



MILL BITS

The Newsletter of the CRANBROOK WINDMILL ASSOCIATION

Autumn 2019

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

AGM and AUTUMN MEETING – 3pm, Sunday 24th November, 2019, in the Russell Building. The customary scones, jam, and cream will be on offer and there will be the usual raffle to help raise funds for the Association. **Donations of Raffle Prizes** are much appreciated - please contact Hazel to let her know what you can offer by emailing: hazel.jobson@btinternet.com

Summer Party

Once again our annual Summer Party was blessed by a glorious evening with just over 30 members present to enjoy this social occasion accompanied by nibbles and sparkling wine organised by Linda Swann and her helpers. During the course of the evening, members signed a "Wish You Well" card for Peggy Fryer who has now moved to be nearer her family in Cheshire.

Thank You, Peggy

2019 has seen the retirement from active volunteering at the Mill of Peggy Fryer. She and her late husband, Jack, were the driving force in setting up the Association in 1982 to work with the Kent County Council to enable the Mill to be opened to the public on a regular basis. This was no mean task. The Mill needed to be adapted in many ways (there were no handrails to the stairs and most of the floors were completely empty). All of the displays and exhibits, which we now take for granted, had to be created or acquired and whilst there was an energetic team that set about this, Peggy was the one who kept them in order.



Elected to the Committee at the inaugural meeting of the Association on 6th May 1982, Peggy continued in office until May 2010, twice as Chairman. However, this was not retirement for Peggy, as she remained an active Steward until May of this year, a total of 37 years in all! An enthusiastic recruiter of new volunteers Peggy never failed to suggest to anyone she met, that they joined our elite band. During the early low times she kept the Association 'alive' and suggested (and carried out) things to keep up morale, an accomplished artist and designer of the CWA Logo, Peggy also represented the Association at local and national events on numerous occasions.

Peggy, we wish you well and are grateful for the enormous contribution that you have made in securing the future of Union Mill.

Maintenance and Displays

It was suggested that new handrails by the steps up to the front door of the mill would be helpful so Nick Vinall found a firm that supplies scaffolding items in all shapes and sizes. The result is very in keeping. Some of our members said that they really appreciated this as they are beginning to feel their age!



Henry Jobson has also repaired some exhibits, including the model shutters, used on the Exhibition Floor, and the model which shows how the millstones worked.

Promised - the installation of a water point near the Russell Building for washing the outside of both that building and the lower parts of the mill walls.

Milling in June

There was a strong breeze blowing on Saturday 8th June and telephones summoned both experienced and trainee millers to a milling session in the afternoon. Because of frequent changes in the wind speed, the man on the staging had a full-time job keeping the sweeps at a constant speed but nine of our plastic tubs were filled with flour in about an hour, each one holding enough for about seven of the larger bags we sell in the shop.

Bagging the Flour

The editor joined three flour baggers (pictured below) in the Russell Building about two weeks later to fill and seal 1.5Kg bags and with four pairs of hands the time flew – more often than not, only two people do this job. Sixty four bags were filled in one and a quarter hours, including a short stop for a tea-break. When the next batch of flour has to be packed, please join the team and bring your kitchen scales (electronic preferred).



The Three Bageteers



Could this be a record?



Fresh supplies of wheat arrived at the end of June from our supplier, Weald Granary, a farmers' Co-operative. Here it is, just delivered on the ground floor, watched over by Ebenezer and Caleb Russell.

A second delivery was taken in September but the wind hasn't obliged yet.

A Generous Donation

We are very pleased to announce the receipt of a donation of £500. The donor prefers to remain anonymous but requested that some should be spent on purchasing white Millers' Coats for Children to wear when grinding their own flour on the machinery floor. The substantial balance should go towards the re-painting of the exterior of the Russell Building – see later.



These coats have proved to be a great success and proud parents quickly get out their camera phones.



Guest Stewards

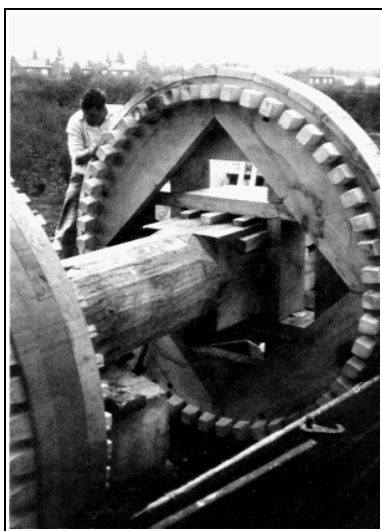
On two August Wednesday afternoons we were assisted by five Kent County Council employees (Simon, Lauren, Chris, Hannah, and Ellie) who were taking part in a staff development programme. For us it was a good opportunity to demonstrate the valuable work that our Volunteers carry out week after week, and they were able to experience what a special place Union Mill is, and how much it is appreciated by Visitors. In addition to supporting our own Volunteers on stewarding duties we were able to show them the operation of the Electric Mill and the bagging up of the flour. As can be seen from the photo they seem to have enjoyed the experience.



