

# SUFFOLK MILLS GROUP

## Newsletter

[www.suffolkmills.org.uk](http://www.suffolkmills.org.uk)

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It is hard to believe S.M.G. is now 30 years old, and that I have compiled nearly 100 newsletters (this will be my 96th, as Peter Dolman did the first and another in 1986 when I was hospitalised). Time don't half fly. We held a very enjoyable garden party at Stanton mill on a fine Sunday in May to celebrate the 30 years, but as with so many of our events these days, while attendance was reasonable, we would liked to have seen a few more faces. Like many small voluntary societies, we keep ticking along with the same longstanding committee members, but we cannot go on like this indefinitely. Sooner or later we must find new people willing and able to serve, otherwise the Group will fold.

This issue contains an interesting article which has emerged from research into historic farm buildings, as well as another of Bob Paterson's derelict mills, featuring perhaps the most romantic derelict of all, Brograve windpump in Norfolk. The fascination of a derelict mill is that it is ephemeral, and eventually will change and the romance will be lost. Brograve has stood with the remains of its last working sails for over 60 years, so see it before they fall, as they must surely do in the next few years.

Forthcoming mill events are summarised below. The next newsletter will appear in the autumn. Enjoy the summer (when it re-appears!)

SPAB Mills Section weekend tour  
Thelnetham mill mini work-in  
SMG visit to Stansfield mill  
Herringfleet windpump open day  
SPAB Mills Section meeting, London

September 6th-9th  
September 15th-16th  
September 23rd  
October 7th  
November 10th

Mark Barnard

## 17<sup>th</sup> AND 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY 'MILL-HOUSES' IN SUFFOLK

Stephen Podd

The title refers not to the dwelling house attached to a watermill or windmill, but to a farm building which seems to have had a fairly fleeting existence in part of Suffolk. 'Mill-house' is the contemporary name for these buildings, and although it now conjures up an image of the house associated with a mill, I have retained it throughout this article.

At the 2006 Historic Farm Buildings Group annual conference, held in Suffolk, I used a number of probate inventories from the Otley/Framsden/Helmingham area to illustrate the activities and buildings on a typical farm in the dairying region of the county in the 18th century. One of the delegates contacted me afterwards to ask why there seemed to be such a large number of 'mill-houses'

amongst the buildings mentioned. Of the 28 inventories used, twelve (mainly the larger farms) mention the presence of a horse mill or 'mill-house' (or both). These entries range in date from 1681 to 1745. The answer to the question was that I had never even thought about it before - but that it was a subject worth pursuing.

The delegate posing the question was from Herefordshire, where she was familiar with cider mills, but she also wondered about the possibility of mills for grinding mustard seed. Both these uses can quickly be discounted, because clayland Suffolk was not a cider-making area - everyone was brewing beer, as the inventories clearly demonstrate - and mustard seems to have been used only on a domestic scale. A number of the inventories make reference to a pair of (mustard) querns or to a pestle and mortar, both of which could have been used for grinding mustard. In fact, the mills were almost certainly for grinding cereals, especially wheat, but possibly also for grinding malt. At least two inventories speak specifically of a 'wheat mill'. Seven of the twelve inventories make it clear the mills are horse-powered. The necessary harness is also mentioned on several occasions, for example: 'one pair of miltrace with [*illegible*] collar and blinders'. Two of the inventories refer to 'two mill stones', while one farm also had an associated hopper and a 'mill wheel'.

So what were these early 'mill-houses'? One is tempted to think of a building similar to the horse-gin annexes of the later 19th century, specially designed to accommodate the circular path described by the horse. But it seems that these 17th and 18th century buildings were not necessarily purpose-built. Six of the inventories (including the two earliest) imply that the mill was installed in part of an existing building. The earliest was in a combination stable and barn, one was in 'an outhouse', while yet another was in a (combination?) 'barn and mill house'. At Poplar Farm, Ashbocking, the mill was listed as being in the 'stable, mill house and barns' complex. It is not clear if this was a combination building or simply a convenient grouping for the compiler of the inventory. At an unidentified farm in Framsdan, the mill was located in a 'mill-house' which was part of a 'malting office, mill house and stable' complex. An implied stand-alone 'mill house' is referred to at Redhouse Farm, Framsdan in 1713. However, from a different source comes mention of a separate 'mill-house' as early as 1635: this was at the rectory in my home village of Otley, where the Rector farmed some 75 acres of glebe, and had a backhouse, dairy, barn, stable, mill house, [*illegible*] '...below and two above', plus a carthouse and a 'hogscoat'. The 'mill-house' is not mentioned in 1706. The Court Rolls for the same village provide evidence for a 'house, barn, stable and millhouse' at Wood Farm, in 1685. This was a holding of about 70 acres, but which was also leasing an additional 135 acres of demesne at the time. From the description it is not clear if this is a freestanding 'mill house', or part of a combination barn. A quick visit to the barn provided enough evidence to be fairly certain that the stable was originally at one end of the barn, so it could be that the horse-mill was at the other end, but there is no obvious evidence for this. Even earlier is a reference to a 'mill-house' at Stonham Aspal rectory in 1612. It appears to be

