



MILL BITS

The Newsletter of the CRANBROOK WINDMILL ASSOCIATION

Autumn 2018

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

AGM and AUTUMN MEETING – 3pm, Sunday 25th November, 2018, in the Russell Building. Scones, jam and cream will be on offer to persuade you to attend and there will be the usual raffle to help raise funds for the Association. **Donations of Raffle Prizes** much appreciated - please contact Andy to let him know what you can offer.

We propose to run a repeat of the **Acronym Competition** this year and the initials for you to conjure with this time are **CWA**. Please send your **Clever Witty Acronyms** to Andy by Sunday 18th November to allow time for our independent judge to consider.

Summer Party

This year's party was a much lower key affair than last year and members enjoyed a pleasant social evening with nibbles and drinks outside the Russell Building. Many thanks to Linda Swann for organising the event and to Nick Vinall for firing off the corks.



Cranbrook in Bloom

There has been a fine splash of colour in the boxes outside the front door of the mill this summer. Many thanks to those who tend and water them.



Co-op staff visit the Mill

As a thank you to the Co-op for their generous donation which enabled us to purchase the electric mill, arrangements were made for a group of Co-op employees to visit the mill on the evening of Tuesday, 19th June. The group numbered about fifteen including several families with children, who enjoyed working at the querns.



NO WIND! Unfortunately, we have been unable to mill by wind since the “Miller's Training Day” in March but, thanks to the Co-op, we have still been able to provide stone-ground flour for sale in the shop.

Wheels of Time



Wednesday 25th July was the first of our Mid-week openings in the School Summer Holidays and a good number of children with parents and/or grandparents visited the mill. Two brothers each sported over 30 badges on their lanyards but they had started collecting them last year so had a head start. One young lady received a presidential handshake when she signed up.



Social Media

facebook

Our popular Facebook page (maintained by Ian Burrows) provides notes and photos of events; while posts can be entered directly, it may be helpful if any contributors could email Ian Burrows (iwrburrows@hotmail.com) with content so that we avoid any repetition. All contributions will be very welcome'.

Maintenance - Wanted Grease Monkeys

We are always looking for greasers to boost our maintenance team. We grease the moving parts in the cap on the first Saturday of the month and the task is normally completed in 40 minutes. We have several volunteers so you should not be called on more than every 3 months. The only requirements are a willingness to climb and a head for heights and there is a bit of balancing on supporting beams to be done. Fancy it? Contact: Andy White on 01580-713681, email: unionmiller1@yahoo.co.uk

Brian goes aloft >>



On which subject ...

Brian Swann and Don Newcombe offered their services as grease monkeys on 6th July. Don was the "new boy" so read out the checklist of about twenty grease points to be attended to and watched carefully. Occasionally he got daubed with grease (accidentally of course) as part of his initiation ceremony.



The worm gear gets the greasy pole treatment



Using a grease gun for the fantail bearings

Group Visit 3rd July

A coach-party of 42, including two or three token men, visited the mill as the conclusion to a day of sight-seeing.. Their day didn't start well when they were held up for an hour on the M20 but they arrived at the mill only twenty minutes late for a scheduled one hour visit. About half of the group decided that the stairs were not to their liking and spent their time in the Russell building where Nick demonstrated the electric mill and in the basement where they watched the videos. The remainder of the group went aloft and some even reached the stone floor.



Introduction by Nick



Stone floor with Don

Behind the Scenes

As our French burr stones had not been used since April, it was decided that a “Spring Clean” was required. Peter Bourne writes:

One of the least glamorous aspects of being a miller is ensuring that relevant hygiene standards are adhered to. In this respect regular cleaning of the mill stones is an important aspect. This is not a simple task since it involves stripping down the tun case to expose the French Burr Stones to clean out any residue of partially milled grain that sits between the runner and bedstones. We have an array of specially adapted brushes and hoover attachments which enable us to reach between the stones. On the Meal Floor the Plastic Flour Tubs, which are used to store freshly milled flour, and the central bins must be dusted and thoroughly hoovered. The whole process requires at least three of our members and takes around two hours each time.



