



MILL BITS

The Newsletter of the CRANBROOK WINDMILL ASSOCIATION

Summer 2019

Chairman: Nick Vinall, Secretary: Hazel Jobson, Treasurer: Peter Bourne

MEMBERS ANNUAL SUMMER PARTY FRIDAY, 12TH JULY, 7.00PM IN THE RUSSELL BUILDING

Come and enjoy our Summer Party. Light refreshments will be provided. A donation of about £3 per person would be appreciated to cover costs.

Please email Linda Swann swann.sheafe@btinternet.com or telephone 01580 712732 to confirm your attendance.

Preparing for the 2019 Season

Milling

On Wednesday 13th March, there was a good breeze and members donned white coats and blue overalls to prepare a stock of flour ready for sale on our first open days. Subsequently we have had two further very productive sessions, and will continue to mill whenever possible.



Millers at Work

B-Team hiding outside >>>
One looks very suspicious!



Spring Cleaning

On Saturday, 23rd March about fifteen members gathered at the mill with brooms and buckets so that dust, cobwebs, and numerous dead insects could be dealt with. The windows were cleaned inside and, where there was access from the staging, on the outside too. One enthusiastic window cleaner on the stone floor suddenly found a small pane he was cleaning parted from what little putty was left in the frame and fell to the staging below but miraculously did not break!

STOP PRESS - Cranbrook Goes Nuts - 298 visitors at the windmill on Sunday 26th May!

Kent's Big Weekend

We have been involved with this event for the last 14 years and benefit from the County wide publicity generated by the organisers. For the first 12 years we were able to offer ticket winners free entry, even though we do not charge for entry. However, the organisers now insist, for those sites that do not normally charge, the ticket winners are offered some form of "freebie" so it was agreed that the first 25 ticket holders would receive a small bag of flour.

National Mill Day

No, it's not a spelling mistake. In Holland, "Nationale Molen Dag" takes place over the second weekend in May, the same days as our event in the UK, and about 900 windmills in the country are open to the public. Sounds like a good idea for a holiday in May next year. A Dutch online newspaper (published in English) had an article about last year's event with this photo and the caption: "Two cliches in one photo". The article listed the many ways in which the Dutch used wind power in addition to drainage mills – such as mustard mills, hemp mills, grain mills, snuff mills, cocoa mills, oil mills, chalk mills, paint mills and saw mills.



Brenzett Windmill

There is a splendid model of this post mill, built by one of our members, on display in the Russell Building. The mill had ceased production of wheat flour for human consumption by about 1900 but was used until the 1920s for grinding "corn from local farmers for feeding to their cattle, pigs, and poultry". It was taken down in February 1925 in order to re-use the timbers. No plans have survived so I contacted the model maker, Peter Frazer, and he said, *This was never intended to be a scale model. It was supposed to be a reasonable representation with the rough proportions taken from photographs. It didn't work out too badly. I had been building small model mills for a year or two and wasn't entirely "green". However, this mill was a big step up and I did get help with the bits that required lathing or fret-sawing from a friend's elder brother. Also, I was quite adept at skiving off games to go to the carpentry and metal workshops where I learned "technique" (unofficially!).*



In early 1938, a local Folkestone newspaper published a series of short articles about "Kentish Windmills", written by A.W.Tiffin. In the Brenzett article he described how the mill had the common arrangement of two pairs of stones, one of French burr for grinding wheat, the other of Peak stones for grist milling. The French stones were driven directly from the brake wheel near the front of the windshaft, while the peak stones were driven by another gear towards the rear. This arrangement can be clearly seen in Peter's model.

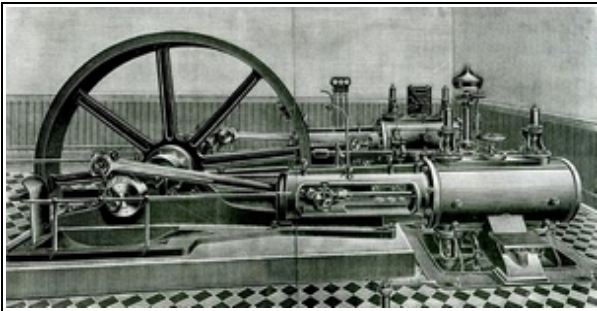
Alfred Tiffin lived in Goudhurst for twenty years and was fascinated by local history, later publishing the Goudhurst Jubilee Book. Perhaps his interest in windmills was inspired by the smock mill which stood near the church there.

What the Papers Said

Because of the greater reliability of milling by water power, Hugh Russell (pictured right) took on the lease of Slipmill in Hawkhurst, in 1893, perhaps influenced by his brother Caleb, who was operating a watermill at Mersham. However, a few years later, Hugh decided to emigrate to Australia and the Union Mill was put up for sale in 1901 – twice in fact. Unfortunately, no buyer was found and Caleb felt obliged to return to Cranbrook and run the windmill. However, the advertisements give a good description of the Mill and its equipment at that time.



In the *Sussex Agricultural Express* for March 1901, the “Union Mills” was described as: “... with seven floors, its modern two sack ROLLER PLANT by Dell and Son, and other MACHINERY, driven by a powerful compound engine by Fowler as well as wind power; the Granaries, Stabling, Offices, Residence, and Garden. This is a thoroughly old-established business, situated in a good wheat district (delivered to the mills by growers' own teams), and doing a splendid country trade, turning over about £200 per week, half of which is retail, together with a good trade of Farmers' Grinding. Also FOUR FREEHOLD BAKEHOUSES, with shops and Premises in the Parishes of Cranbrook, Biddenden, and High Halden, taking 33 sacks a week.”



A Fowler Compound Mill Engine

There were six or seven bakers' shops in Cranbrook at that time but which of those Hugh owned is not known.

WARNING! Windmills can damage your heath!

Sussex Advertiser Tues 13 Dec 1864 (copy of report from *Sheffield Telegraph*)

WHIRLING ROUND A WINDMILL - A few days ago Mr. John Henry Spooner, miller at Patrington (Yorks), went upon one of his mill sails to do a little repair. While on the sail the wind blew very strong and the mill ran through her brake. He held fast and was taken four or five times round; and had it not been for the timely assistance of a neighbour, who ran into the mill and lowered some of the stones, which happened to be in gear, there is no doubt but he would have been killed. When taken off the sail he was quite black in the face. Several people saw him whirling round.

Can you Believe it?

Even windmills can have “fake news” reported about them. On 11th September 1896, the *Southern Echo*, published in Southampton, reported, “A Windmill Demolished”, it claimed that “the windmill at Cranbrook ... was struck by lightning and practically demolished”. However, *The Canterbury Journal* reported that the sweeps were “much damaged”. “The structure itself escaped.” It was not unusual for tall buildings like churches and windmills to be struck by lightning. Windmills usually came off worse because many were built largely of wood.

Final Bits

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