there still in 1706. I have not yet had the opportunity to examine later glebe terriers to try to ascertain when it disappeared.

The inventory of John Allen of Helmingham, also dated 1612, lists only items in the house, but amongst these is a 'mill peck', suggesting that John (who was certainly a farmer rather than a miller) had a use for it on the farm. A map of his farm (now Paris Farm) has survived from 1638. The existing house and barn are readily identifiable, but there is also a separate building, now gone. Was it a 'mill-house'? It could also have been a hop-house, as hops were grown on the farm at that time.

At least two inventories mention a 'mill-house chamber' or 'mill chamber'. Do these descriptions imply that the first was a stand-alone building with a chamber over? Was the 'mill chamber' the same (more likely), or was it a chamber in the farmhouse (or backhouse), with the mill in a ground-floor area and thus closely linked to all the other processing jobs (cheese and butter making, baking and brewing) going on in or very close to the house? These two references suggest that the 'mill-houses' could perhaps be conventional gabled buildings with accommodation above like some stables of the period, or that part of an existing building (the backhouse perhaps) had been adapted to house the horse-mill. But until definitive evidence is found, this must remain speculative.

My Herefordshire questioner commented that wheat would normally be ground at the local (wind)mill. Cretingham for sure, and (I think) Framsdon too, had early watermills on the River Deben, but these had disappeared by the later Middle Ages. There were two windmills in Framsdon in the 19th century, one of which dates - significantly perhaps (see below) - from the mid 18th century (1760); and one at Cretingham. Documentary evidence suggests that Winston had two manorial windmills, the ring ditch of one of them (at Winston Hall) surviving as an earthwork until about 15 years ago; both seem to have ceased working before 1600. Helmingham also has two sites, a mill mount and a mill ditch, but both, likewise, seem to have been defunct by 1600. Pettaugh has two early-abandoned sites, one almost certainly manorial in origin. The mill which stood in the centre of the village at the beginning of the 20th century was rebuilt in 1865 but appears to have originated (again, significantly) between 1738 and 1783. Otley had a mill (site) which functioned throughout the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries (and probably much earlier - a mill is mentioned in 1341 in the *Inquisition of the Ninths* - the same source would doubtless give windmill numbers in other nearby parishes). Two additional mills appeared in Otley in the 19th century. Ashbocking had a windmill in the 19th century as well as a field name alluding to a long-deserted site. So clearly there were plenty of windmills in the area at various times. However, these facts raise certain questions.

It strikes me from the known information on local mills that there were apparently very few of them in this admittedly quite limited area of Suffolk in the 17th and early 18th centuries. There is ample evidence for a number of early mills on sites which were abandoned before 1600. This includes manorial mills, but bearing in mind that the manorial system in these parts was

extremely weak by 1600, it is not surprising that the associated mills had gone out of use by then. So from around 1600, perhaps a few decades earlier, there seems to be a gap until about 1750, when new mills began to be erected. This is all very logical when one considers that very little cereal was grown in these clayland parishes in the 17th and early 18th centuries, especially on the larger farms: some of the larger farms in the first half of the 17th century were totally given over to grass and cows. So it seems equally logical that as those same farms began to grow a modest area of cereals towards the end of the 17th and into the 18th centuries, they invested in the machinery to process it. By the second half of the 18th century enough cereals were being grown to make windmills an economic proposition again, largely supplanting the on-farm horse mills well before the end of the century. This later phase in windmill building - although not my surmised gap in the previous century or so - is more or less confirmed by Peter Dolman in his commentary on windmills and watermills in the *Historical Atlas of Suffolk* (3rd Edition, 1999, pp.148-9), when a boom in the building of new mills and the rebuilding of old ones is said to have taken place in the 50 years after about 1780.

