

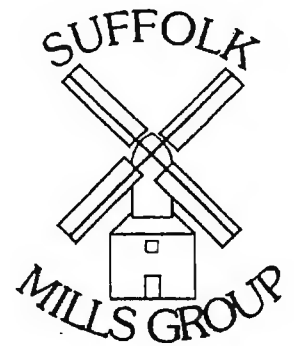
SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

Newsletter

www.suffolkmills.org.uk

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We had a reasonably good turnout of members for the public meeting in early March, although making these annual meetings known to the wider population remains a problem as we attracted few if any of the general public. The visit to Layham watermill can also count as a success, with the added bonus of fine weather and the mill grinding for a short while, adequately demonstrating the ability of the newly repaired waterwheel.

It goes without saying that to exist at all, let alone prosper, a small society such as S.M.G. relies on volunteers. Yet the numbers of volunteers in all walks of life is dwindling. Only last week a headline in a national newspaper read 'Busier lives take toll on volunteers', citing the usual reasons such as peoples' need to work longer hours and more demands on leisure time, as well as more worrying trends such as the risks inherent in the 'compensation culture'. It is perhaps ironic that the people who feel this lack of new volunteers most acutely are the volunteers themselves. This is certainly the case at S.M.G., which has been run by more or less the same faces for almost 30 years. We are not immortal and if new blood does not come forward, sooner or later the inevitable will occur.

Please note the dates below, especially the forthcoming A.G.M. We are arranging a joint visit with Essex Mills Group in September, and also advertising two other E.M.G. events at which S.M.G. members would be welcomed.

EMG visit to Morse's wind engine park	Sunday July 2nd
SMG Annual General Meeting	Sunday July 16th
SMG visit to Drinkstone post mill	Sunday July 23rd
EMG visit to Thorington Street mill	Sunday August 13th
SMG/EMG visit to Ashdon post mill	Sunday September 24th

