

SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

Newsletter

www.suffolkmills.org.uk

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It is pleasing to report that our one event since the last newsletter, the pre-Christmas social evening, saw an encouraging turnout of members, including several new faces. The Education Room at the Museum of East Anglian Life proved to be just the right size, and was a most comfortable venue.

Life is full of unexpected events and surprises. In December we heard that Rosy and Alex Hayward would be leaving Drinkstone Mills as Alex had a new job in Scotland. Ironically, at about the same time they received news of a large grant from English Heritage towards repairs to the post mill. The mills are now for sale: read more in the News section below.

At long last Suffolk has its first commercial wind turbine. After what seemed like a very long gestation, this appeared almost overnight in early December, and when I saw it at the beginning of January was already turning on test runs. Opinion on these is still divided, so we expect Dave Pearce's talk at our forthcoming public meeting to be of particular interest. Please do come along if you can, and display the poster if one is enclosed with this newsletter.

Forthcoming events are as follows:

S.M.G. public meeting, Ipswich	Saturday March 5th
SPAB Mills Section meeting, London	Saturday March 12th
S.M.G. visit to Friston post mill	Sunday April 24th
National Mills Weekend	Sat/Sun May 7th-8th

Finally, make I make another appeal for material for these pages? Apart from the series on Rattlesden Mills (which will be continued in the next issue), I've nearly run out. Please help!

Mark Barnard

MY INTEREST IN MILLS Bob Malster

Unlike those who have written of a sudden encounter leading to a life-long interest in mills, I can recall no single incident that sparked off my interest. Mills just seemed to be part of my early life, though my family was in no way connected with milling. Wherever I went there were windmills and watermills to be seen, many of them still at work in the 1940's, and in those days millers were often willing to allow a youngster to 'have a look inside' and to tell him of their work.

Probably the first mill I saw inside was the old watermill at Keswick, on the River Yare south of Norwich. In spite of being totally without any artistic gift I had joined the school sketching club, and our art master had taken us to Keswick one afternoon on a sketching expedition. After we had spent some time

at work with our pencils he announced that he'd asked the miller to show us the mill, and he'd agreed. The white-painted weatherboarded mill was still working, though I am by no means sure that it was still powered by the wheel at that time; later, certainly, it was operated by an electric motor.

About 1946 I began exploring further afield on my bicycle, and one afternoon found my way to Bawburgh, higher up the Yare and west of the city. There I found a very different mill, a tall red-brick building that was working on a different scale to that at Keswick, which was then only producing animal feed. Bawburgh was producing flour on roller machines operated by a mysterious turbine that, unlike the very visible wheel of other mills, was hidden somewhere down below the floor. When I rode out in a different direction and arrived at Buxton mills, on the Bure, I found that mill, too, had roller plant and a turbine that could not be seen even by inquisitive boys asking awkward questions.

There were windmills, too. The tower of one old mill, Peafield mill at New Lakenham, still stood minus cap and sails within the city of Norwich, though the postmill at Sprowston had been burnt down the year after I was born, so I did not see that; I could do no more than cycle up the rough track to try to see where it had stood.

One of my memories that remains sharp even after so many years is of North Mill, Wymondham, illuminated by a full moon. I had walked out to the mill after a swimming lesson at Wymondham Baths since I had the best part of an hour to wait for a bus home, and the tall smock mill stood out sharply against the dark sky; it was a beautiful sight. I never did see inside that mill; alas, it was burnt down in 1949. It looked big even from the roadside, but I learnt that it had been moved from Dilham in the 1850's, by rail, so it was said. Rex Wailes records in *The English Windmill* that the cant posts were cut in two to allow them to be transported.

I never heard for myself how that removal was carried out, but on a visit to Banham I heard from one of the locals the story of how the mill there had been moved on a timber drag from Hingham. The drag had got bogged down on the way to the proposed new site, and the mill was therefore re-erected on a compromise site. Banham was an unusual mill; it had the buck of a postmill erected on top of a short brick tower, turning on a curb. It was what the Norfolk people called a mawfry; more scholarly people like the parson would have known it as an hermaphrodite, 'neither one thing nor the other'. Banham mill was derelict when I saw it, and I did not get into the mill. Old Buckenham mill, with its five pairs of stones in a surprisingly wide tower, was also derelict, but I did manage to open the door and wander around in the dust and dirt. What a joy it was on a much more recent visit with the Mills Group to see it restored.