A Visit by a Flemish Miller

On Saturday, 1st June, five men from West Flanders in North Belgium visited the mill on the last day of their holiday in England and gave us a postcard and a leaflet about the windmill which they open to the public. The “grandfather” of the group was Luc Verhenne.

The mill is known as the Kouter Molen and stands on a high mound near the town of Harelbeke. It is the third mill to occupy the site; the first burnt down in 1892 and its replacement was irreparably damaged in WWI. The third ceased working in 1948 and steadily deteriorated until it was bought in 1978 by the local town council for just one franc – a familiar story?



As with most post mills, it has access stairs at the rear and a tail-pole for turning into the wind. Like the post mill at Beckley, featured in the last Newsletter, it has two sets of millstones driven fore and aft from the windshaft but all the gearing is constructed of wood, with lantern pinions, the predecessors of steel bevel gears. Their stones are about 20cm deep and 1.8m diameter and, as is common on the continent, they are larger and run a little slower than ours.

<< Windshaft and main gears during restoration



The millwrights who built their mill went the extra mile with some neat mouldings carved on the base of the central post.

Thanks to Geoff Bootle who talked to the visitors about the machinery in their mill.

Wheels of Time – Silver Badge Award

Adam and Ella from Dartford chose Union Windmill, Cranbrook, to receive their Wheels of Time Silver Badge award after visiting 20 separate Kent Museums and Heritage Sites.. In addition to being presented with the award, they borrowed the Millers' white coats to grind a small bag of flour, and also received a Certificate for climbing the stairs to the top floor of “the tallest Smock Mill in the country”.



<< Silver Badge



Russell Building

This building is owned by the Association and so it's our responsibility to see that it is well maintained and presentable to the public. Repainting was being considered for 2020 but thanks to the anonymous donor mentioned earlier, the work was finished in August. The painter was Paul Archbold, who lives near the mill, and he's done a splendid job.



Put out the Flags



The bunting was attached to the sweeps on Saturday, 21st September, to celebrate the 90th birthday of one of our members, George Hudson. It was left there for the following Wednesday, when we were visited by Ann Allen, MBE, Chairman of KCC, and Luke Bonwick, the recently appointed Conservation Officer, whose responsibilities include Kent's eight windmills. The sky was rather grey but there was enough wind to turn the sweeps. Luckily it was from the Southeast so the sweeps faced the Hill to greet our visitors. Over tea/coffee and cake they were given a brief history of the mill and the formation of the CWA by Peter Bourne, followed by a tour of the mill with

stewards on each floor giving their customary talks. Ann was given a bag of "electric flour" before she left and a Certificate for getting to the Bin floor !

Ann being shown the ropes (er, chains) >>



Caleb's Steam Engine, 1873

This engine was used by Caleb Oylor Russell to power machinery such as a lathe and a drill in the Union Mill's workshop. Steam was generated for it in an adjoining boiler house.



In 1958, after the death of John Russell (Caleb's son), it was sold to the miller at Cross in Hand windmill, near Heathfield in East Sussex. The engine is in full working order and was purchased recently on eBay by the present owner, Matt Yeoman (pictured), who brought it to the mill for people to see during a weekend in September. He asked if the Association would like to purchase it but our committee has decided to accept his kind offer of borrowing it for display when we open to the public next year.

An Artistic Record

The illustration on the right is taken from a water-colour painted in the 1920s by Herbert Alexander, who lived at Swifts in Cranbrook, and was a member of the Royal Water Colour Society,.

A copy is in our Archives but it was also published in 1945, in a book called "Kentish Fire", in which the author, F.C.Clark, described the mill as "an outstanding example ... and is still worked under sail when the winds are favourable. She has a gas engine to keep things going when the winds are fickle."

"It can be safely stated that the margin of profit, if any, owes much to the fact that Mr. John Russell, the present owner, is himself a skilled mechanic and millwright, and is able to do the many repairs and adjustments which are essential to the successful running of primitive (*really?* - Ed.) machinery."



The adjoining buildings, which housed the gas engine, have all gone but those with sharp eyes may still see the remains of a line of mortar, now tarred over, which provided a weather-tight seal between their roofs and the mill. The artist must have sat in the gardens which the Russells owned but is now occupied by the new(-ish) houses which rejoice in the name of Russells Yard. The Russell Building can be seen on the left of the mill in the picture.

Enquiries have so far failed to locate the original painting if it still exists.

Final Bits

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