Mark Barnard

VANISHED MILLS Peter Greene

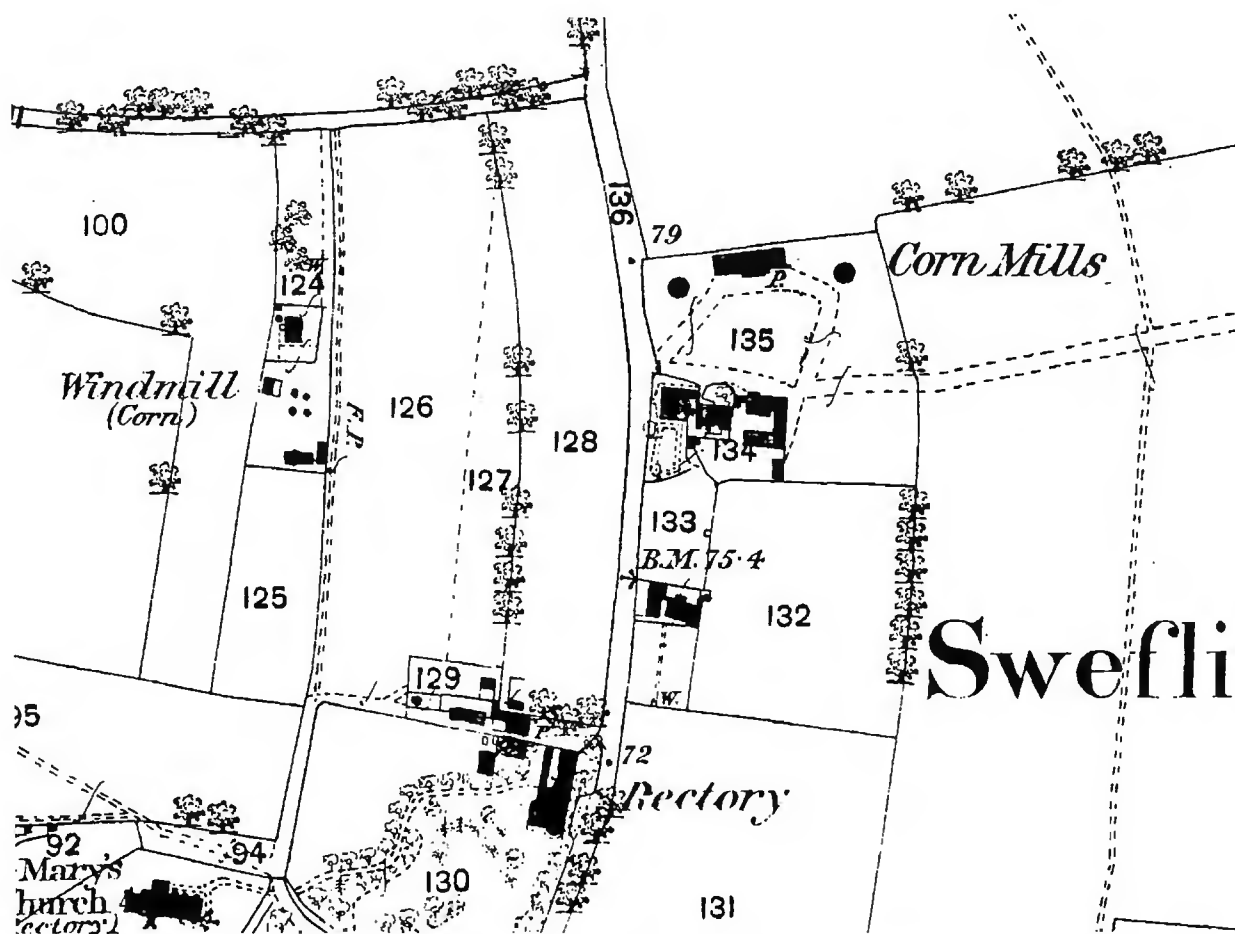
SWEFLING MILLS, SWEFLING

There are remains of three windmills and one steam mill in Swefling, built on the high ground between Swefling and Rendham. Girling's Mill (see Newsletter 90) was a small, single mill enterprise; in contrast, its neighbour Swefling Mills consisted of two post mills (Middle Mill and High Mill) and a steam mill, with a substantial miller's home to the south, Swefling Lodge.

The Copyhold lands south of the mills were held by Bruisyard Manor. These lands were taken up by Jonathan Seaman in 1805, where he later built his fine Georgian house. The Abstracts of Title related to this purchase show that a single mill stood at

this location as early as 1682, and probably became known, first as 'Old Mill' and later as 'Middle Mill'.

The next clear reference to the mill was in 1698, when John Mulliner died and bequeathed the mill to his son John. In 1784 the mill, described simply as 'the Old Mill', was advertised in the *Ipswich Journal* as having been acquired by William Seaman. William Seaman had been a miller in Sibton, using a horse mill. In 1785 he upgraded the mill by installing two pairs of French stones, probably in response to similar improvements made by his neighbour, Benjamin Artis. William Seaman died in 1796, and the enterprise passed to his brother Jonathan Seaman, who in turn passed it to his son, Jonathan Seaman, in 1826. Between 1829 and 1832 the second mill was built. It was put up for sale in 1833 by the trustees and creditors of Mr Seaman shortly after the new mill (High Mill) was built. Henry Mills took over the mills in 1835. In 1879 the property was in the possession of Frederick William Shearing, part of a large milling family. He leased it to William Herring and Son in 1906, and finally disposed of the roundhouses and steam mill to Alfred Harris for £500 on 24th January 1913. During some of this period an Edward M. Douglas seems to have been the miller, perhaps paying a rental and working the steam mill.



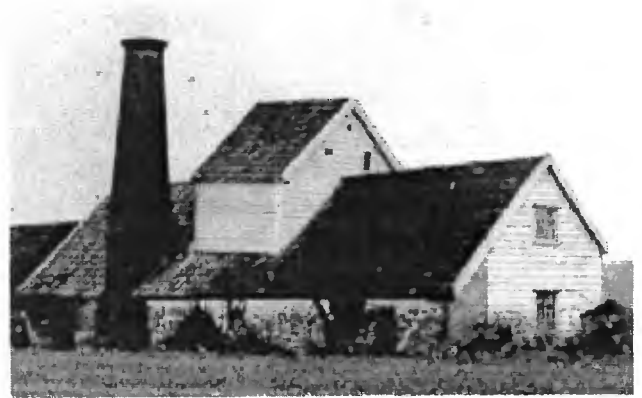
The O.S. 25-inch map of 1883 showing (west to east) Girling's Mill (then open trestle), Middle Mill, the steam mill and High Mill. (Scale 1:2500)

Middle Mill, also known as Lyddie (Lydia), was apparently built in about 1783, and seems to be the earlier of the two. The bucks in both Swefling Mills appear to have been set well back on the post, resulting in well balanced mills. She had two pairs of stones in the head, an iron windshaft and a flour bolter; no fantail is visible in my photographs, so the mill may have been winded manually. The sails were not patent as evidenced in the inquest into George Markham's death. The wooden buck was demolished shortly after 1899, leaving only the two storey roundhouse which remains today and dates from about 1830. The photograph below shows Lyddie shortly before she was demolished. Displaced or missing weatherboarding can be seen, along with a broken sail. The roundhouse has been used as a home ever since.



