

SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

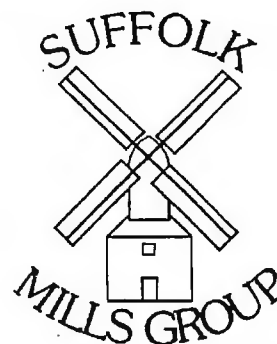
Newsletter

No. 94

February 2006

www.suffolkmills.org.uk

Editor: MARK BARNARD
41 Melbourne Road,
Ipswich, Suffolk. IP4 5PP



Our social evening back in early December seems a long time ago now, and as I write we can look forward to Spring, after an unusually dry winter, so far (touch wood!) without the predicted severe weather. Coming up is our annual public meeting, at which former SPAB Mills Section chairman and renown watermillier Mildred Cookson has kindly agreed to speak. Please do support this event, tell your friends and do what else you can to publicise it (a poster may be enclosed).

This year sees the 75th anniversary of the SPAB Mills Section, as the old Watermill Section from which it grew was founded in 1931. I have always regarded that year as a special one in windmill preservation, probably because it was when the sole windmill book in my school library (SPB Mais' *England of the Windmills*) was published, as well as another I coveted at the time, *In Search of English Windmills*. Either side of 1931 saw the production of the two volumes of *English Windmills* by the Architectural Press, and other well known windmill works followed. While much has been achieved, we always want more. The small number of unrestored mills are now as precious as unrestored steam locomotives, and we want to save as many of them as possible. Next year we have our own anniversary to celebrate - 30 years of S.M.G. It doesn't seem possible!

Please note the dates below. The next newsletter will appear in May/June, accompanied by the new Suffolk mills tourist leaflet. Don't miss it!