Most people (including me up until now) tend to think of windmills as a permanent fixture in the English countryside, a traditional feature that has always been there. However, I am now coming round to the cautious conclusion that the history of windmills in the dairying region of Suffolk is not that simple, and that, for a limited time - perhaps not much more than 150-200 years - 'mill-houses' were a common feature in the farmyards of the area. I imagine that the horse mills themselves were freestanding and moveable objects (albeit large and heavy!) rather than a structural part of the building they were in, so it is highly unlikely that any physical evidence remains for their former presence. Therefore it would be very difficult to identify any surviving 'mill-houses'. Redundant 'mill-houses' were doubtless either demolished or converted to another use in the second half of the 18th century.

How widespread were 'mill-houses'? Were they just a localised feature of the dairy area of Suffolk, or was there a ripple effect into adjoining areas? Were they a feature in other parts of the country? This is something I am now trying to ascertain. Francis Steer's *Farm and Cottage Inventories of Mid-Essex, 1635 to 1749* (Chichester, 1969) has transcriptions of 248 inventories, but only a single reference to a 'mill-house'. Samuel Sumers of Roxwell had a 'horcmill and other implements in the mill hous' in 1685. (In fact, it is the only reference in the book to a mill powered by an animal.) The implication is that 'mill-houses' and horse-mills were not a feature of mid-Essex. Other inventories make clear that mustard, malt and other grain were more commonly ground by hand-powered querns. Robertsbridge Priory, East Sussex, had a 'mill-house' in 1567; however it appears to have been powered by water rather than by horse. It is described as 'covered with straw, standing over the river, wherein are one wheatmill, one maltmill, one apple mill, and over the same, one fair gardyner [*storehouse*] to lay and keep corn in'.

My thoughts expressed here are as yet fairly speculative, but as I have not seen similar ideas in the general literature, I

wonder whether anyone has ever raised the question before. If any S.M.G. member can shed more light on this subject, whether with Suffolk examples or from examples elsewhere in the country, I would be pleased to hear from them. There must surely be some information somewhere in the form of articles or contemporary sketches, etc. If you can help, please contact me or the editor ([stephen.podd1@virgin.net](mailto:stephen.podd1@virgin.net) or [mark.barnard@et.suffolkcc.gov.uk](mailto:mark.barnard@et.suffolkcc.gov.uk)). Hopefully I will be able to gather sufficient information to write a follow-up article on the history of these rather enigmatic farm buildings.

## **LAST OF THE GREAT DERELICTS (3) Bob Paterson**

### **BROGRAVE LEVEL DRAINAGE MILL, NORFOLK**

This windpump remains to be the epitome of dereliction and on Saturday 12th May this year we finally made a site visit to find out what remains of this famous wreck.

The windpump was built in 1771 to lift the water from farmland into recently dug drainage ditches into a cut that went down from the Brayden Marshes to Horsey Mere. There used to be a fine datestone to this effect but sadly this was stolen in the 1990's. The lettering on the datestone included the initials 'B.B.'. This was Sir Bernard Brograve ('Bart') of Worstead House and Waxham Hall, the local landowner who was something of a legend. He was, I believe, bred in the army; served some time in the militia; fought two or three duels and quarrelled with most gentlemen of the county. It has been said that Bernard Brograve defied the devil, who subsequently pushed the mill over, accounting for its serious