On a visit to Halesworth I photographed the postmill there; at Woodbridge I took pictures of both Tricker's Mill and Buttrum's, and the tidemill as well. I also photographed the black postmill at Westleton before it was pulled over. And of course I rode around the Broads area looking at and photographing the drainage mills like Ash Tree Level, those on the Halvergate marshes, and Berney Arms.

In 1948, I think it was, the SPAB Wind and Watermill Section (as it then was) held an exhibition at the Castle Museum in Norwich, and there I met Mrs Monica Dance, who had little difficulty in persuading me to become a member of the Section. I remained a member for quite a few years until the responsibilities of bringing up a family made me forget to pay my sub one year.

It was not long after that that I took a bus from King's Lynn to Boston to visit Maud Foster mill there. It was no longer at work but not entirely out of use, and the workmen there allowed me to roam all over the windmill. Then one of them took me into Beehive Works, the adjacent millwright's workshops, which were full of wooden patterns for cast-iron wheels, cardboard patterns for gear teeth, and all kinds of paraphernalia, including a cradle for hoisting up the side of a mill when painting the cladding. Every pattern had pencilled on it the mill to which it related. Those wooden patterns were all being consigned to the fire; the works were being cleared, I was told. I returned to Lynn on the bus with a selection of the smaller patterns, some of which I gave to Framsdon mill when Chris Hullcoop, Brian Flint and others were helping to restore it in the sixties or seventies.

Two years later conscription removed me from East Anglia and I got to know the mills of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Tower mills like Great Haseley and Wheatley, and postmills like the preserved mill at Pitstone and the derelict one at Chinnor, with its unusual three crosstrees and six quarterbars. Pitstone had been restored, with a cartwheel on the end of the tailpole; I have never quite decided whether that was original or just a quirk of the restorer. I also had a rather fleeting acquaintance with the mills of the Liverpool area, including a tower mill still standing in Liverpool's Scotland Road. At Great Crosby I was not only shown around the tower mill by the miller but invited to tea by him; he also gave me one of the old wooden gear teeth to add to my growing collection of relics.

All too many of the mills I saw when cycling around East Anglia half a century ago have now gone, but some at least have been preserved. Some, like Old Buckenham, have gained a new lease of life and are giving a new generation of mill enthusiasts that lift of the spirits that one always gets at seeing a fine mill looming over the hedge.

WERE THESE MILLS PHOTOGRAPHED? (4) Brian Flint

The following list concludes my alphabetical listing of Suffolk corn windmills, which stood reasonably complete if not still working in 1870, but of which no photographs are known to exist. As before, P, S and T denote post, smock and tower mills followed by the National Grid Reference and date of demolition.

PAKEFIELD	P	536904	1888
PETTISTREE	T	305552	c.1898
POLSTEAD	P	990411	After 1890
PRESTON	S	940507	After 1885
REDGRAVE	P(OT)	039786	1903

REDLINGFIELD	P(OT)	182713	1881
RICKINGHALL INFERIOR	P	039759	c.1885
RUMBURGH	P(OT)	348812	1879
SOUTH ELMHAM ALL SAINTS	T	344828	After 1890
SHIMPLING	P	859519	c.1875
SHOTLEY	T	224361	After 1900
SOMERLEYTON	P	481969	c.1880?
SOMERSHAM	P(OT)	085485	c.1918?
STOKE ASH	P	114694	1883
STOKE BY CLARE	T	724435	c.1890
STOWMARKET	S	042585	1884
STRADISHALL	P	740531	1884
TANNINGTON	P	252681	1879
TROSTON	S	895733	c.1880
WESTERFIELD	S	170474	c.1889
WESTON	P	410862	1896
WHEPSTEAD	P	841579	1894
WICKHAM MARKET	S	305556	After 1873
WICKHAM SKEITH	P(OT)	093697	1881
WINGFIELD	P	234781	c.1900
WISSETT	T	375786	c.1918
WITHERSFIELD	P(OT)	658472	c.1910
WITNESHAM (WOOD FARM)	P(OT)	183519	c.1888
WORLINGWORTH	P*	223706	c.1910 (* buck only)
WYVERSTONE	P(OT)	031677	After 1880
YAXLEY	S	121737	After 1881
YOXFORD	P	395681	After 1910

Having now finished listing Suffolk windmills for which photographs are sought I find the total number to be 118. Surely a few of these must still exist somewhere but to date none has been forthcoming despite a few phone calls which at first seemed promising. I can be contacted on 01394 460936 and await your call.