SMG public meeting, Ipswich
SMG visit to Layham watermill
National Mills Weekend

Saturday March 4th
Sunday April 2nd
Sat-Sun May 13th-14th

Mark Barnard

DRAINAGE MILLS OF THE SUFFOLK FENS Peter Filby

Part 1: A Brief Introduction to Fen Drainage

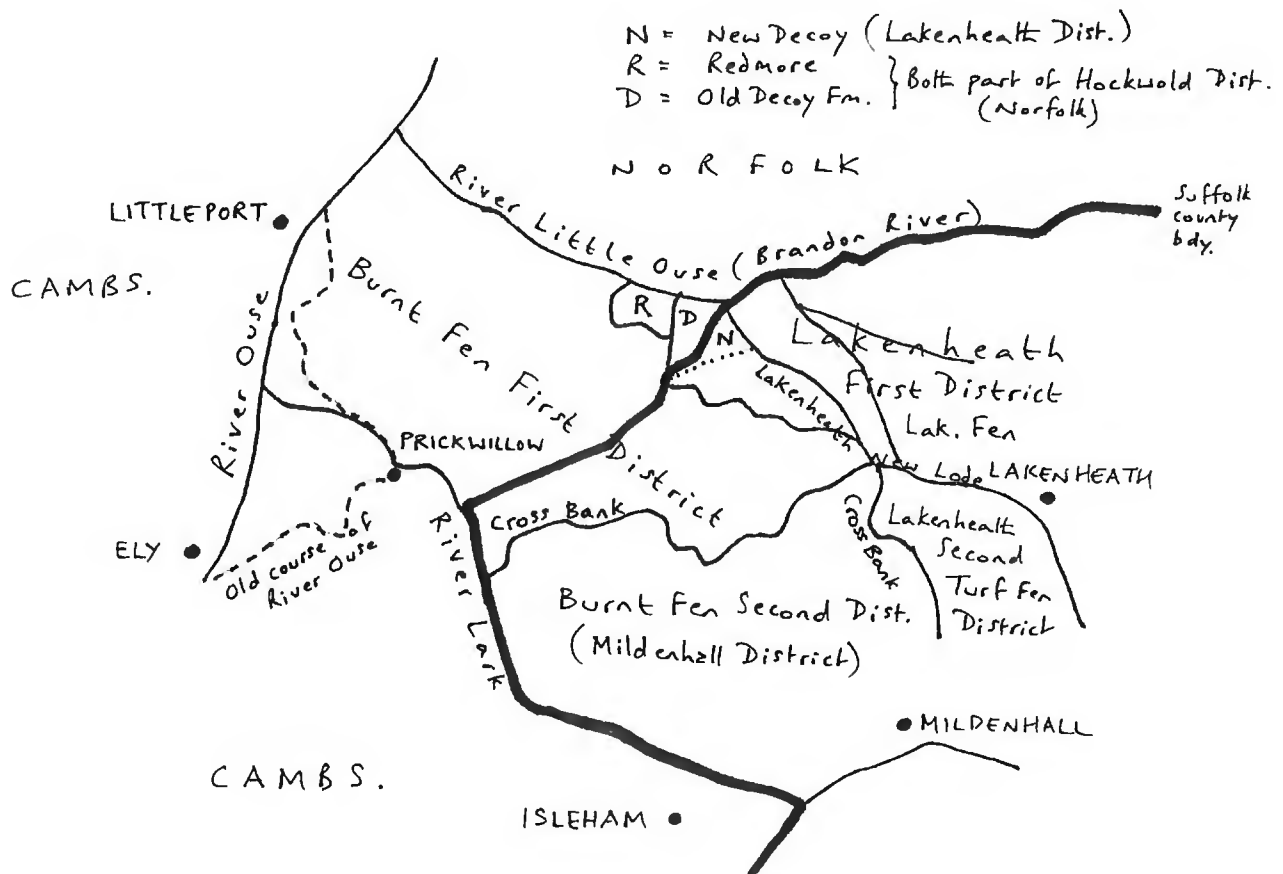
Introduction

There were about 16 drainage windmills in the fens of north-west Suffolk, compared to the hundreds that were in Cambridgeshire, or the hundred or so in west Norfolk. Only a few of these mills survived to be drawn or photographed when they were still working, but most photos are of sad derelicts. Three Suffolk ones stood until the 1920's. The last intact one, Great Fen Mill at Lakenheath, was demolished in about 1950. The house-converted stump of Middle Mill, formerly of the Mildenhall District, is now the only survivor. Many had the appearance of the Broadland marsh mill at Herringfleet. Its location and turning sails on open days is reminiscent of over two thousand smock drainage mills in the

East of England. Most have been long gone and now their only memory is often a mark on a map. I have been researching mills for many years including drainage mills. Some of my family, the Finch's of Ely, built and maintained them for well over one hundred years. A few of those mills were in Suffolk, for the Mildenhall District, and others were in the adjoining Burnt Fen District which was partly in Suffolk. Unfortunately all this was two hundred and more years ago. However, my research has discovered much about many forgotten mills and various people who were involved with them.

The Fens

18th and 19th century maps¹ often have many windmill symbols, although not all were marked on maps. By delving into newspapers and archival sources many can be identified. With directories and census material information can be gathered about the people that owned and worked them. In the 18th century there may be less sources but often a surprising amount can be discovered. Many works have been published on the drainage of the fens. A few have a chapter or so about the impact of windmill drainage, notably those by H.C. Darby and R.L. Hills². There are a few brief historical accounts of the fen drainage districts³. Some like Burnt Fen crossed county borders. In Suffolk there were four drainage districts that used drainage mills. The ones using the River Lark were Burnt Fen First District (Prickwillow) with two



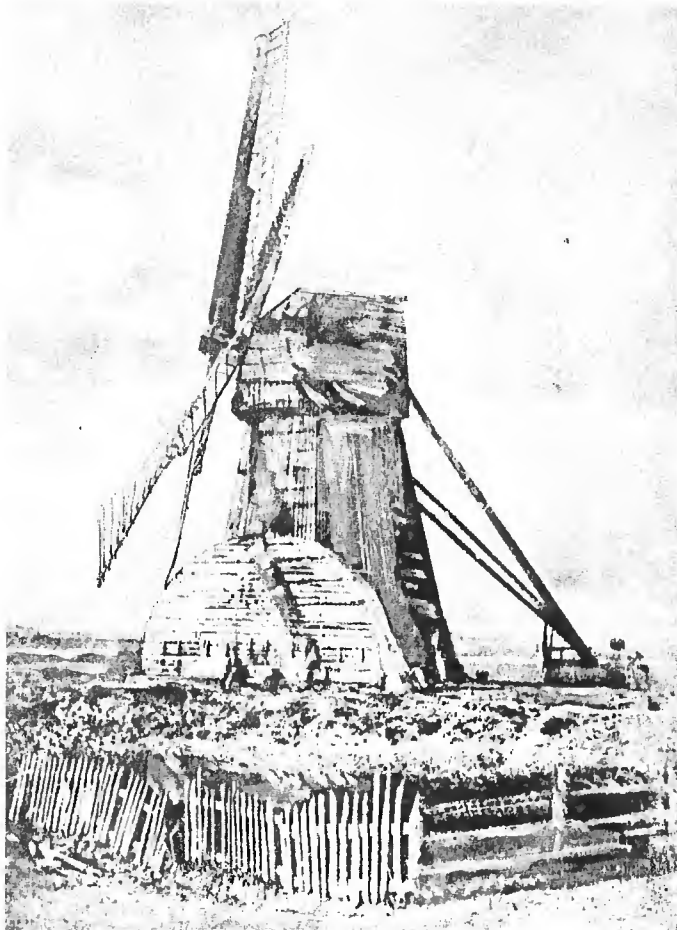
Sketch map of the drainage Districts in the Suffolk fens