Exposing the stones

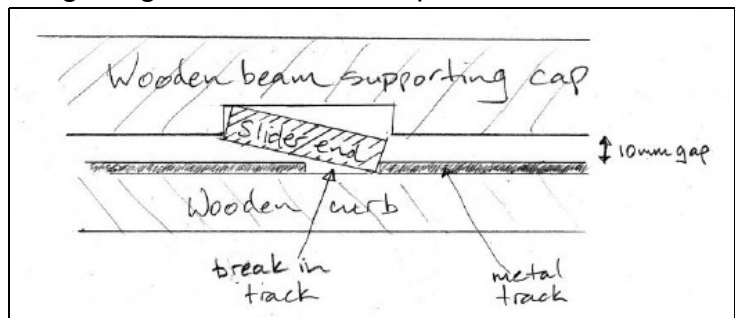


Final cleaning

If you are interested in helping the milling team please contact Peter Bourne or Terry West.

Trouble at Mill

During the summer it became apparent that the cap was not turning properly and was jamming in one position. More critically, there were several occasions when the Mill had been tail-winded, potentially dangerous in strong winds. On 22nd August attempts were made to turn the cap manually using a rope around the Y-wheel, just as the early millers had to do before the fantail was added. When the cap was pushed beyond the ‘sticking point’ it lifted about 20mm more than usual. Close inspection of the top of the Mill tower showed that one of the bronze sliders was getting stuck at a certain point, where there is a gap in the metal track on which it slides (see diagram). When forced further the slider tilted and lifted the cap. Peter Bourne and Nick Vinall sent a report with photos and diagrams to KCC who immediately authorised the millwrights IJP to come and sort out the problem.



IJP diagnosed that part of the metal track had lifted and was causing the jam. They reckoned that this was due to shrinkage of the wooden curb, caused by the recent long spell of hot weather. Fortunately they knew the locations of the bolts that pull the track down onto the wooden curb and were able to re-tighten these. The track on the other side

of the gap also needed the same treatment and the cap could then slide smoothly, both ways, over the join in the track. We have been carefully monitoring the movement of the cap since then to see if it sticks anywhere else but all is well so far.

How Did We Do in 2018?

What actually is the best measure of success for the Windmill Association?

As a Registered Charity we do need to be financially secure, but are not driven by the need to maximise profit. Certainly, we endeavour to generate sufficient income to enable us to fulfil our main Charitable Objects (Educating the Public about Union Mill in particular, and Windmills in general). We do this largely by opening the mill for public visits and informing visitors on the history, mechanics, etc, of windmills. A key measure of success therefore is the annual number of Visitors to the mill.

Overall, 2018 has been a good year with a total of 3,222 visitors compared with 2,839 in 2017, an increase of 13%. This is particularly pleasing as there were fewer "Special Events" where we opened the mill than in 2017 (no "Cranbrook Funday", and only one day for "Cranbrook Goes Nuts" compared with two days last year). A big contributor to the increase in visitor numbers has been the success of our membership of the "Wheels of Time" Badge Scheme which enabled us to publicise the mill more widely. Our Shop/Reception Volunteers deserve great credit for encouraging Parents to sign up their children to the scheme. We look forward to building on this success in 2019.

Trip Advisor

Andy P from Brighton visited the mill at the beginning of October and wrote:

Brilliant place, ultra child friendly. What a find! Amazing intricate massive working mill! Visited with a 4 year old who LOVED it. Climb precarious ladders and staircases, walk around the top of the mill OUTSIDE! Lots of working models. Grind your own flour (which we made into pizza). Bought amazing and inexpensive jams on the ground floor. Lovely enthusiastic staff who knew everything about the mill. Cannot recommend highly enough ... what a gem!

Another report read:

A credit to Kent County Council and the fantastically enthusiastic and knowledgeable volunteers on every floor. Really imaginatively presented, children welcomed and hands on models. Free but well worth a donation to keep this impressive piece of history alive.

What the Papers Said - Fires in Windmills

Wellingborough & Kettering News, October 22nd, 1881.

Yeldon – A Wind-mill and Mill House Burnt Down - A wind-mill, which had not been worked for two or three years, was set going by the gale last Friday and, for want of oil, the workings became so hot that it caught fire, the mill and mill house being burnt to the ground. The mill was situated on a hill, and was the property of the late Mr. Benjamin West, of Wollaston. The fire was not discovered till the mill and mill house were in ruins. The damage is estimated at £20, which is covered by insurance in the Sun office.

Thank goodness the Union Mill has a regular team of grease monkeys!

Final Bits

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