Middle Mill (left), steam mill & High Mill c.1895

High Mill, also known as Rachael, was built around 1830. Isaac Johnston's map of 1832 does not show it, but it is mentioned in a sale bill of 1834. This was the largest of the three mills in Swefling, measuring approximately 55 feet from the base of the two-storey roundhouse to the top of the fantail. It had four patent sails, two pairs of stones in the head and one in the tail, an iron windshaft, flour bolters, a fantail above the back gable and a tailpole. The design of the fantail is rare as its position rendered it difficult to maintain and dangerous to repair. The spindle ran down from the tail, along the tailpole and to the wheel at the end of the tailpole. In fact, it was whilst working on this fantail that journeyman miller George Markham fell and died. The mill ceased working in the early 1900's and the buck was removed in 1911-12, with the double tramway stairs going to nearby Saxtead mill. The surviving roundhouse was used as a storeroom, with a corrugated iron roof, and appears to have been reduced to only one storey high. Only the inner core of three of the four piers remain, the cladding of Suffolk white brick having been removed and sold in the 1930's.



Above: The steam mill with truncated chimney
Left: High Mill

The Steam Mill, whilst clearly a large structure, is a bit of a mystery. Plenty of documented evidence has been gathered over the years on the windmills of Suffolk but little seems to be known about these less romantic buildings. It is believed to have been built between 1833 and 1862, by John Whitmore for Henry Mills. It was originally driven by a beam engine, which was later replaced by a portable oil engine. It fell into disuse between 1922 and 1929 and very little of this structure now remains.



The roundhouses of Middle Mill and High Mill, as seen from outside Girling's Mill in 1934 (S. Freese)

In 1851 Henry Mills received a covenant from his neighbour Rev. Russell Skinner in which the Reverend guaranteed that none of his trees would exceed a height of fourteen feet. Henry Mills was concerned that tall trees were robbing the mills of the wind so vital to them.

Coroner's inquests were held into two deaths directly related to milling in the village. In both cases men fell from the mills. In 1840 George Markham, aged 27, fell to his death while working on the fantail at the very top of High Mill. It is from this document that we know that the mill was 55 feet high, making it one of the tallest in the county. History repeated itself when 25-year-old Abdiel Bicker died after falling from Middle Mill in 1867. He had been up in the sails assisting a millwright and carrying out repairs.

Despite the tragedy that often surrounded mills, their beauty is undeniable and was eloquently captured by a relative of William Shearing, Frank Tacon, recalling a visit to Sweffling: *'After the tiresome train journey...Sweffling!...Lyddie and Rachel gleaming white, whirling white sails: resolutely facing whatever wind might blow: dauntlessly turning zephyr or gale to good.'*

With special thanks to Susan Hunter for her assistance in providing contacts and Shearing family history, to Edith Pratt for generously providing me with access to the historical documents, and to Jennifer Raaff for much valuable information (all the way from South Africa, where Mr. Shearing's family migrated).

DRAINAGE MILLS OF THE SUFFOLK FENS Peter Filby

Part 1: A Brief Introduction to Fen Drainage (concluded)

Drainage Mills

Mills were usually the major expense of any district that used them, and many cash strapped boards had to take out more loans to pay large millwrights bills. Interest rates were usually at 5% per annum for many years. Advertisements or notices asking for tenders were published, or were invited when large jobs such as building or rebuilding a mill were required. Millwrights built the mill structure and machinery, but bricklayers, blacksmiths, plumbers, and also a founder would be needed. Materials might be supplied by one or more of the Commissioners. Usually the millwright who gave the lowest tender got the work, subject to satisfactory guarantees. Payment was made in instalments, and the millwrights knew this, and some might be held back. Thus the mill would have to work effectively, and a contract had been performed to specification. Occasionally a millwright altered the 'scantlings', or the gearing was not satisfactory. If he could not finish the job, another would be called in and paid out of the money held back. William Finch had to virtually rebuild one new mill for a district, and several times had to replace 'botched' gearing. On completion of a large job another millwright would be called in to give a second opinion. Local tradesmen also benefitted through supplying a wide range of

goods, or services required, and if there were two or more shops or carpenters, or blacksmiths, they all often got a share of supplying goods or work to their district. The mills had to have fire insurance, and this was done through a local agent, who was often a Commissioner or a tradesman.

Taxes were the main source of revenue for the district. Notices were published in regional newspapers⁷ and displayed in public places (and printed by a local printer), informing when and where the taxes would be collected. Further notices were made giving warning that proceedings would be taken against defaulters. A final notice in the newspapers could name the people, with plots of land and monies owed. In many wet years, or successive wet seasons, farmers would run out of money, but some were tardy payers, and the district still had to meet its expenses incurred on their behalf. Additional finance was made from the collection of tolls. This sometimes led to irregularities even if they were usually farmed out and a bond demanded.

A strong line was taken against people who damaged or stole district property. Despite this there were many cases of arson or theft, and often mischievous damage was caused. Sometimes an unattended mill was damaged through a brake being taken off so the sails would turn. Fittings might be stolen such as chains, ropes, or even brasses. Watermen and other itinerants were often suspected and convicted. On occasions mills were deliberately set on fire, or attempts were made at arson. Public notices were displayed for the apprehension of offenders, and a reward offered.