Act. Thus it was 1738 before another was passed for a group of three fens around Ely. Then in 1740, the Waterbeach Level north of Cambridge. During the next sixty years many other areas also got their own Acts. Most of the Levels and Districts would erect several drainage windmills, and re-use ones that existed. This included the Suffolk districts but more about them later.

Internal Drainage Districts

The districts were governed by the statutes laid down by their Act of Parliament. They were run by 'Commissioners', landowners of above certain acreages, or their lessees, or representatives. Smaller landowners could attend the annual meetings that had to be held by the Act. Other meetings would be held as necessary to effect the good running of the district, and committees would be elected for specific projects. Commissioners would also include mercantile interests who could (and did) supply goods on lengthy credit. Local tradesmen usually also had to wait for payments, and had to submit invoices which could be critically examined. Sometimes they would be told their charges were too high, and to resubmit the bill for a prompt payment. Districts (some early ones were called Levels) varied in size from a few hundred acres to 29,000 acres, and their costs were proportionate. Much depended on landowners' circumstances,

economic conditions, and the weather. Long wet spells, or even seasons could 'drown' the district, its crops and livestock.



A typical fen drainage mill of the 1820's

Properly qualified and paid 'officers' would be appointed for the administration of the district. The law was strict about fit persons, which included Commissioners, to hold office. A Treasurer would be in charge of financial affairs. There was also a Receiver of Taxes, and tolls. Later ones may have had to bid for this privilege and a bond had to be provided. A Clerk, or Secretary, with legal knowledge, a lawyer was often appointed who would administer the district. Lastly a Surveyor. Often in smaller districts this role would be combined with that of Superintendent who was in day to day charge of looking after the mills,

of its mills in Suffolk and Burnt Fen Second District (normally called the Mildenhall District) which had three Suffolk mills. The districts that used the River Little Ouse, or Brandon River as it was often called were Lakenheath Great Fen District which had one mill, but there were two different mills and sites, and Lakenheath Turf Fen District which had one mill. Some of the mills were replaced or rebuilt on site, others were taken down, so at any one time during the period 1760-1860 those were the numbers operated by those districts. There were only a few farm drainage mills in Suffolk; most were in Mildenhall District. Another was on the Old Decoy Farm, River Little Ouse. Over on the opposite bank there was one other mill in a small extra-parochial part of Suffolk, one of the Norfolk Feltwell Second District, Hockwold mills. There were two or three small later windpumps near the River Lark.

Maps also give an idea what the landscape was like before and after the 'great undertaking' of the 17th century. Johannes Blaeu's map 'Regiones Inundatae', published in 1648⁴, was copied from earlier maps and clearly shows the fenland before the Bedford Level drainage of the 1630's. Later maps by Sir Jonas Moore in 1685 shows the fenland after extensive drainage works carried out by the Bedford Level Corporation⁵. They show the land assigned to the 'Adventurers' who financed the drainage work. This includes areas of north-west Suffolk. Anyone looking along the waterways and embankments of the fens like the Old Bedford, The Hundred Foot, the Rivers Lark and Little Ouse, which were all originally either cut or embanked at this period must be impressed by the effort to try and manage the environment on a gigantic scale. A later map of the Bedford Levels was published by Samuel Wells in 1829, clerk to the Bedford Level Corporation (BLC), with a separate Lot Book giving ownership⁶.