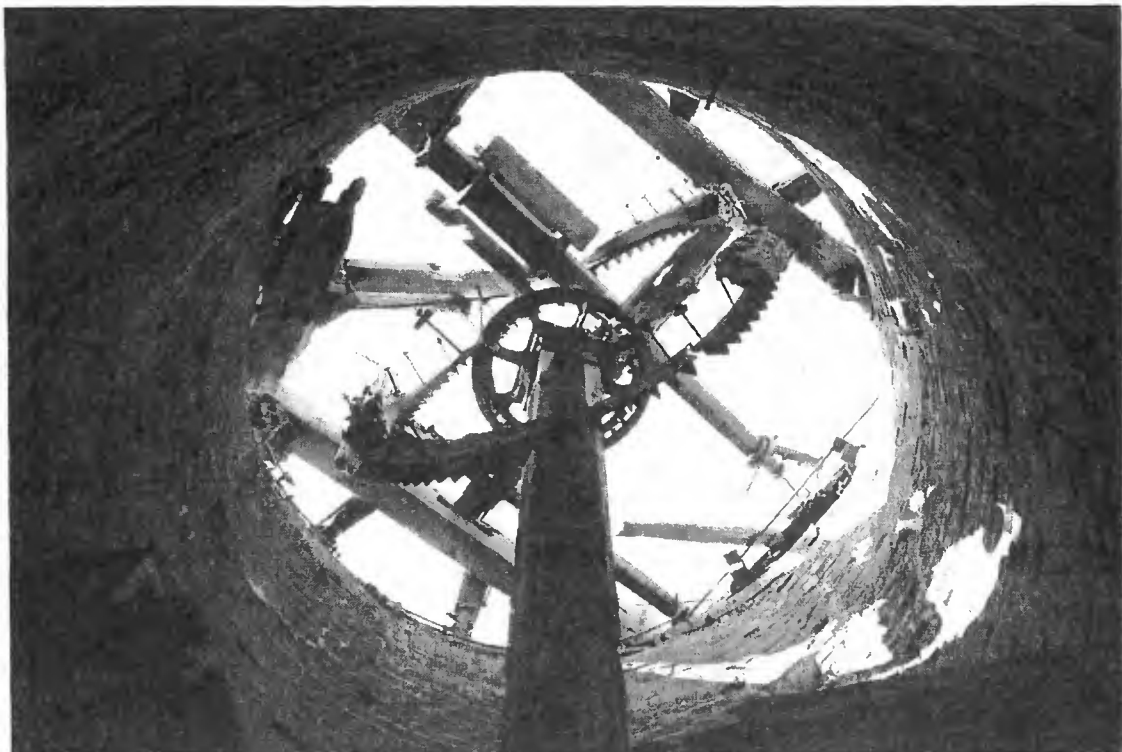
Brograve Mill (April 2007)

lean, although it has also been said that as soon as the bricklayers began work the tower began to lean.

She worked well into the last century. She probably is the oldest remaining brick windpump on the Norfolk Broads and is unique from the other mills in that the tower has less 'batter' than the typical tower and is slightly shorter. The lean, similar to the windpump at Buckenham Ferry, is unique in that the upper section of the tower has vertical walls. It looks like the tower has definitely been altered in the past. More about that later.

Several old photographs remain of the windpump. When she finished working she carried four patent shuttered sails, a boat-shaped cap and an eight-bladed fan. The lower part of the tower is old and would have been a squat common-sailed tailpole-winded mill when first built. It would have had a scoopwheel, but since then it has been raised and a more modern cap put on - with a fantail. The present machinery is Victorian and mostly cast-iron with a turbine pump inside the tower. Absolutely no work has been done on the mill since she ceased work and the track of deterioration is well documented. She was derelict by 1950. By the 1960's, according to Vincent Pargeter, the cap roof was missing. I first visited the site in 1989 and the remains of the four sails were still in place and the fanstage was still in situ.

There are various ways of getting to the mill, by water being the easiest. We went by foot, via an unofficial footpath going due south from Bridge Farm. Some ditch jumping is needed and thankfully the ditch was shallow in water and I didn't mind having wet feet for an afternoon. It was worth it.



Brograve Mill: looking up inside the tower (April 2007)

Two sail whips remain, and the wood actually looks in pretty good shape. Only the clamps and stubs of the other two sails remain. One sail fell off long ago and the third fell off in recent years (since 1998) and remains on the ground next to the tower. The windshaft is cast-iron and is complete with striking rod and spider gear. Only the cast-iron sections of the wooden brakewheel remain and these are dangling down from the windshaft. The windshaft (and sails) look as if they are going to tumble down at any stage. A cast-iron wallower and great spur wheel remain on a heavy duty square-section wooden upright shaft. Some floor beams are still in place and the fantail remains complete (with fan drive, two gears and shaft, and 'Y' wheel) less fan blades and stability! The fantail also looks as if it is hanging on to dear life. The brick walled culvert that housed the former scoopwheel remains, and one window lintol is made from part of the nave of a wooden scoopwheel, presumably from this mill.

There are sadly no plans to save the mill: it is too isolated. A holding operation would remove the uniqueness of this lovely - almost romantic - derelict.

## **REPORT OF 2007 A.G.M.**

The 2007 A.G.M. was held on Sunday July 8th in Ixworth watermill, by kind permission of David Drake and Nicola Gooch. 20 attended, with apologies from David Barton, Jack Clover, Melanie Dolman, John & Madeliene Ford, Piers Hartley, Robert Manning, Trevor Scott, Bob Sharp, Peter Steggall, John Streeter, Chris Wilson, Vic Wilson and Alan Willmott. After Chairman Chris Hullcoop had opened the meeting, Mark Barnard read the minutes of the 2006 A.G.M.. These were agreed as a true record (proposed Brian Flint, seconded Bob Malster). There were no matters arising.

