



MILL BITS

The Newsletter of the CRANBROOK WINDMILL ASSOCIATION

Autumn 2017

Chairman: Denis Hempstead., Secretary: Andrew White, Treasurer: Peter Bourne

AGM and AUTUMN MEETING – 3pm, Sunday 26th November, 2017

Put the date in your diary. More information later in this Newsletter.

Summer Celebrations – Friday 7th July

It was touch and go, but the finishing touches to the newly restored and returned Sweeps were completed just in time to make our 2017 Members Summer Party in the Russell Building a double celebration. The Association had invited Kent County Councillor, Michael Payne, to press the button (technical term) on the new Electric Mill and produce the first "official" bag of our own Electrically driven Stone-ground Flour. This was presented to the Councillor as a souvenir of his visit. Councillor Payne is the Deputy Cabinet Member at KCC for the Department which includes their eight windmills, and the opportunity was taken to show him round the mill and to highlight the work of the Association. KCC were thanked for their work in organising the repairs to the sweeps, even though when they promised that they would be back by June, they were referring to June 2016 and not a year later!



It was a glorious Summer's evening and there was an excellent turnout of members, who afterwards adjourned upstairs for Strawberries and Scones, accompanied by a glass of bubbly.



Thanks to everyone who was involved in organising the Party and making it such a great success.

The Sweeps Came Back!

On Tuesday 27th June, a “cherry-picker” crane arrived at about 8am to help with re-painting the stocks before fitting the sweeps. On Wednesday, two cranes arrived at about 8am and the sweeps about an hour later. The lorry driver managed to reverse into the approach!

The four sweeps were raised and bolted into the stocks during Wednesday and one of the clamps which had split was replaced with a new one prepared in advance by IJP. By the evening, the very tall crane had finished its job of lifting the sweeps into position and returned to Staplehurst. On Thursday, backstays joining the sweeps to the stocks were fixed and the spider mechanism and steel work, necessary for controlling the shutters, was connected.



<< Cranes in position.
Neighbours had been
warned about access.

Sweep no.4 being
lifted into place >>



Over the course of the three days many Association members gathered on the Hill opposite the entrance to the mill, some with cameras. We were graced by a visit from Lord & Lady Newsom who called on Wednesday to monitor progress. Reporters from the Kent Messenger also visited and a picture appeared in the newspaper the following week. Local Radio and TV were contacted but failed to show any interest!!

Unfortunately, the “end-clamps” did not fit and were returned to IJP's workshop (near Reading) for adjustment. This meant that the “cherry-picker” crane (from Purfleet, in Essex) had to return at crack of dawn on Wednesday 5th July to enable these to be fitted and for final adjustments to be made. The millwrights

spent quite some time in the cap which became more like an oven as the day went on!

These rebuilt sweeps do not have the wires running through the shutters as before, which means that they close more tightly so we are hoping that we can mill in lighter winds. At the time of writing, winds have been too light but we have been able to “freewheel” the sweeps occasionally on open days, which always helps to bring visitors in from the town.

You can see lots more photos on the mill's website (link from homepage) and from there another link to a video of the event on YouTube put together by Nick Vinall. Thanks to all those who sent copies of photos of the big event.

Website: www.unionmill.org.uk

A Rare Sight!

The sweeps were set at the Celebration position (right) on Saturday 23rd June to mark the marriage of one of our stewards, Sue Hayman. Perhaps her new husband can be persuaded to become a volunteer?

Windmills for Sale



These colourful windmills make an attractive new addition to the range of items available from the shop.