The BLC was from 1630 for two hundred years the paramount drainage authority. By 1651 the Bedford Level was split into three regions: The Middle, North, and South Levels. The fens of Suffolk were in the South Level. By the 18th century the BLC was beset with financial problems. They had hundreds of miles of rivers and drains and also embankments to maintain, as well as sluices, locks and other appurtenances. They had many calls by groups of landowners for money towards what they had paid out on maintenance of banks in their areas. The BLC received revenue from letting land, grazing rights, public houses, tolls, and the tax on the lands drained. It was not enough. Finally in 1726 a group of landowners, or 'commissioners' from Haddenham in the Isle of Ely sought to drain their land at *their* expense. They would maintain banks, erect mills or 'engines' as these were more usually called, sluices, and cut new internal drains. They were allowed to promote a Bill through Parliament with little opposition. The Bill which normally would have failed was passed thus becoming the first modern Internal District Drainage Act. This set the pattern for all the later Acts. However the BLC had retained rights to all the external banks, and any major work involving them had to be done by consultation, such as erecting mills, and cutting their outfalls through the banks. The BLC also wanted to see how the Haddenham Level would work in practice before any other groups of landowners were allowed to obtain an

drains, banks, sluices, bridges, etc. This position was often performed by a fenman, sometimes a former miller, who was particularly able. He had to be a practical man and carry out repairs himself, and supervise the various people employed by the district. He was under supervision himself by a committee of Commissioners to ensure work that would be paid for was carried out properly. Often a house was provided at some central location, and also a warehouse in which to store materials, tools and equipment. There was also an assortment of wood for various jobs including mill and bank repairs. Millers would also be appointed for each of the drainage mills, and conditions were often made as to their attendance at the mill. Other jobs might be performed when the mills were not needed, such as rodding the drains and mowing the banks. Some larger districts employed their own millwright, and also employed local tradesmen when necessary. The Suffolk districts tended to use millwrights from Ely or Soham, but some of their mills were built by tender using millwrights from further afield.

When a new district was established a survey would be made of its banks, drains, sluices, and any mills. This work previously had often come under 'Commissions of Sewers', and some of these were still operative under the Land Drainage Act of 1930. The Commissioners might require a mill to be put in order and taken over for district drainage, and compensation paid to the owner. Others might need to be moved, or to be built on a new site. New drains would also be required, which was expensive. Then a loan would be arranged, mortgaged against the future taxes levied. Windmills were sometimes hired from local landowners, or in an emergency by using a shared drain, or a tunnel under a bank to drains of a mill belonging to a neighbouring district.

(Part One will be concluded in the next issue)

Sources

Much of my Suffolk research has been done at County Record Offices in Cambridge, Norwich, Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich; the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library; Cambridge University Library, and several other libraries and repositories. It summarises much archival research and numerous documents, and many other sources. However some fairly easily available citations are as follows.

- 1 Hodgkinson: *Map of Suffolk* (1783). Reprinted by Suffolk Records Society (1972) also the Larks Press, Debenham (2003) [The Cambs/Suffolk fen border is wrong]
Ordnance Survey, 1st edition, one-inch maps: sheet nos 51 (1824) and 61 (1836). There are later reprints of these maps available by David & Charles in bookshops.
- 2 Darby, H.C. *The Draining of the Fens*. 2nd edition, Cambridge University Press (1956)
Darby, H.C. *The Changing Fenland*. Cambridge U.P. (1983)
Hills, R.L. *Machines, Mills and Uncountable Costly Necessities*. Norwich (1967) Now revised and updated as:
Hills, R.L. *The Draining of the Fens*. Landmark Pub. (2003)
Hills, R.L. *Power from Wind*. Cambridge U.P. (1994 & 1996)
Summers, D. *The Great Level*. David & Charles (1976)

- 3 Beckett, J. *The Urgent Hour: The Drainage of Burnt Fen District in the South Level of the Fens 1760-1981*. Ely (1983)
- 4 Blaue, Sir Johannes. *Regiones Inundatae* (1648). Reprinted by Cambridgeshire Libraries (1990's)
- 5 Moore, Sir Jonas. *Map of the Great Level of the Fens* (1685). A large map in several sheets; reprint of the smaller one sheet version. Cambs. Libraries (1990's)
- 6 Wells, S. *Map of the Bedford Level*. J. Cary, London (1829)
Wells, S. *Lot Books to the Bedford Level Corporation*. (1829 & 1841). One for 1820 was reprinted by Spindrift Press, Wisbech (2003).

REMINISCENCES OF A COUNTRY MILLER (6)

Harold Hitchcock

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

Windmillers cannot be very secretive concerning their work. The time of starting, length of the day's work, whether or not the mill is stopped for a meal hour, is apparent to all who live in sight of the mill. So long as the sails are within view, everyone knows if the miller is working or wasting a good wind. While most would perhaps hardly trouble to take notice, neighbouring millers kept a keen eye on their neighbours' mill sails and there was always a friendly rivalry between them. Our old miller John who, judging by his reminiscences, had worked in nearly every mill in Norfolk and Suffolk, very soon after his starting work here spotted the nearby mills whose busily turning sails could be noted from the higher floors of Sally (Rattlesden tower mill).