Presenting the accounts, Des Codd said that the deficit of £94 on the year was considerably reduced from 2005. This was despite contributing £1000 towards Vincent Pargeter's consultancy fees on the Drinkstone post mill repairs. A grant of £400 had recently been given to Bardwell mill towards the new sails. On behalf of Bardwell mill Jonathan Wheeler thanked the Group and said the contribution was much appreciated. Chris Hullcoop said other grants would be considered, including some money for Syleham mill. Self-help projects would be encouraged in this way. The payments should have included a contribution to the Mills Archive Trust, which by mistake was not paid in 2006. This has now been rectified, and we have increased our annual payment to the Trust to £120. Total balances still stood at over £11,000. The accounts were agreed as a true record (proposed David Eddershaw, seconded Bob Malster).

Mark Barnard gave the editor's report. The average of three newsletters every year would continue, even though there had only been two since the last A.G.M.. He thanked the contributors but stressed the need for more material as the 100th issue approaches. He had hoped that Chris Hullcoop would write a piece to mark the Group's 30th anniversary, but Chris had declined as he was too pessimistic! Production and format of the newsletter remain unchanged. Chris Hullcoop thanked Mark Barnard, and admitted that

he was becoming pessimistic, especially when he saw his past work not being maintained. He was especially concerned about the future of the tall post mills.

Mark Barnard had compiled details of membership in the absence of a secretary, which the Group has not had since the death of Peter Dolman five years ago. Membership stood at 155, which represented a steady if slow decline from 170 in 2001. Complimentary newsletters are sent to the SPAB Mills Section and to the Suffolk Record Office (Ipswich), and newsletters are exchanged with nine other mills groups and the Suffolk Industrial Archaeology Society. Chris Hullcoop said it is intended to erect a small plaque in Stanton mill in memory of Peter Dolman. Chris emphasised that new blood is needed on the committee, whose average age is high. Brian Flint said he would try to write a piece for the newsletter to mark the 30th anniversary.

Election of officers and other committee members for 2007-8 followed. All were willing to serve another term and were therefore re-elected en bloc (proposed Enid Wheeler, seconded Linda Grixti).

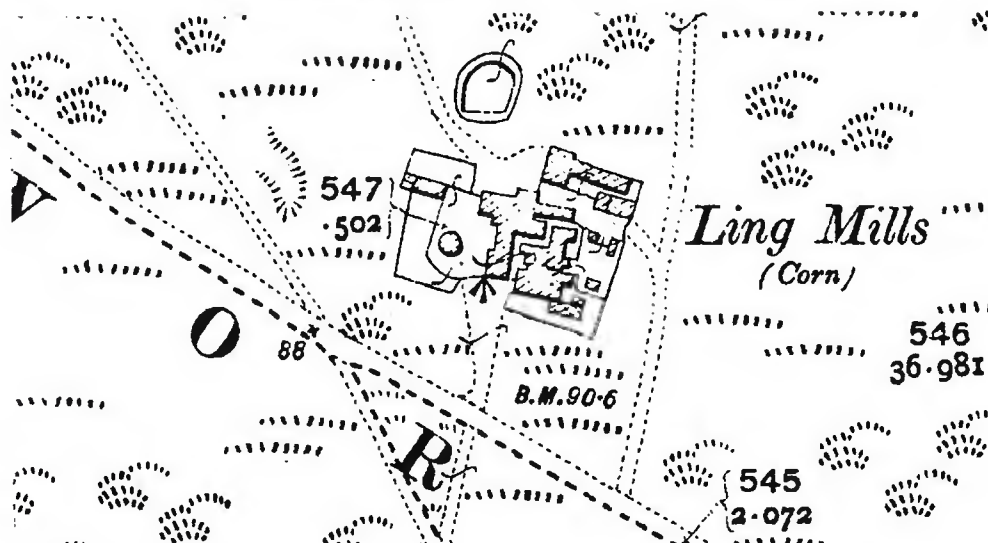
Dominic Grixti asked about a work-in at Thelnetham in 2007. Mark Barnard said as far as he knew, any work-in was now unlikely to happen until 2008. Jonathan Wheeler gave a progress report on the new sails for Bardwell; the next fund-raising event would be a steam thrashing day on August 19th. David Eddershaw gave an update on Pakenham watermill and invited those present to look round the mill house and see the mill working that afternoon. The meeting ended with the Chairman's report on the year, illustrated with slides. Afterwards, tea and gateaux were served in attractive surroundings by the mill pond (see photograph below).