Working the mills was usually a seasonal occupation, depending on the weather. Typically a few mills would be set off in November, and the others in December. They would be worked through the winter until Spring, March to May, and gradually stood down. Sometimes they might be started again during the summer, and in wet years would be worked as necessary. Lack of wind, and really cold and icy spells stopped the mills working, and a sudden thaw meant the drains were full of water. Maintenance on the mills was done in the summer to get them ready for the next season, but urgent repairs would be done as soon as possible.

Drainage Millers

'Millers' were employed to run the mills and were expected to work them whenever the wind or conditions were sufficient, day or night. Sometimes a relief miller might be employed, or one of his family if they lived in the mill. This could be in the most inclement seasons: ice, snow, frosty fen fogs, rain for days on end. The district officers and taxpayers would be watching the mills particularly if a lot of water had to be moved out of the drains. It takes a fair steady wind to make a drainage mill lift water effectively. There were also many complaints about absenteeism such as helping on a nearby farm. Millers were usually dismissed for letting their mills get damaged through negligence, and sometimes ended up in court if there had been an insurance claim. As well as adjusting the common sails (which were on most of the older mills) they did routine maintenance

such as greasing the machinery. The mills used a lot of grease as the older ones had dead curbs. The majority of the fen mills were turned by a tripod tailpole, as at Herringfleet. A capstan or a winch would be moved around the anchor posts, so the cap could be slewed round taking the sails into, or out of the wind. The big fen mills stood 40 or 50 feet high, and carried up to 42ft common sails. The scoop wheels also had to be cleaned of ice, mud and weeds, and the weed traps in the mill drain, using scrapers. Accidents to millers were reported like one at White Top Mills, Mildenhall where one fell from the cap and was killed. Some also died or were injured when clothing caught in machinery.

When the water was low in the drains the Commissioners could often find some alternative work such as repairing damaged embankments. The security of any district depended on the state of its banks against breaches by water. Trampling by livestock (the banks were often leased for grazing, but this could be revoked) and also burrowing animals threatened this. Trapping moles and rabbits, and perhaps game, and catching fish, whilst weeding drains meant extra money, clothing and food. The pay of millers varied across the fens but was typically six or seven shillings (30p-35p) a week until about 1800 when it rose to about ten shillings (50p). Pay was stopped when the mills were set down, and if there was no other district work, employment was found on farms, which at harvest time meant bonus money, or in gangs 'slubbing' or cleaning out drains. The millers lived in the large mills (some were named after them) rent free, often with large families. Numerous accidents with children being killed by sails or machinery and by drowning are recorded^B. Some drainage mills were operated by successive family generations and sometimes the women helped, or worked them. Most mills had fireplaces and the millers were supplied with turfs, later coals, for their fires. In a few districts an isolated mill might be provided with a separate bakehouse for the miller and his family and also other fen folk living nearby.

Notes

7,8 I have checked many years of newspapers: *Cambridge Chronicle*, *Norwich Mercury*, *Bury Post*, etc. (microfilms in county libraries and record offices)

REMINISCENCES OF A COUNTRY MILLER (7)

Harold Hitchcock

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

Following on from these personal memories and reminiscences, it may be of interest to look rather more closely at methods of flour production and trade customs of the past hundred years or more. Later on I shall try and describe more present day practice, in non-technical language.

It has always been very apparent to me that, although everyone enjoys the results of the miller's (and baker's) work

when they come to the table, there is a surprising degree of ignorance with many people regarding the processes which ultimately convert the raw grain to a cheap, palatable, ready cooked food, which even during the height of the submarine menace, was always in supply and up to the present has not been subject to rationing.

Over a number of years I have had pleasure in conducting several folks around our small roller mill and I think, without exception, all have expressed surprise at the amount of machinery involved and the comparative intricacy of the process. I remember one friend in particular saying, after he had been shown around, that he had visualised one or perhaps two immense and long rollers, stretching almost the length of the building! If any miller friend catches sight of these lines he will at once wonder what amount of spring there would be to such rolls as these and what his grind would be like at the centre.

Considering the trade of a miller is the oldest in the world, apart from agriculture, one feels at a loss in trying to write anything of interest to the ordinary person, especially remembering that books already written on milling in the past are more numerous than can be counted. Should any feel inclined to dispute the above statement regarding the antiquity of the trade, I would refer them to Genesis 18 verse 6 from which it is quite clear that either Abraham, his wife or his servants were millers of a kind.

Through the kindness of a friend and near neighbour, Mr J.A. Clover of Buxhall Mills (the name of Clover in Suffolk being synonymous with miller) I have been lent a kind of trade journal, belonging to his grandfather, which commences in 1828, the year in which he commenced business at Buxhall. It is interesting to note the business is still carried on there by Mr Clover and his son, the latter representing the fourth generation of an unbroken line. It would seem advisable, therefore, not to try and look back beyond that date and, as I have no knowledge of conditions of trade in the more urban districts, to confine my remarks to conditions applying in my immediate district, which is rural very definitely.