STEBBING WATERMILL TO BE CONVERTED INTO A HOUSE: SOME REMINISCENCES OF THE PUBLIC INQUIRY Chris Hullcoop

I had not intended to go to the public inquiry called early in 2002 to enable a government inspector to decide whether or not Stebbing watermill should be converted into a house. Roy Berry of Essex Mills Group thought that someone concerned with old mills from a neighbouring county would add weight to the case for the proper preservation of the mill and rather reluctantly I agreed to attend.

I have to admit I was very prejudiced against that part of Essex so close to London. While modern maps do not warn 'Here there be dragons', the perils for old mills are money-hungry property developers and an enormous pressure to develop and convert everything in sight. Money and fear rule and along once friendly old lanes are found large houses with high fences and security gates. Having checked your credentials, if those within decide you are not a rival gangster intent on revenge they might press a button to let you in.

Stebbing mill had little chance of survival as the District Council had already resolved to approve plans for its conversion to a house. This is very unusual as the mill is Grade II* listed and very few Essex mills remain that have not been converted, but remember this is Essex near London. The vast majority of district councils would not have approved the application, particularly as the adjoining mill house could easily have been extended and the watermill was small and easy to maintain as a mill. Compare its repair and maintenance with fitting and maintaining four shuttered patent sails spanning 70 feet on a windmill. Upkeep of the roof, weatherboards and windows is all straightforward builder's work and not expensive.

I felt the inquiry was a complete waste of time. The inspector had received submissions from all concerned both for and against. Thus he had in precis form all the principal arguments. He could have tabulated all the arguments for and against, weighed the balance and come to a reasonable conclusion. Unless he heard a new major argument from the floor he would not change his mind. This would be a logical thing to do and any one of us would have done similarly.

The inquiry was held at the Uttlesford District Council offices in Great Dunmow. The developer's case was led by a lawyer



Stebbing watermill in the mid 1970's
(from *Some Essex Watermills* by Hervey Benham)

specialising in planning inquiries and calling on the developer, the District Council, an engineer, an architect and a historic building conservationist. The main opposers to the plan were Essex Mills Group, English Heritage and the S.P.A.B. The lawyer was at a great advantage as inquiries like this were the job he had been doing for many years but for most appearing against the proposals it was their first case. The lawyer called leading professional people highly qualified and in one case with the letters behind his name stretching five times the length of his name! These people were undoubtedly very good in their own particular professions but had little or no knowledge of old watermills. Over several days many thousands of words were said magnifying relatively minor problems. I particularly recall a long debate over the problems of possible wheelchair access to the upper floors. Nobody thought to mention this difficulty in say a post windmill or in Wren's Great Fire of London monument.

The difficulties in repairing and maintaining Cauldwell's Mill at Rowsley in Derbyshire were given as an example by the distinguished architect appearing for the developer. What he did not say was that Cauldwell's Mill is very large and difficult to maintain while Stebbing is small and to a competent caring owner would not be a maintenance problem. Nobody challenged this.

The case made by the lawyer and his team was not a good one, but it was only challenged in a rather half-hearted way by our team who I fear did not do very well. Perhaps it was lack of experience or the slightly intimidating courtroom atmosphere well suited to the lawyer. Bob Sier for Essex Mills Group spoke well as before retirement he was a Union representative at his work and so was used to a combative style. John Neale of English Heritage and Vincent Pargeter for the S.P.A.B. were not really happy with the courtroom style and Vincent was suffering from a dose of influenza which did not help. Richard Ward spoke well as a mill owner who had with his mill overcome all the problems that had been so exaggerated. I'm sure I appeared to be a sincere but feet-off-the-ground romantic, but by then I was feeling aggressive and had become accustomed to the way the inquiry worked. The inspector had said we could sit but I noticed how the lawyer always stood and used his body, arms and hands in a rather effective and theatrical way, so I stood! I had hoped to be cross-examined and at last we could have a real cut and thrust debate but sadly he did not cross-examine me.

So much nonsense was spoken at the inquiry, particularly on the mill/house relationship. It's difficult to quantify the appeal of the atmosphere of an old watermill and its house. It's something almost magical and has to be experienced. The house is a home for the family, a well lit, warm and comfortable place where friends are welcomed. There are carpets on the floors, curtains at the windows, pictures on the walls, comfortable easy chairs and a TV/video/music centre, perhaps even a piano! It is a safe and welcoming place where before a meal a chat and a glass of sherry can be enjoyed.