## MILLS ON THE MAP

The featured mill stood on the common or ling at Wortham, and formed part of an attractive group of buildings with a steam mill as well as the mill house and miller's cottage (hidden behind the windmill). The map of 1905 shows the buildings very clearly; even the conservatory by the front corner of the mill house can be made out. Note the extensive outbuildings attached to the rear of the steam mill. The post mill was unusual in having a roof-mounted fantail. It is said to have been built c.1825 with materials from another mill on the site which was broken up. The steam mill was added c.1855, and gradually supplanted the windmill. Smooth rolls were installed in 1890, and by 1895 the steam mill's stones had been replaced by a 3-Sack roller plant. A postcard of 1908 shows the windmill without sails and with a conveyor and walkway linking it to the steam mill. The windmill was pulled down c.1918, and the steam mill sometime after the late 1930's. For fuller historical and technical notes see *Vanished Mills* in Newsletter 74.



## WHERE IS THIS MILL?

Can any member identify the mill shown on this old photograph given to Des Codd? It is a tower or smock mill with an unusual pent roof cap, six-bladed fantail and two common and two shuttered sails. The nearby group of buildings and tall almost vertically-walled chimney may help locate it. If you can help please write to the editor or email him ([mark.barnard@et.suffolkcc.gov.uk](mailto:mark.barnard@et.suffolkcc.gov.uk)).



## CAPTION COMPETITION

Sadly there was a very poor response to our caption competition in the last newsletter, featuring an unsuspecting Romeo inside a post mill as the wind changes. We print the two entries below, and leave you to decide who should be the winner!

1. Entry from Mr Risc Houllchop of Wofelestix:  
Romeo: *Strewth, what the heck! It must be an earthquake!*  
Juliette: *Well, something had to make the earth move, you couldn't!*
2. Entry from Mr Karm Randrab of Chiwisp:  
Romeo: *Strewth, what the heck! Everything is moving except the post!*  
Juliette: *Oh my royal male! You're not on strike again are you?*

## NEWS

### TUDDENHAM WATERMILL RE-OPENS

As we reported last November (see Newsletter 96), the converted Tuddenham mill has been undergoing a major refurbishment. The restaurant re-opened in April together with three luxury new bedroom suites on the top floor. The old brown stained boarding is now painted white; the nasty catalogue windows have given way to



purpose-made windows; two dummy loading doors have been added and one dummy ground floor door (based on old photographs), and ugly service pipework on the front elevation removed. All this work has greatly enhanced the appearance of the building (see above photograph). At the rear the tall chimney has been cleared of extensive ivy growth, and many other small improvements made. The interior was already much altered but the surviving gear, including the waterwheel and main drive have of course been retained. The modern upper ceilings have not been replaced, allowing the original roof structure to be seen inside the bedrooms. In the last few months two new buildings have been erected in the grounds, with another 12 bedrooms of letting accommodation. A short article on the history of the mill will be included in the newsletter in the near future. (M.B.)

#### WORK UNDER WAY AT LARK MILLS

Planning consent has been granted for the conversion of Lark Mills in Mildenhall to offices and 14 apartments, and work on the project is now under way. Although not listed, the mill is a prominent feature of the town's Conservation Area and occupies a historic mill site at the river crossing. The taller building is a former roller mill of 1887-8; although largely empty of machinery, it contains two water turbines (including an original 'Hercules' turbine by John Turnbull of Glasgow) and these will be retained in situ. The building fronting Mill Street was rebuilt in 1908 but contains the bones of a timber-framed mill, probably of the early 19th century. This has a Gilkes turbine, installed in 1956, which it is planned to use for generation, and the wheelpit of the waterwheel removed in 1902.

The dilapidated single storey outbuildings at the rear, associated with electricity generation for the locality in the early 20th century, have been recorded by a specialist prior to



Above: Lark Mills in April 2007.

Right: The former steam engine boiler discovered during site clearance work.



demolition. The large slate switchgear panel has been saved and it is hoped to re-site it in the entrance foyer of the new offices. Also salvaged is a pair of millstones built into the weighbridge office; these have been set in a new boundary wall next to the mill.

One interesting discovery during clearance of the overgrown outbuildings was an old boiler, later re-used as a fuel storage tank. This has been identified as a 'Cornish' horizontal high pressure shell boiler with a single large internal fire-tube (blanked off on re-use). Although produced in large numbers from c.1810 to 1955, this one is the much rarer sub-type with a top steam (separation) dome like early railway locomotives. In service the boiler was placed horizontally in a brick 'setting'. The flue gases passed along the internal fire-tube, then back to the front in a trench under the boiler, then back again along two side-flues in the brickwork, efficiently giving up most of their heat. This must have once steamed an auxiliary engine at the mill, and it is possible more will come to light about its history.