The miller's trade then would seem to be divided into two parts, the buying of local grown wheat and converting same into flour and offal for sale in the neighbourhood and also the trade known as 'wheat grists' in which the miller ground and dressed the customers' own wheat on payment of a charge which appears to be fairly standard of five shillings per coomb, or 18 stones, for the earlier part of the 19th century. Strangely enough, later on in the century, when the purchasing power of the pound was becoming less, the charge for grinding and dressing wheat was reduced to two shillings and sixpence per coomb, at which it remained until the control of flour mills was instituted soon after the commencement of the First World War. The regulations under this control did not allow the grinding of wheat by any except controlled flour millers and, consequently, many of the smaller millers who had been in the habit of obliging customers with this form of service, were compelled to drop out. There was, however, one other form of payment for wheat gristing, which was

often applied to those customers who kept no livestock and who, therefore, had no real use for the offal or, as we should term it now, the wheatfeed. This was for the miller to retain the wheatfeed in payment for his services and would, I suppose, be applied especially to farm workers when the combined gleanings of the family was brought along to be converted into flour. In such cases I do not think the miller was specially careful to clean the wheatfeed very thoroughly; this being his perquisite he would see that the quality of the same was good and the quantity not cut too fine.

The power available in this district was wind only and it does not need a great deal of imagination to visualise the position that must have arisen during certain times in the year, when long spells of still settled weather prevailed. Farmer H..., who had sent a sack of wheat to the mill to be converted into flour a fortnight before, might be reminded by his wife on baking day that she had insufficient flour to bake with. The gentleman in question call at the mill in high dudgeon as to why his grist had not been returned, seeing it was now a fortnight since it had been sent. Mrs S... a horseman's wife, with seven or eight hungry mouths to fill, might rate the miller because her precious bushel of wheat, gained by laborious gleaning after harvest, was not yet ground. To these and all other entreaties the miller would probably reply, 'All in good time, WHEN the wind blows'. Without the wind he was helpless and might have to spend days in enforced idleness and it is only fair to concede how busy he would become later on, when the long looked-for wind did come, and both day and night, so long as it continued, the sails would swing steadily around, providing all once more with the necessary flour to enable busy housewives to bake, and hungry workers to eat, both with their families, and under the hedgerow, as they ate their frugal meals, or 'snaps' when working in the fields.

Mention of gleaning in the previous paragraph reminds me of the importance this played in the life of agricultural workers of a century or more ago. Once the fields had been cleared and raked at harvest time, permission would be given for the gleaners to come into the fields and commence their work. The farm worker's wives, with all their broods, would engage in this whenever circumstances permitted and, with much back-ache, would carry home enough short straws and ear-heads cut off short which had escaped the rake, to eventually thresh out by hand two, three or more bushels of wheat. This converted by the miller into flour, would go a long way towards providing bread for the family during the winter months and would provide some relief to the family budget during times when wheat flour cost four shillings per stone and the farm worker's wage was nine shillings per week. How couples brought up a family and fed and clothed them under these conditions will always remain a mystery to me.

REPORT OF 2005 A.G.M.

The 2005 A.G.M. was held on Sunday July 3rd at Burgh mill, by kind permission of Edward and Penny Creasy. 14 members were present, with apologies from Mark Barnard, Roy Berry, Melanie

Dolman, Peter Filby and Dave Pearce.

The minutes of the 2004 A.G.M. were agreed (proposed Brian Flint, seconded Bill Vincent). Chris Hullcoop commented that the newsletter continues to be of high quality. There was an unanimous vote of thanks to Mark Barnard for all his hard work on newsletter production over the last 25+ years.

Treasurer Des Codd circulated the accounts for 2004. They showed expenditure exceeding income by £1,400, mainly due to grants to mills totalling £900, purchase of copies of Suffolk material from the Mills Archive, and acquisition of a TV/video. There was still a healthy balance of nearly £12,000 at the start of 2005. Brian Flint asked about the £500 grant towards the new mills tourism leaflet which is being produced by the County Council. The leaflet is still in the production stage. Chris Hullcoop applauded Dominic and Linda Grixti for their continued work at Stanton mill and mentioned the S.M.G. grant of £400. He suggested further grants could be made to Stanton, Drinkstone, Thelnetham and towards the conservation of some minor mill remains, and to the production of a publication.

The remains of Syleham mill were discussed. This is one of the best roundhouses in Suffolk as it contains machinery which could be power-driven to produce flour. It was suggested that the remains of the buck should be craned off and the crowntree stored inside the roundhouse. The hole at the top of the roundhouse would need to be covered in, and the post protected. The main steps, still in situ, would need to be propped or taken down. Chris Wilson thought it would be difficult and risky to get volunteers involved with this project and that professionals should be brought in to do the heavy work.