There is a special attractiveness in watching distant mill sails day after day. This arises from the constant changing angle which they present to the observer from the same vantage point, because of the ever changing direction of the wind. One day C's mill would present its white sails revolving with the sun (or the clock, whichever you prefer), but the next day, should the wind be exactly in the opposite direction, the motion of those same sails would appear to have reversed because we were then looking at them from the back instead of the front of the sails.

A very peculiar effect was noticed, however, when the wind was half-way between these two points and the sails were presenting their edges only to the observer. Then all one would see was a continual lengthening and shortening of the distant sails as they revolved but, as each sail came in line with the onlooker's vision, it appeared to give a sharp spurt while immediately after it apparently slowed while the whole length of the sail extended and then again as the next sail came in direct line a sharp jump again occurred (or seemed to). This kind of optical illusion is more pronounced with mills that are set to run in an anti-clockwise direction. After watching such a mill

from a certain angle for a few moments, the sails all appear jumbled up together, then we will find it impossible to say in which direction they are actually going. No doubt there is a scientific explanation of this but I merely record what I have noticed on several occasions.

To return to our neighbours' mills. From John, I suppose, I learnt to keep an eye on how they were kept at work, at least while it was daylight. When dark fell, the miller could grind or not as he pleased, without having the eyes of the parish upon his discrepancies. Rather a disadvantage, I feel, to have one's doings so patently advertised. Who knows if Farmer B is having his after dinner snooze before the fire but Miller C, if working his mill single handed, soon declares to all and sundry that, for the moment, work and he have fallen out. About 1½ miles away, as the crow flies, stood the large and very fine brick towered



Buxhall mill

Buxhall mill. From a little distance, she gave the impression of a very buxom matron, on close observation one noticed a peculiarity I have never seen elsewhere, for half the height of the tower there was no taper, only in the second half did the tower taper to a smaller circumference. One of the most modern windmills, this mill was equipped with four pairs of stones, flour dressing bolter, etc. and it was designed entirely as a flour mill in that period when stones were used solely for the production of flour in this country. With tremendously long sails and heavy stocks, the weight of her cap was enormous and without the help of modern engineering in providing a frictionless bearing at her neck, I believe a large part of the power she developed was absorbed in simply turning her own working parts. Notwithstanding this, I believe her owner has used all four pairs of stones at the same time in an exceptionally steady wind and, in a moderate wind, she would have one pair of 4ft 6ins stones along at a pretty speed.

Like many another, this mill's career as a windmill came to an end through a strong tail wind one night which badly damaged the fly wheel. Owing to high cost and difficulty in obtaining a millwright's services, the owner decided to discard the sails, retaining the stones in the tower which would henceforth be driven by an oil engine as formerly in the absence of wind.

I remember going to this mill as it was being partly dismantled, on purpose to see the lowering of the massive windshaft. One of the mill stocks, about 65ft in length and 19ins

square in the centre, was stood up vertically against the head of the mill and secured by guy ropes from three or four directions. From this was hung a pair of rope pulleys to take the weight of the windshaft, the fall rope being secured to a windlass on the ground. A lighter pair of rope blocks was secured to the tail of the shaft to steady it and the shaft was then slowly heaved out of the cap until the weight was entirely taken on the raised up stock. Massive though this baulk was, there was a distinct whip noticeable as this great weight was transferred to the pulley blocks but the contrivance stood firm against the shock and the shaft was gently lowered to terra-firma.

The mill, however, that was kept most in view was the post mill at Gedding less than a mile away across the fields. The reason for this was twofold. First, every time we walked from roller mill to Sally or vice versa, we had only to glance across the fields to see our neighbour's mill turning while Buxhall mill could only be noticed from the windows of our higher floors or the fly stage itself.

The second reason, however, and this concerned myself chiefly, was because I was becoming interested in my neighbouring miller's elder daughter; at this time owing to war conditions, she was spending a good part of her time in her father's mill and, when we began to meet, what better foundation for introduction and conversation could be found than our respective mills, the wind that served us both, etc. From this it was only a

short step to discover an easy means of communication. At the commencement of courtship and while it is still in the clandestine stage, various duties and happenings would interfere with a pre-arranged meeting at the last minute and the danger arose of absence being misconstrued. Love generally finds a way to overcome all obstacles and it seemed quite natural for us to use our mill sails to convey a message.