Now pass through a mysterious small door into the mill. It is cold, damp and dusty, there are no carpets on the floors or pictures on the walls. It is not well lit and is full of heavy

machinery, grain bins, spouts, sack traps, etc, and crude open steps lead from one floor to the next. It has a stern Dickensian industrial atmosphere, a place of work (and very hard work) in the 18th and 19th centuries. Its atmosphere is rather bleak but makes a wonderful contrast with the warmth and comfort of the house. This contrast is lost once the mill is converted into a house. The house may double in size, its cash value rise by even more, but its value to those who love old mills is all but lost. The plumbing, wiring, insulation, carpets, curtains and furniture and everything that converts a non-habitable industrial building into a habitable domestic building inevitably spoils its character. Make no mistake, the word 'convert' means what it says: 'change into' (OED). Nearly all the watermills in Essex have now been converted into houses and as money-hungry developers eye them up perhaps one day all of them will be.

Five months after the inquiry came the decision I had expected: consent was granted for the conversion.

Stebbing mill was most unfortunate in being in the area of a district council with a poor reputation for the protection of our industrial heritage, before an inspector with little knowledge or sympathy, a property developer keen to maximise returns on investment, and in a part of Essex where the pressure for development is very great. The mill stood little chance.

Looking again at my Ordnance map of the area I have written on it 'Here there be dragons'!

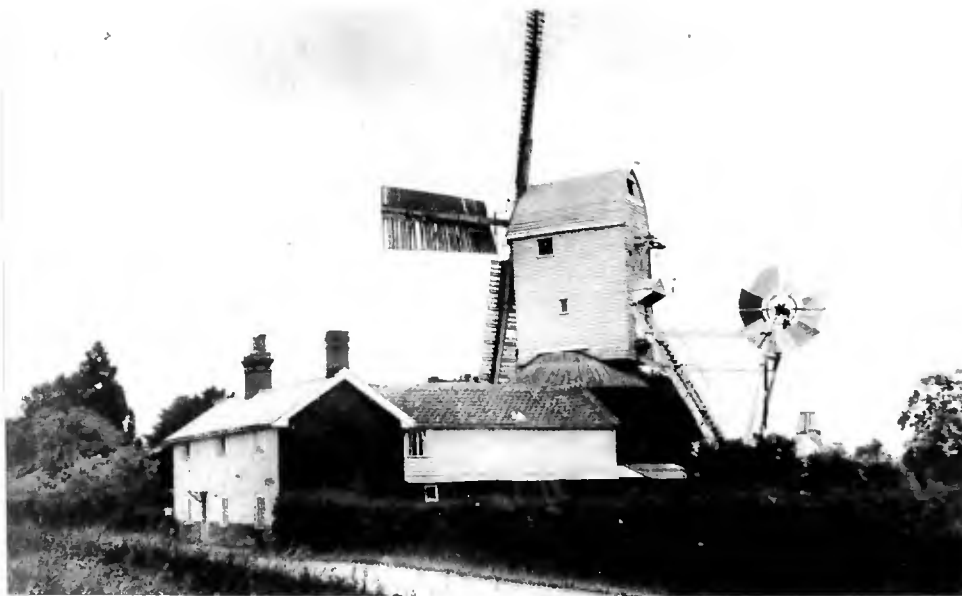
MILL BOOKS FOR SALE

Sylvia Ball is offering for sale a number of mill publications which are part of the collection of her late husband Len, who died in 2003. Sylvia lives at Acton near Sudbury, and can be contacted on 01787 377096. Postage would be extra on the prices quoted.

Scottish Windmills (Douglas, Oglethorpe & Hume) £3; *Hertfordshire Windmills & Millers* (Moore) £10; *Windmills and Watermills* (Wailes) £5; *England of the Windmills* (reprint) (Mais) £10; *Windmill Land* (reprint) (Clarke) £15; *Norfolk Corn Windmills* (Apling) £9; *Suffolk Windmills* (Flint) £10; *Windmills of Somerset* (Coulthard & Watts) £15; *The Mills of the Isle of Wight* (Major) £30; *Windmills of England* (Brown) £12; *The Watermills of Britain* (reprint) (Syson) £12; *Windmills & Watermills from Old Photographs* (Major & Watts) £7; *Oxfordshire Mills* (Foreman) £12; *Yorkshire Windmills* (Whitworth) £5; *The English Windmill* (Wailes) £15; *Windmills in England* (Wailes) £12; *Harvesting the Air* (Kealey) £15; *East Yorkshire Windmills* (Gregory) £10; *Windmills and Millwrighting* (reprint) (Freese) £15; *Some Essex Watermills* (Benham) £15; *Windmills of Anglesey* (Guise & Lees) £10; *Windmills* (Beedell) £5; *The Windmills of Surrey & Inner London* (Farries & Mason) £60; *Essex Windmills, Millers & Millwrights Vols 1-5* (Farries) £150; *Old Windmills and Watermills* (Thurston Hopkins) £10; *Old English Mills and Inns* (Thurston Hopkins) £10; *The Archaeology of Mills and Milling* (Watts) £12; *Bedfordshire Mills* (Howes) £5; *Windmills and Watermills* (Bryan) £10; *Derbyshire Windmills* (Gifford) £5; *The Windmills of John Wallis Titt* (Major) £4.