The remainder of the former Parker Bros. site, which closed in 2003, is being redeveloped for housing. (M.B.)

## CONVERSION OF PAKENHAM WATERMILL'S HOUSE

Work is on schedule to start in October on the Miller's House attached to Pakenham watermill, thanks to a generous grant from the Esme Fairbairn Trust and other donors who have responded to an appeal launched by the Suffolk Building Preservation Trust. The first part of the work will include the conversion of most of the upper floor to a self-contained flat which will be let in order to provide a source of income for the mill.

The house dates mainly from the 18th century and presumably stands on the site of earlier buildings, as does the mill itself. At the rear is a projecting wing which may be older than the rest of the house. Traditionally known as the 'Tudor kitchen', it contains a large open fire and chimney stack against the end wall, with a bread oven on one side and brewing vat on the other. This part of the room is open to the rafters. The walls are timber framed with lath and plaster infill and there is evidence that the roof height has been raised at some stage in the past, presumably to accommodate the huge brick hearth. A full historical survey of the building and the mill has been commissioned before work starts and it will be interesting to see just how old this kitchen is. Whether or not it turns out to be of Tudor date, it is a very interesting survival and the plan is to restore it and open it to visitors.

The second part of the plan, which cannot be undertaken until more funds are available, will be to provide better visitor facilities such as a tearoom and new toilets in the ground floor of the house, and perhaps to restore the existing kitchen to look as it might have done about a hundred years ago when the miller and his family were living there.

Meanwhile, the volunteer team will keep the mill grinding as usual to supply the 18 outlets which currently sell or bake with our flour and we expect the building work to be completed between our closing at the end of this season and opening again for Easter 2008. (David Eddershaw)

## PROGRESS AT SYLEHAM MILL

A good start has been made with repairs to the post mill roundhouse at Syleham. The first task was to prepare for the visit of a mobile crane to lift down the remaining buck timbers. Most of the buck was destroyed in the 1987 hurricane. A few years ago the half ton crowntree had been secured to the post top with wooden struts which were still in good condition. The only timber attached to the crowntree was the left side girt. It had been reinforced with a cast iron plate, a piece of steel angle, and in the 1930's Jesse Wightman had fitted a fine oak beam beside it. It was a miracle that this four hundredweight piece had not fallen through the roof as only its weight and a fragile tie to the tail gable held it in place. A steel bracket together with light wooden struts were made to hold it safely to the crowntree.

Before the remains of the lower part of the tail gable could be removed, the very rotten but still heavy steps had to be propped from the ground. Two 18ft x 4ins x 4ins timbers had been delivered by Clarkes and once these props were in place with



Above: Preparing for the crane lift on 28th June  
Below: The completed cone framework on 13th July



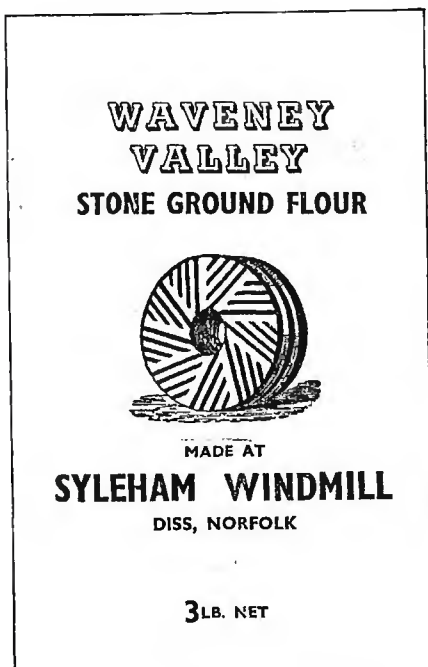
diagonal braces, the remains of the gable could be removed in small pieces without the danger of the steps demolishing part of the roof and the delicate clay lump roundhouse walls.

Some years ago we had covered the remains of the buck's meal floor with corrugated iron sheets very firmly fitted. The lower side rails had all but rotted away, but the sheer trees remained quite substantial. The left one had been reinforced for most of its length with heavy steel angle while the right one had broken

in half. We were able to hold these in place with short lengths of rope which could be quickly released when the crane took the strain.