'I will come unless I put the mill top sailed at 6 o'clock' would be the parting arrangement at the previous meeting (that means the mill would be stopped at the arranged time with two sails exactly vertical and two, of course, horizontal). That, by the way, is a position the sails are never usually left at, the normal position being in the form of a St Andrew's cross. I have read, by the way, that in earlier times, the up and down position was used to signify the death of the miller. There was a snag



Gedding mill

to our arrangement at times, I remember. That was when in a very slow wind the mill would inadvertently stop in the pre-arranged position when the signal was not required. The only remedy then was to get a long pole and push her cross-sailed lest a wrong message be sent across the fields. All went well, however, in this direction and in 1922 two milling families were united by our marriage and we have lived happily ever afterwards.

After being used to the tower and cap type of windmill, the old post mill at Gedding always intrigued me. It has always been a mystery how these mills stand up to a severe gale for the whole of the upper part of the mill sits upon and turns on an immense oak post. There is nothing rigid in their construction and, when at work, the mill bucks and rears in an alarming fashion. When on the top floor the sensation is almost that of a ship at sea. The very fact that the whole structure gives slightly to a gust of wind is, I believe, one of the secrets of their strength for I have never heard of one being blown over unless they have become tail winded in a gale.

The gearing in this mill was of the simplest. A pair of large stones, 4ft 6ins in diameter, laid at the head of the mill and a smaller pair 3ft 6ins at the tail. The windshaft carried a head and tail wheel for each set of stones and these were driven direct from the windshaft by a crotched spindle and gear wheel engaging the head and tail wheels.

Like most other post mills, the sails of this mill reached to within about 18 inches of the ground and woe betide anyone who overlooked this fact and came in contact with the swiftly moving point of a sail! One apprentice there was so knocked over and spent several weeks recuperating from broken ribs.

In the roundhouse below the mill, which protects the post and struts of the structure and which also serves as a store, there are always two doors provided. Should the sails be swinging over one doorway on a given day, then the other one is the one to be used for that day.

One very interesting point in connection with this mill is the fact that it originally stood in a neighbouring parish and was moved bodily during the same year in which my wife's father was born. It speaks well for the millwrights of that day that, with very crude appliances, they were able to tackle and complete a job of this magnitude without mishap. Tradition tells how the body of this mill was transported on a large timber truck, drawn by 20 horses. When passing through a shallow ford, the conveyance broke down and there the whole affair remained over that weekend giving many sightseers the spectacle of a mill in an unusual position!

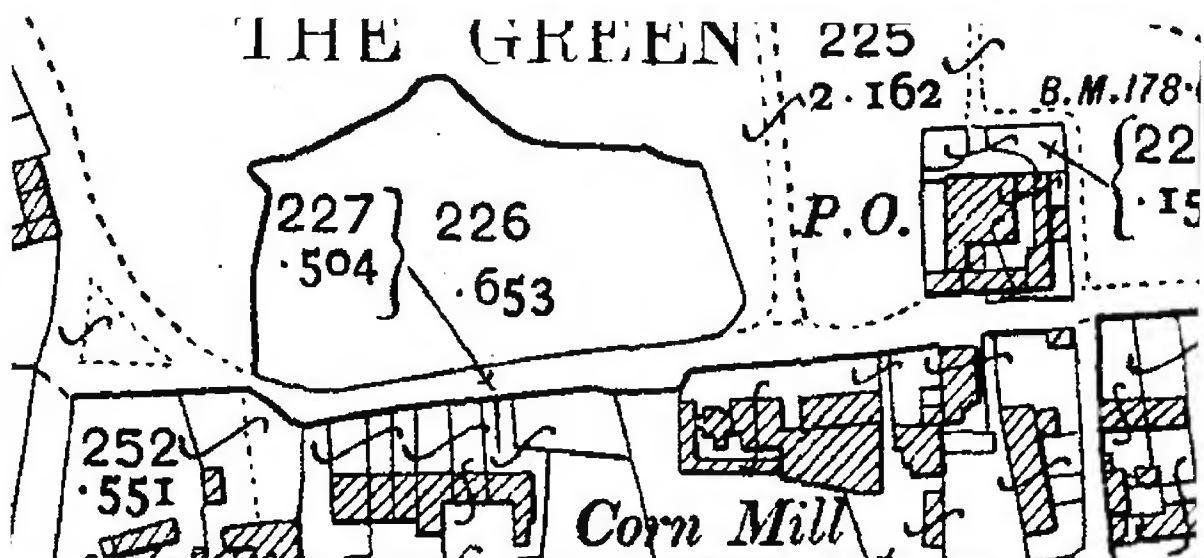
The sails of one other mill, a greater distance away than either of the two mentioned, could just be discerned above the trees from Sally's fly-stage. It speaks well of John's powers of observation at over 65 years of age, that he it was who drew our attention to these sails just showing on the highest part of their travel, while we who had lived here all our lives had never noticed them from these premises. I refer to the smock towered mill at Bradfield St George which ceased working several years

ago. One curious fact about this mill when working always struck me when passing same. This was the slowly revolving sails compared with other mills and the fact that the stronger the wind blew the slower she seemed to turn.