Chris Hullcoop asked about the plans by Brian Flint and Bob Malster to write another book on Suffolk windmills. Brian Flint suggested that due to time constraints, a photo book may be attempted, featuring one photograph of every known windmill with a descriptive paragraph. Chris Hullcoop suggested spreading the search for windmill photographs wider, perhaps with an article in the local press, a plea on Radio Suffolk or a notice on our website. Bob Paterson has a CD of all the photographs Peter Dolman's estate passed to the Mills Archive. Brian Flint has a large archive of photographs (including 600 taken by Stanley Freese) and notes.

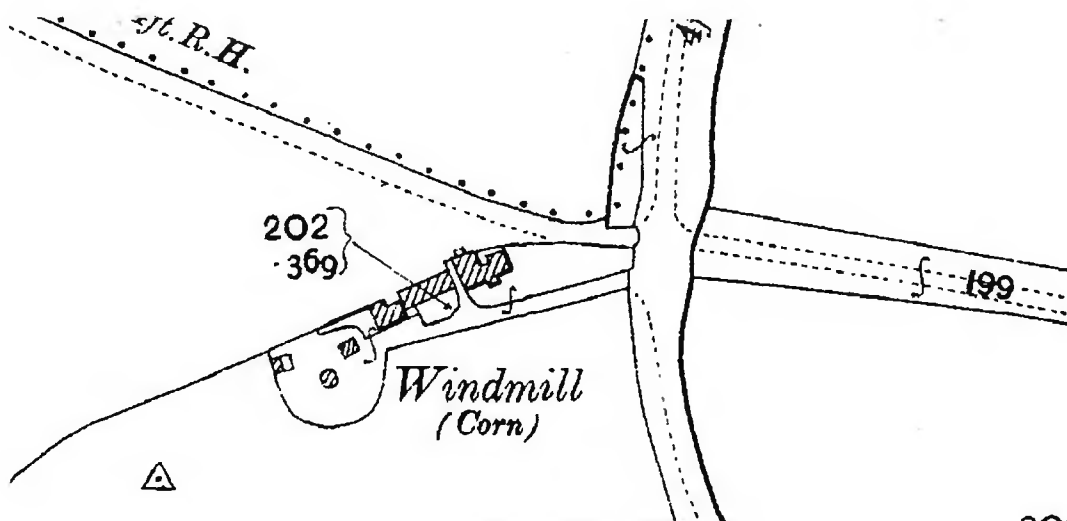
Election of officers followed. Alex and Rosy Hayward would be stepping down from the committee as they were shortly moving out of the area. Replacements were badly needed. Susan Burden said she would volunteer, but thought that her location would make it difficult to attend meetings. Des Codd said committee members should preferably be local. Chris Hullcoop said that the Group would continue in a low-key way but young blood is needed. He praised Bob Paterson for his work on the website, mailshots and general computer back-up work. The present committee was willing to serve for another year and was duly re-elected.

After the meeting everyone ascended the tower to admire Chris Hullcoop's new roof as well as the splendid view.

MILLS ON THE MAP

This time we feature the smock mill at Brettenham. It stood just off the village street, at the start of the minor road to Felsham. The photograph was taken at the entrance to the mill premises, and shows successively the mill cottage, two outbuildings (the second probably a stable), engine shed and finally the mill, all of which are mapped (O.S. 25-inch, 1904 edition, not to scale).

This was a beautifully proportioned smock mill on a very low brick base. It bore the date 1814, and replaced a post mill on the same site. At the time of the photograph it still had an all wooden windshaft; this was replaced by an iron one in c.1910-15. There were 2 common and 2 spring sails; it finished work on just the commons, and these were removed in 1931. It was pulled down sometime between 1939 and 1947.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

David Barton of Ipswich writes:

The article in Newsletter No.92, 'Whitmore & Binyon: a Brief History' by Peter Dolman reminded me of my contribution on the subject published in Newsletter No.39 of June 1987. Peter also addressed the subject as part of the annual public meeting on 25th February 1995. I can recall three other meetings where the history of the firm has been studied.

The first was at Wickham Market on 24th April 1979 when the researches of the (Wickham Market) Historical Society led to an evening which included the gathering of the surviving members of the Whitmore family. On 4th November 1982 Ken Masters gave a lecture to the Industrial Archaeology Society at the Suffolk College. He was a member of the Wickham Market Society. Thirdly, I have notes from a lecture given by Miss E.P. Cockburn at Wickham Market on 23rd September 1994. I wonder if any of this research is in the files of the Mills Group.