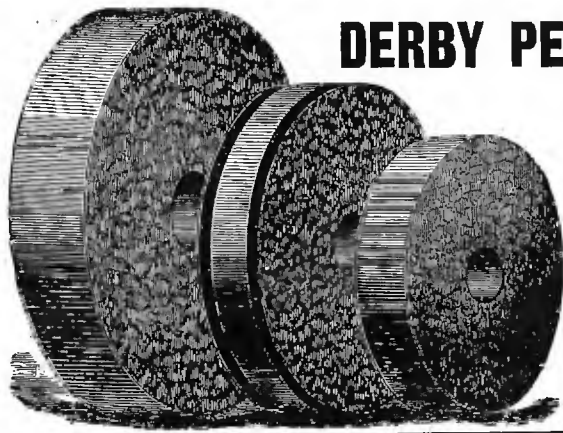
MILLS ON THE MAP

This mill stood on the edge of the village of Laxfield. It was a tall post mill, of a type once common in east Suffolk, and had undoubtedly been raised in height at least once during its life. The photograph pre-dates June 1929 when the sail shutters and fantail were removed, the mill having been only occasionally run after c.1920. The buck was taken down in the early 1940's. Some of the outbuildings clustered round the mill were single storied and do not feature in the photograph. Note the kiln roof of the nearby malting, visible just below the fantail. The map is the 25-inch O.S. of 1884 (not to scale).



90 YEARS AGO ...

From *The Miller*, March 2nd 1914.



. THE .

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Some Abstracts of References in Brief.

(Names on Application.)

COLESBERG,

*Sept.*, 1911.

DEAR SIR,—The millstones you sent us answer our purpose admirably, they need no dressing, thereby saving us much time and expense, they grind to perfection and do much more work than the stones which they superseded.

Yours faithfully,

DORCHESTER,

*Feb.* 13, 1912.

DEAR SIR,—The first pair of Champagne are working well and please send me another pair.

Yours faithfully,

DERBY, *March* 4, 1912.

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# NEWS

## DRINKSTONE MILLS

Just before Christmas came the unexpected news that Alex and Rosy Hayward were leaving Drinkstone, as Alex had been offered a job as Keeper of the Department of Science and Technology in the National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh. After much soul-searching, they decided to begin the search for a sympathetic new owner for the Mills, to carry on the careful restoration work which has begun. The property is now with estate agents David Burr (01359 245245), the first time it has been on the open market for at least 200 years. The guide price is £385,000.

The site contains Britain's most important group of windmill-related buildings, and is designated as a conservation area. The 1½ acre plot has developed over several centuries, and contains an attractive mill cottage (Grade II); an engine-driven smock mill on a horse mill base, with working 1929 Ruston oil engine (Grade II); an interesting range of outbuildings, including a First World War army hut used as a granary and an ex-G.E.R. railway carriage body of 1864; and of course the jewel in the crown, the Grade I listed post mill, which recent research has revealed contains much 16th century fabric, and can justly claim to be one of our oldest surviving post mills, as well as being one of the minority to have escaped 20th century restoration. It would not be difficult to produce flour again with the engine-driven stones in the smock mill, but more important will be the need to exercise care and judgement to retain the unique atmosphere of the site.

A complicating factor in the sale is the offer of a £135,000 grant from English Heritage towards repairs to the post mill buck, trestle and windshaft. Rosy and Alex are keen that this work should go ahead in 2005, but a condition of the grant offer is that the post mill should remain in the same ownership for ten years after completion of the grant-aided work. The post mill and a right of way to it will therefore remain with Rosy and Alex until this grant condition is met. The total cost of this phase of the work is £160,000. The Friends of Drinkstone Mills and Meadow have now raised £6,200, leaving £18,800 to find. As with all English Heritage grant projects, there is a huge amount of detail and planning to sort out, but (fingers crossed) work is due to start in April. (M.B.)