MILLS ON THE MAP Mark Barnard

This fine view of the tower mill in the centre of Wickham Skeith also shows the adjoining steam mill and a small boarded granary or store. All three buildings can be identified on the map extract, from the 1904 25-inch O.S. (not to scale). The mill tower does not appear as a perfect circle on the map because of abutting buildings at ground level.

The mill was built late, probably just after 1850. Both windmill and steam mill had two pairs of stones. The steam engine blew up and was replaced by an oil engine. The windmill was said to be in good order when pulled down early in 1925.



SUFFOLK COASTAL MILLS Doug Nicholls

Two items in Newsletter 90 particularly caught my eye so I thought I would write as both have a maritime theme, which readers might find of interest.

The first relates to the prospective overhaul of the Woodbridge tide mill. Members of S.M.G. may not be aware that as a precursor to this, funds were raised to enable Tidemill Quay to be refurbished during 2003. This project was completed in time for an opening ceremony on April 16th 2004. As no Thames sailing barges were available to lay on the Quay during the ceremony my wife and I were approached to see if we could take our Dutch sailing barge *Nooit Volmaakt* round from our berth at Robertsons Boatyard at Lime Kiln Quay for a couple of days. Although *Nooit Volmaakt* ceased trading in north-east Holland in 1966 she has kept her traditional looks with wooden hatch boards still in place. We were pleased to attend and received a token cargo of two coombe sacks from one Suffolk Punch drawn wagon and discharged it into another, before the wagons went off in procession round Woodbridge (see photograph below).

The second point of interest relates to our own address: Mill House, Alderton Road, Hollesley. The post mill that stood on this plot (Grid Ref. 342435) is one of which there is apparently no known photographic record. When I joined S.M.G. a couple of years ago it was with the intention of enlisting some help and



Nooit Volmaakt alongside Tide Mill Quay

expertise in researching the history of 'our' mill. Unfortunately within a very short time of joining the Group we purchased *Nooit Volmaakt* and all our resources and spare time have been devoted to that project.

However, to follow up the maritime aspect. I have been a skipper of Thames sailing barges for some years and have acquired various items relating to the navigation of the waters of the Thames estuary and points beyond.

Two sailing guides are of particular interest. The first is the forerunner of a very popular guide called *East Coast Rivers*, which has been produced and revised for many years by Jack Coote. My edition of *East Coast Rivers* is by SVSC Messum, Lieutenant RN, and published by J D Potter of The Minories, London in 1903. A chartlet next to page 22 covers the waters from Walton on the Naze to Orfordness. It places West Mill Hollesley at our location and also shows East Mill Hollesley but there is no reference to either mill in the text.

The second publication is *The Pilot's Guide for the River Thames and its Approaches*. This is a fifth edition re-compiled by H D Jenkins FRGS and published by Imray, Laurie, Norie and Wilson in 1923. The chartlet facing page 40 shows Harwich Approaches including Woodbridge and Orford havens and still shows Hollesley West and East Mills and also Boyton Mill. On page 48 we find a description of the entrance to the River Ore at Shingle Street accompanied by another chartlet from Long Sand to Orfordness corrected to January 1923. This shows Hollesley East Mill but does not reach as far as West Mill.

In this publication we also find Boyton Windmill and Orford West Mill in the text as navigation aids for the passage across Hollesley Bay inside the Whiting bank to round Orfordness. On page 52: *Boyton Windmill just open West of Boyton Hall bearing 332 degrees true will lead across the South West End of the Whiting in 3½ fathoms least water. A little further on in the text: When about midway between the lighthouse and the NE Whiting buoy, it is advisable to steer out, past the lighthouse, in a 63 degree true direction, to ensure giving the beach a wide berth. If from any cause the buoy is not on its station, Orford West Mill in line with Orford Church, 328 degrees true, clears the north-east extreme of the bank in 5 fathoms.*

Other S.M.G. members will no doubt know how long Hollesley East Mill, Boyton Mill and Orford West Mill survived but if as we believe Hollesley West Mill actually came down in gales in 1881 it begs the question as to how much research the compilers of the 1903 guide and very definitely the 1923 guide carried out.

