pearce)

NATIONAL MILLS SUNDAY AT HERRINGFLEET

Members of the Lowestoft District & Pye Amateur Radio Club set up a station for the day close to the mill, and made no less than 212 contacts, including 19 other mills and radio enthusiasts on the Continent. The dull and damp weather meant that we were unable to complete the new video film of the mill, most of which was shot last year. We'll try again on August 1st, when I will yet again have to don the same clothes for the sake of continuity! (M.B.)

PROPOSED DEMOLITION AT LARK MILLS

Application has been made for the demolition of a range of single storey outbuildings at the rear of Lark Mills, Mildenhall. Although of fairly rudimentary construction and now very overgrown, the buildings once housed oil engines and generating equipment dating from the period 1919-1935 when the mill supplied electricity to over 300 customers in the area, via a network of overhead lines. Of particular interest and deserving of preservation is a large panel containing switchgear; unfortunately the building containing it now has a collapsed roof and the panel is likely to be in a poor state. It is to be hoped that these buildings are properly recorded before demolition, and their story can feature in the town's museum. (M.B.)

EVENTS

HERRINGFLEET WINDPUMP OPEN DAY: SUNDAY AUGUST 1st, 1-5pm

This will be the second open day of 2004, giving the public another chance to see inside the mill and, wind permitting, to experience the sight and sounds of a windmill lifting water with a scoopwheel. Members are welcome to come along and lend a hand to get the mill going; we'll be there from about 11.30am.

**'WORK-IN' AT DRINKSTONE SMOCK MILL: SATURDAY AUGUST 7th -
MONDAY AUGUST 9th**

Details of this three-day work-in can be found in the News section above. Much has been achieved on Suffolk mills over the years by voluntary work, and we hope this tradition will be continued at Drinkstone, the most important windmill site in the country - right here on your doorstep!

VISIT TO FELIXSTOWE DOCK ROLLER MILL: MONDAY AUGUST 16th at 7pm

The RHM mill at Felixstowe Dock is now the only roller mill in Suffolk producing flour for baking. Built in 1905-7 for Marriages of Colchester beside the dock basin, it has been re-fitted several times. This will be our last chance to see it in operation, as the mill will close for good in Spring 2005. The mill is an impressive structure, extremely robustly built, and well worth a look.

The mill is in the middle of one of Europe's biggest container ports. It is easily reached by taking No.2 Gate and, after 300 yards, turning left into Dyke Road, and following this road for two-thirds of a mile. Please assemble promptly in the car park at just before 7pm as we will have a guided tour.

DRINKSTONE MILLS OPEN WEEKEND: SEPTEMBER 11th-12th, 1-5pm

This opening coincides with Heritage Open Weekend, when buildings of architectural and historic interest all over the country are specially opened to the public. For further details, or if you would like to help on one of these days, please contact Rosy and Alex Hayward (01359 240220).

**VISIT TO SOUTH WALSHAM AND THRIGBY POST MILLS, NORFOLK: SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 19th, from 2.30pm**

It is a remarkable coincidence that the two new post mills in the country have been built within a few miles of each other in south-east Norfolk. This out-of-county visit will provide an opportunity to see both mills in one afternoon, and to meet the people behind these formidable projects.

We will meet at South Walsham mill at 2.30pm. This has been built close to an old post mill site by Richard Seago. The design of the buck is based on local practice and has a gallery around the eaves (great views!) and a full-width porch. Some of the machinery from Eye mill in Suffolk can be seen, and also stored on site is the Eye main post with its fine inscription. The mill is on a minor road just to the north of the B1140 Acle to Norwich road, about two miles west of Acle (Grid Ref 380128.)

Thrigby post mill has been reconstructed by Nick Prior from a roundhouse and trestle, the new buck being lifted on in 1984. Machinery has mainly come from other lost mills. Last year four common sails were erected, and like South Walsham the aim is to achieve full working order. Thrigby is on a minor road about half way between Acle and Caistor on Sea; the mill is east of the village at Grid Ref 468121.