## DALHAM MILL FOR SALE

The Grade II\* listed smock mill at Dalham, on the Suffolk-Cambridgeshire border, is on the market. The mill dates from the late 18th century and last worked in about 1926. In recent years it has had a rather chequered history with a major restoration begun in the late 1970's but never completed. The smock tower and cap were overhauled, but the fantail and sails were not replaced. Dalham is the last smock mill in the country with hurst-mounted millstones (three pairs), and contains fine mostly wooden machinery. Unfortunately the brakewheel was dismembered in anticipation of a new wheel which was never made, but the pieces are still on site. There is an attractive 4-bed flint-faced cottage, a small barn and grounds of about an acre. Agents are Bedfords (01284 769999) and the guide price £595,000. (M.B.)

### NESS POINT TURBINE COMPLETED

Suffolk has a commercial wind turbine at last. The components arrived by sea from Denmark in a special transportation vessel at the beginning of December. Construction on site began on 7th December and was completed just three days later. The tower is in three sections: lower 17m long (71 tonnes); middle 29m long (65 tonnes) and top 29m long (46 tonnes). The nacelle or 'cap' weighs a massive 83 tonnes, while each of the rotor blades is 44.8m long and weighs 10 tonnes. It stands in an industrial area, very close to the sea, and is set to become a much visited landmark at the most easterly point in the country. It is difficult to miss, being readily visible from the resort's main beaches south of the harbour, and can even be glimpsed from the Simpson's roundabout on the A12 about three miles to the south. (M.B.)



### S.M.G. WEBSITE

You may have noticed on the first page of this newsletter a new address for our website. Last month we discovered that the old site, which the late Peter Dolman had been instrumental in setting up, was defunct, and the domain name was not easily recoverable. We have now secured a new domain name, [suffolkmills.org.uk](http://suffolkmills.org.uk) and once fully functional we intend that this will be properly maintained and regularly up-dated. Several members have joined by printing the membership form off the old website so we know this is a valuable facility whose importance can only grow. (M.B.)

## EVENTS

### S.M.G. PUBLIC MEETING: 'POWER FROM WIND'; SATURDAY MARCH 5th at 7.30pm; FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, FONNEREAU ROAD, IPSWICH

This year we return to the theme of wind power, contrasting traditional windmill technology with 21st century wind turbines. Main speaker will be Dr Dave Pearce, who as well as being an enthusiast for old mills, is also professionally involved with wind turbines through his work for E.ON UK plc. Dave plans to cover the development of windmill design in the 19th century, restoration projects at Thelnetham, Wicken and elsewhere, as well as looking at modern wind power and in particular the Scroby Sands wind farm off Great Yarmouth, which has 30 2MW machines.

Please note the change of venue from that given in the last newsletter. The Friends Meeting House is a short walk from the town centre, close to Christchurch Park; we are in the Collinson Room.

The growth of wind power for electricity generation is somewhat controversial, especially when inland wind farms are proposed. This talk should help understanding of what contribution it can make in the future to the country's energy needs. Please come along and support our main meeting of the year, and tell your friends about it. Admission is free.

### S.M.G. VISIT TO FRISTON POST MILL: SUNDAY APRIL 24th, from 2.30pm

Friston is generally considered to be the perfect example of the tall, technically advanced post mill which reached a peak of development in east Suffolk in the early years of the 19th century. Indeed, Jesse Wightman, when asked in 1958 which he considered to be the finest remaining post mill in England replied, "Now that Swilland has gone, Friston".

Built in 1812, it was run by wind until 1955 (after 1943 with just two sails), and by oil engine until 1966. After narrowly escaping demolition in the 1960's it was bought by the present owner Piers Hartley in 1972. The buck was repaired and reboarded in the mid 1970's, and last year steelwork was erected to carry the weight of the buck independently of the main post, owing to concerns about the weakness of the trestle. Although the millstones have been removed, much of interest still survives, including many small items lost in over-restored mills.

The mill is easily found right in the centre of the village, just off the main road to Aldeburgh.

### HERRINGFLEET WINDPUMP OPEN DAY: SUNDAY MAY 8th

As usual we will run Herringfleet windpump (wind permitting) on the Sunday of National Mills Weekend, and will be on site from about midday to 5.30pm. The Lowestoft District & Pye Amateur Radio Club also plan to set up a temporary radio station close to the mill, as they did last year, to provide an added attraction. We look forward to seeing some of you there!

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