Incidentally although we don't know much of the history of Hollesley West Mill we believe this house was built on the site in the early 20th century and remained under the ownership of Quilter's Bawdsey estate. It was in fact the gamekeeper's cottage when sold out of the estate in 1954. Indeed when we came here in 1992 we found many artefacts relating to the gamekeeper's trade still hung up or buried about the place. If any members have knowledge of any of the mills mentioned above, it would be very interesting if they could share it with us via this newsletter.

NEWS

PROGRESS AT DRINKSTONE

Repairs to the post mill are nearing completion. Following reinstatement of the windshaft (see last newsletter) the roof has been rebuilt, re-using more than three-quarters of the old rafters, almost all of which required repair. The distinctive rake towards the tail, and the eaves overhang, have been retained, but the angle of rake has been reduced. Apart from the head and tail gables and the petticoat, at mid February the boarding was complete and looking good. One refinement is lead flashing at the corners, carried round onto the end of each board to protect the end grain.

Minor repairs have been carried out to the trestle. When one of the old templates (the timber pads on top of the piers) was being planed, a lead musket ball was discovered, which must have been embedded in the living tree! A steel flitch plate has been inserted along the crowntree to strengthen this important timber. One 'new' feature is the full length tailpole, as the fantail winding, a very late addition, is being discarded. (M.B.)



The roof of Drinkstone post mill from the tail, with new boarding & reinstated sack-hoist (February 14th 2006)

REPAIRS AT ALTON WATERMILL

About three years ago the wheel of the watermill at the Museum of East Anglian Life in Stowmarket suddenly stopped. The cross-tailed gudgeon (sounds like a fish!) which is integral with one of the iron bearings on the wooden wheelshaft had broken away from the wood. This end of the wheelshaft had rotted leaving the gudgeon fins with little sound wood to hang onto.

At a meeting with museum staff in the mill we talked over various options for repairs. A new end could have been spliced onto the shaft, but as the museum staff and volunteers were going to carry out the work it could have been too difficult for them. The museum had available a good service for cutting and fabricating large steel components, so it was decided to leave the wooden shaft completely intact and to fabricate a new gudgeon and bearing, attached to the shaft via special brackets fitted to where the shaft was still sound. It was important that the components were strong enough, the fitting firm enough, and that there were no water traps to encourage rot. We gave the museum some design sketches and the components were soon made, but unfortunately lack of time and manpower meant that the fitting had to be carried out by professional engineers. Armour Engineering, fresh from their work on the Layham waterwheel, took on the job and the new gudgeon was fitted in January. The pond has been dredged and now the wheel is turning merrily again ready for this summer's visitors. (C.H.)

LOTTERY AWARD FOR TIDE MILL

Woodbridge Tide Mill Trust has been awarded a Project Planning Grant of up to £43,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund towards the cost of specialist reports to guide improvement work at the mill. If the main lottery grant application is successful, it is hoped to complete works on site towards the end of 2007. (M.B.)

EVENTS

S.M.G. PUBLIC MEETING: 'MEET MILDRED THE MILLER';
SATURDAY MARCH 4th at 7.30pm; FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, FONNEREAU
ROAD, IPSWICH

For this year's public meeting we are delighted to welcome Mildred Cookson, former chairman of the SPAB Mills Section and miller at Mapledurham watermill on the river Thames for many years. Mildred was also one of the prime movers in establishing the Mills Archive Trust, and has carried out research into mills in her native north-west England.

The Friends Meeting House is a short walk from the town centre, close to Christchurch Park. Please do come along if you can, and display the poster if one is enclosed.

VISIT TO LAYHAM WATERMILL: SUNDAY APRIL 2nd, 2.30pm-4.30pm

This picturesque brick watermill was rebuilt in 1905 after a fire destroyed its timber-framed predecessor. It re-uses the main machinery from the earlier mill, including a fine breastshot waterwheel recently repaired by Armour Engineering. Owner David Pearce hopes to be on hand to show us round, and maybe even get it working. The mill is at TM034405; turn off the B1070 in Upper Layham at Mill Lane.

NATIONAL MILLS WEEKEND: MAY 13th-14th

Herringfleet windpump will be open and running (wind permitting) on the Sunday as usual. Look out for details of other mills open nearer the time.

SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP
invite you to

MEET MILDRED THE MILLER

**Mildred Cookson,
Britain's only lady
watermiller, talks
about her life with
mills and milling
on the Thames**



SATURDAY MARCH 4th at 7.30pm

**FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE
FONNEREAU ROAD, IPSWICH**