I can recall several visits to Butley mill pictured in the current newsletter. The owner was Mr Jack Hewitt and a friend of my uncle Mr Fred Johnson of Wickham Market. Mr Stanley Higgins who worked at the mill lived nearby. Some old millstones that stood outside the mill carried Whitmore's cast name plates. I surmise the former steam engine had been a Whitmore product.

Returning to Newsletter No.90, my pre-war cycle adventures took me to Swefling where I was shown the oil engine and the stones in the roundhouse. When Whitmore's closed in 1902 I conclude my friend of the family, Mr Albert Braddock, continued as an independent engineer sending his tools up to the station for despatch by train. He was involved with the installation of the oil engine. He died at Wickham on 23rd December 1949 aged 84. His father James was born at Somerton in Norfolk and was chief foreman at Whitmore's. On one occasion business for the firm took him to St Petersburg in Russia. When Mr Braddock's house 'The Vinery' was being demolished for development I looked around the site and came across a rusty diestock in an outhouse, a surviving tool of Mr Braddock's. After cleaning I handed this over to the local history centre for safe keeping.

I have two other memories of Swefling. One is the fact that the mill house was a single storey dwelling with the kitchen below ground. Was it so built as to offer less disturbance to the wind one wonders. My other memory relates to the fine model of a traction engine made by Mr Gowing's son. This model is now in the Long Shop Museum, Leiston in a showcase provided by Garretts.

NEWS

JOHN JORDAN

John Jordan, old Biggles of Biggleswade, died recently at the age of 85. Also known as the Crunchy Bar King he was born in 1921, heir to the Jordan family milling business at Holme Mills, Biggleswade, established in 1855. Today Jordans are

internationally famous quality cereal manufacturers and are still an independent family business run by John's sons.

John was apprenticed to millers Reeds of Norwich, his father ensuring that he knew the whole business from top to bottom. A near neighbour when he was at home was Richard Shuttleworth who introduced him to flying in a Tiger Moth. In 1939 he joined the R.A.F. and was soon flying Blenheim bombers raiding Germany by day and was lucky to survive. After the war as well as building up the family business he kept his interest in aviation, running a crop spraying business, flying all the planes in the Shuttleworth Collection, and even serving for a while as an airline pilot. His flying log books show that he flew some 25,000 hours and around 150 different types of aircraft, single and multi-engined.

We first met him when he came to Ipswich to give our annual mill lecture in 1990. He happened to mention that he landed a bomber on a beach in East Anglia and that he still enjoyed flying, especially aerobatics, in his 1942 Stearman biplane. He joined S.M.G. and on one splendid day in 1991 brought his biplane to Suffolk to perform aerobatics over Thelnetham mill. On the way he barnstormed R.A.F. Honington and before lunch had to phone them to explain his antics. They forgave him though and I'm sure they enjoyed his escapade. On another occasion he performed over Herringfleet mill, dropping Crunchy bars to visitors.

I have particularly happy memories of flying with John. I was very wary of aircraft as when I was a boy of about 12 years I was out in the countryside near Woodbridge when an aircraft crashed just 300 yards from me. Unfortunately it turned upside down trapping the pilot and then caught fire. A farmer and I tried unsuccessfully to beat out the flames and the pilot was burned to death before the brigade arrived. Not a good introduction to aviation. To counteract this John said that I must fly in his biplane and he was sure I would come to love the old machine and indeed I did.

AIR POLICE FORCE

WANTED



FOR AERONAUGHTIES

BRIDGESTORMER

JORDAN

ALIAS

BIGGLES, RED BARON, etc, etc.

HUGE REWARD

WARNING

THIS MAN WILL TRY ANYTHING AND SHOULD NOT
BE APPROACHED BY AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS

On one occasion we went to an airshow and as I swung the 10ft propellor the announcer said that you needed years of experience to do this or you could be killed. I felt nervous as I had only done it once before earlier that day!

On a visit to the sadly long gone Ipswich air fete we flew under the Orwell bridge. I recalled John telling me he would love to appear on a 'Wanted' poster. So one was made and sent to Jordans for display on their notice board in case they knew the whereabouts of the wanted man!

The Stearman biplane had a very large radial engine which could lift it vertically after take-off. John was a master of aerobatics performed close to the ground, so close that I could count the daisies! My duties were security, starter, oil cleaner and patcher of the fabric. The best days out I ever had were taking part in airshows with John. What a privilege, what memories! (C.H.)

PROGRESS AT DRINKSTONE

Most of the repairs to the post mill buck were completed by the end of the winter, allowing the enclosed scaffold to be removed. The boarding looks good, and the Belzona membrane on the roof boards is not discernable. Suitable timber (larch) has now been procured for the steps and at the time of writing (early June) these were under construction. The petticoat boards also have to be fitted. It is anticipated that all work will be complete by the time of our visit in July (see below). (M.B.)