An unexpected visitor at the mill when we opened on October 7th for Cranbrook Apple Fair >>>

The 2017 AGM

to be held in the Russell Building, 3pm, Sunday 26th November

The forthcoming AGM provides us all with three opportunities. Firstly, the excuse to get out and about on a Sunday afternoon. Secondly, a chance to socialise with all our fellow volunteers; it is surprising how rarely our paths cross during the season. Thirdly, and most importantly, to help keep democracy alive by voting for the members of YOUR committee. We are well aware that fresh ideas and talents are always needed and so we urge you to put your thinking caps on and come up with some names of members who may be pleased to serve on the management committee. We also know that some people do not want to put themselves forward for a committee but may be able to help with our various sub-groups, eg. publicity, maintenance, greasing, and milling. There is a particular need for someone to keep an eye on the Russell Building and keep it tidy, a job done very well, until recently, by Mike Newsom, who has had to give up for health reasons. We also very much need a person or persons to take on the organisation of the catering for this meeting, and possibly for other events in 2018. Suggestions and offers of help please to Andy White 01580-713681 or e-mail: unionmiller1@yahoo.co.uk

WANTED: Raffle Prizes. All donations gratefully received - please contact Andy to let him know what you can offer.

At the AGM this year we propose to run a **Fun Competition** with a suitable prize! We all think we know what AGM stands for but let's have some alternative suggestions. A couple of ideas to start you thinking: "A Goodly Mess" and "Association Geriatric Managers". Suggestions must be submitted to Andy by Wednesday 22nd November.

What the Papers Said

From several newspapers, including the *Maidstone Journal*, 4th April 1815:

Eccentric Funeral. – On Friday last, the remains of William Fowle, Gent, of Boxley, were interred, according to his will, under part of a windmill upon his estate. The funeral was respectably attended by his executor and relatives, and was conducted with a solemnity well according with the awful circumstance of sudden death**; and the eccentricity of selecting such a spot for the occasion drew together a considerable assemblage of persons. The body was committed to its silent abode; and the following epitaph (the deceased's own composition) is to be placed on his tomb:

 "Underneath this little mill
 Lies the body of poor Will;
 Odd he liv'd, and odd he died.
 And at his burial no one cried."

** Another report stated: William Fowle died, aged 59, whilst sitting in his chair, apparently in good health, after having eaten a hearty dinner and having drunk a bottle of wine.

Nightingale's Mill - a sad end

Many members will be aware of this photograph of a smock mill with the cap and sweeps perched precariously as a result of being tail-winded. It's a tall mill with at least two brick floors and 3 or 4 floors in the smock, with striking gear and patent shutters but no staging. It stood about a third of a mile south of Four Throws, Hawkhurst.

The mill was first built in about 1821 for members of the Tobitt family, who farmed at Gun Green in Hawkhurst and it stood about two thirds of a mile north of the Oak & Ivy pub, close to the entrance to Tongswood, the building now occupied by St.Ronan's School.



This was not the best of times to make such an investment - only two years after Mary Dobell went bankrupt - but the Tobitts probably didn't have to borrow money to build it and they continued to farm at Gun Green for thirty years. Their farms were put up for sale in 1852 and the windmill (Lot 3) was described as of "modern construction and of good elevation". Presumably it didn't find a buyer first time because it was advertised again a few months later when it was offered "at a price which will admit its removal and re-erection". So during 1853, the mill must have been dismantled and the sweeps and timbers of the smock carried on wagons to its new site on land farmed by John Nightingale to the East of Conghurst Lane. Small post mills are known to have been moved on several occasions but relocating this mill was an altogether larger project. Did they take down the base and clean the bricks for re-use, as well, perhaps? The mill is usually referred to as Nightingale's Mill in Hawkhurst, but the parish boundary crosses the field between the mill and the gate (on Conghurst Lane) shown in the photo, so it is actually in Sandhurst parish (just). The Tobitts continued farming near Four Throws and operating the mill on its new site from when it started working again in 1854 until at least 1867. The mill was tail-winded in about 1905 when Otto Waghorn was the miller and it was demolished a year or two later (marked as disused on an OS map dated 1907).

Final Bits

Editor: Tony Singleton. t: 01580-753431, e: tonysing@unionmill.org.uk