As well as the four large timbers remaining aloft, we decided to lift out of the hedge the tail beam and weather beam. Also, within the remains of a small building by the gate were two formidable 4ft 6ins French burr millstones. These were probably the head stones which had been removed from the buck 50-60 years ago and were well worth putting under cover.

Eastern Plant Hire of Stanton whose cranes had helped at Thelnetham and Stanton mills were able to offer a discount if the job took only a couple of hours and the crane could arrive at any time on a particular day. June 28th was the appointed day; the crane arrived at 5pm and the job was completed before 7pm. The crowntree, weather and tail beams were carefully placed on blocks and we will construct a little roof of corrugated steel to protect them. The heaviest item was the runner stone and this together with the bed stone has been placed in the roundhouse. When the crane departed the roundhouse had lost its giant gibbett look. We then had to remove the corrugated steel sheets which filled the space between the post and the top of the roundhouse roof leaving a 9ft diameter hole. The circumference of the wooden ring was carefully measured with a long metric tape. The tape was then marked at 20 equal intervals and replaced on the ring which was then marked to take the bases of the 20 rafters. This would have been very difficult using an Imperial measure. On the top of the post we fitted a 2ins thick plywood disc to locate the top ends of the 10ft rafters. It is not often there is the chance to examine the pintle on a post top. At Syleham it is in the form of a cast iron cross-tail gudgeon with the pintle just 3ins long. It was very well fitted to the post top with wedges with several bands around and was in perfect condition.



The twenty 4ins x 2ins x 10ft rafters were then fitted, the resulting 'wigwam' being a little oddly shaped as the roof top ring beam is distorted due to pressure from parts of the buck pressing it down. Meanwhile the aluminium for the covering had been delivered and was awaiting the considerable task of cutting it into 20 triangular pieces. The first piece was fitted but with difficulty as the slightest breeze can take hold and convert the 10ft long aluminium triangle into a kite!

As well as fitting all the aluminium covering, much else has to be done. The first floor of the roundhouse needs a lot of repair and the whole interior requires a thorough sweep out and disposal of lots of odds and ends of timber. The engine shed needs lots of maintenance-free protection in the

form of corrugated steel sheets coated with bitumastic paint. Earlier in the year I had managed to force some oil into the engine's cylinder which was seized. Dave Merrin who lives in the mill cottage and Nick Bence-Jones applied a massive heave to the flywheel to unstick the piston. Thankfully no harm has been done and it would be quite possible to once again have the engine driving the roundhouse stones to produce a little flour. I still have one of Miss Jillard's original 3lb flour bags (see previous page). It would be nice to fill it to mark the completion of conservation work on the mill. (C.H.)

## **EVENTS**

### **MINI 'WORK-IN' AT THELNETHAM MILL: SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 15th - SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 16th**

We intend to go ahead with a short work-in at Thelnetham mill to tackle some of the backlog of maintenance and minor repairs. These include: attending to any decay in the clamps; painting the fantail; painting sail shutters (some were removed from the sails for this purpose in 2005); renewal of the decayed bearer for the fan drive under the fanstage; fettling and fitting a replacement link to the hand winding crank; fitting the replacement window frame to the ground floor; cleaning out the millstones and stone furniture. No doubt we will not be able to complete this list. In particular there may be too much activity around the fantail and fan train, and painting the bare wood is probably the most important. Any member interested in assisting should contact Dave Pearce on 0115 936 2398 (day) or 01664 822751.

### **VISIT TO STANSFIELD TOWER MILL: SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 23rd, 2.30-4.30pm**

Fifteen or so months ago the interior of Stansfield mill was a spectacle of decay, unprotected from the elements. Thanks to Chris Hullcoop's hard work last summer, the mill is now roofed and safe access to the top of the tower is possible to allow close inspection of the surviving machinery.

The mill is some 9 miles south-west of Bury St Edmunds, 2½ miles off the A143 Haverhill Road (turn off at Wickham Street). It is reached via a short track at the junction of three minor roads, just north of the village.

### **HERRINGFLEET WINDPUMP OPEN DAY: SUNDAY OCTOBER 7th, 1-4.30pm**

This will only be our second open day at Herringfleet this year, owing to other mill commitments. We hope the weather will be better than the National Mills Weekend Sunday, when it rained most of the time. This opening will be a somewhat poignant occasion as it will be the last time the mill is run before the County Council's 50-year lease expires. It remains to be seen what the future holds for this unique working drainage windmill. See it working while you can!

The mill is reached by footpath off the B1074 Lowestoft - St. Olaves road. A small car park on Herringfleet Hills is signposted on the day.

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