SUFFOLK MILLS FOR SALE

Several mills are currently on the market. **Wixoe** watermill on the Stour, preserving some machinery, comes with house, outbuildings plus residential annexe and 4.3 acres, and a price tag of £1.35M. Agents are Carter Jonas (01787 882881). The converted watermill at **Mendham** is with Strutt & Parker (01473 214841) who are asking £1.5M. **Dalham** smock mill and house are still for sale, reduced to £549,950; the agents are David Burr (01787 277811).

Martin Whitworth (01394 382045) is considering offers in the region of £900,000 for **Buttrum's Mill, Woodbridge**. The mill is leased to the County Council who are responsible for maintenance, and comes with house, stable building converted to commercial use and just under an acre of land.

ROOF PLANNED FOR STANSFIELD MILL

Stansfield is the last derelict corn-grinding windmill in Suffolk containing significant machinery. Built in 1840, the cap was pulled off by ploughing engine in 1922 and a reinforced concrete roof laid on the dust floor. This roof eventually failed, and by the late 1960's had smashed its way to the ground floor. This damage, together with decades of water penetration, has resulted in a spectacle of decay. Back in 1995 we honoured a promise to the new owner Jerry Kane to make the ground floor safe, and lowered the bottom half of the upright shaft to the ground, and tied in place the spurwheel (see Newsletter 62).

As a Grade II listed building 'at risk', the mill qualified for local authority grant aid. This money, together with an extremely useful grant from the SPAB Mills Section, has proved sufficient to allow conservation work on the tower to go ahead this summer. It is intended to construct a conical roof of very shallow pitch, similar to that fitted at Rattlesden mill in 2002. The obvious difference is that Rattlesden is 10ft 5ins overall diameter, whereas Stansfield is 17ft 8ins, 70% bigger! The other difference is the difficulty of access at Stansfield. The dust floor is completely missing and only vestiges of the other upper



Stansfield Mill (June 2006)

floors survive. After much thought the option of an internal scaffold was ruled out, largely because of the difficulty of erecting this without removing machinery or other historic fabric, not to mention the amount of work needed to clear the ground floor. Instead, small access platforms have been built at stone and bin floor levels, using new softwood beams, where possible supported in the decayed ends of the original main floor beams. A new dust floor is now (late June) under construction, using modern softwood joisting and plywood, which will offer convenient access for the roof construction. Some additional work will also be done to make the inside safe and more pleasant to visit, including removal of heaps of pigeon guano! A full report on the work, and more about the mill, will appear in the next issue. (M.B.)

'NEW' POST MILL ON THE MARKET

The post mill at Thrigby near Great Yarmouth, reconstructed by Nick Prior in the last 25 years, is for sale. With house and 2½ acres, the price is £600,000. Agents are Savills of Norwich.

DEMOLITION COMPLETED AT CRANFIELDS SITE

Demolition work at the Cranfield's Mill site in Key Street, Ipswich was completed in late May when the oldest concrete silo, on Foundry Lane, was reduced to rubble by a huge grabber owned by Croydon-based 777 Demolition. Some buildings are being retained.

EVENTS

S.M.G. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AT WOODBRIDGE TIDE MILL: SUNDAY JULY 16th commencing 11am

We last held the AGM at the tide mill in 1997, to mark our 20th anniversary (S.M.G.'s inaugural meeting was held there in May 1977). This year the venue is also appropriate as the Tide Mill Trust is busy putting together their bid to the HLF for major improvements to the mill. Fred Reynolds of the Trust has kindly agreed to say a few words about what is planned.

Please note that there is no parking at the mill. Numerous car parks are within easy walking distance. PLEASE BRING A FOLDING CHAIR WITH YOU IF YOU CAN.

VISIT TO DRINKSTONE POST MILL: SUNDAY JULY 23rd, 2.30-4.30pm

Drinkstone post mill is one of Britain's most important windmills, the only one known to incorporate many 16th century timbers. This visit will provide an opportunity to see the repairs carried out over the last year, and to hear from new owners Chris and Ann Rowe about their plans for the site.

VISIT TO ASHDON POST MILL: SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 24th, from 2.30pm

This interesting mid 18th century Essex post mill last worked in 1912. It is now being repaired to a very high standard by millwright Vincent Pargeter. The mill is 5 miles SW of Haverhill and ½ mile NE of the village, at the end of Mill Lane (Grid Ref. 595426). This is a joint visit with Essex Mills Group, who recommend 'The Rose & Crown' in Ashdon village for lunch.

Other Essex Mills Group visits

S.M.G. members are welcome at the following E.M.G. events.

Visit to Morse's Wind Engine Park at Repps: Sunday July 2nd
Visit to Thorington Street watermill, Stoke by Nayland:
Sunday August 13th

For further details please contact Roy Berry (01787 269724), Christine Burden (01376 324781) or Petra Ward (01376 561310).
