



MILL BITS

The Newsletter of the CRANBROOK WINDMILL ASSOCIATION

Summer 2020

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

This issue of Mill Bits would normally have been sent out in July to advertise our summer party but events have overtaken us - in more ways than one as you will read.

FUTURE PLANS 2020 – but watch this space!

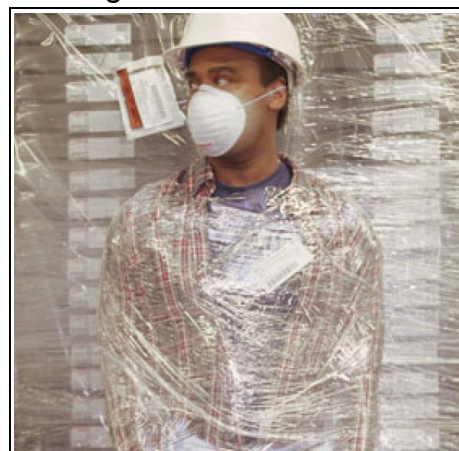
In June and early July, a small working group (Nick, Peter, Susan, and Andrew) met to consider the feasibility of re-opening the Mill safely towards the end of the summer by giving well-spaced guided tours to small social groups. After consulting the members a promising response was received but later developments have made that impossible.



By chance, on the day of the second working group meeting, to discuss safety aspects of such tours, Luke Bonwick (KCC Mills Officer) emailed to confirm that the planned renovation of the mill is now going ahead. A KCC Project Manager has been appointed and the provisional start date was Monday 3rd August. We don't know how long the work will take and we're waiting for further information.

The work will necessitate the removal of the sweeps and fantail for repair in the millwright's workshop in Suffolk. Scaffolding will then be erected and plastic wrapped to contain the dust from sanding the woodwork, followed by the painting and other repair work on site. All this will take several weeks and significant amounts of dust will get into the Mill, via doors, some windows, and particularly under the weatherboarding. Small items inside will be moved to the Russell Building for protection and larger items such as the Exhibition Model, Winnowing, and Flour Dresser will be stretch wrapped (one of Andrew's specialities). The plastic sheeting around the scaffolding will also make it rather gloomy inside, with no views out so the committee concluded that even without covid problems the Mill would be neither pleasant nor safe for visitors and stewards. They therefore decided that the Mill should remain closed to visitors for this season. Luke says that no other Kent Mill will be opening.

That's not him, is it? >>



Looking ahead it seems increasingly likely that covid will still be a factor of life into 2021 though hopefully at a reduced level. We are therefore suggesting that we develop our anti-covid plans over the winter, including organisation, signs, floor markings, etc. Members who wish can be fully involved in this process.

AND there are other ways in which members can be involved – read on.

Appeal for Volunteers – from the “Chief Grease Monkey” (his words)

I know what you will be thinking - “don’t I do enough already” - but hear me out. You may or may not be aware that once a month, winter and summer, a small team of two climb up into the cap to carry out essential lubrication of the main moving parts. This involves the use of a grease gun and an oil can and rarely takes more than 30 minutes or so. It is an obvious and well known fact that we are all getting older and stiffer in the limbs so we really need some new, enthusiastic and slightly younger members to pitch up and join our dedicated team. It is an extremely rewarding task, and if we have sufficient volunteers your turn will only come around occasionally! We have found in the past that a direct approach works better than a general appeal, so perhaps you could don your thinking caps and perhaps come up with a name or two of potential volunteers.

If you feel you may be able to help or want to find out more about what is involved please give Andy White a call on 01580 713681, or any member of the Committee. Ladies may also apply >>

While scaffolding is in place around the mill, no greasing will be needed.



The October edition of Mill Bits, 2018, featured the work of the greasing team. There is a link to back issues on our website at the end of this edition.

Exhibition Floor Displays



frame (above). Some images have been enlarged and rearranged and the basement display has been moved to this floor.

As part of this improvement, Henry has excelled himself with a new model of the vertical windmill, still operational in Nashtifan, Iran (picture right) – see Mill Bits March 2019 for more on this earliest form of windmill.



Renovations to Kent Windmills

Cranbrook mill is not the only Kent windmill due to receive attention this year. Luke Bonwick tells us that renovations are proceeding on two other smock windmills in the county, Herne mill, to the East of Whitstable, and West Kingsdown, NE of Sevenoaks. The following notes and images are from the KCC website.

Herne Windmill



Herne Mill (left) is dated 1789. During its long working life, which ended in the 1950s, the brick base of the mill was raised to two storeys in height. The black smock tower contains three pairs of millstones which were driven by four patent sweeps.

Restoration of the mill began in the 1970s and we acquired the mill in 1984. It is now managed and operated by the "Friends of Herne Mill".

There's more on the history of the mill on the mill's website at:
<https://www.hernewindmill.co.uk/history>



Kingsdown Windmill (right)

The mill will be closed in 2020 while repairs are carried out. The mill stands on private land but can be viewed externally with the permission of the landowner.

Windmills Help Supply Flour during the Pandemic

Almost from day one of the pandemic, many people decided to make their own bread and flour disappeared from the supermarket shelves at an alarming rate. The problem was not a lack of flour but that the majority of flour produced by the big milling companies is sent out, either in tanker loads for the major bread manufacturers, or in large sacks for smaller bakeries. Only a small fraction is packed in bags for supermarket shelves. They were consequently unable to quickly install additional machinery needed to fill 1.5Kg bags, etc, for the increased demand. A few supermarkets, with their own in-store bakeries, were able to package flour from their bulk supplies but working windmills in various parts of the country found that, with suitable safety precautions, they could meet local demand and several such mills have been reported in local newspapers.

A good example is Holgate windmill (photo right) which is just two miles outside York and normally produces about 75Kg of bread flour per week for sale through its shop on Saturdays. Built in 1770, the mill has had to postpone its 250th anniversary celebrations planned for this year, and close its doors to visitors. However, their volunteer millers increased their working hours per week from one to four days and their output to 400kgs. This tower mill has an "onion" shaped cap, typical on mills in the north of England but is unusual in having five sails.
<https://www.holgatewindmill.org/>



Which is the Oldest Windmill in Britain?

There are probably two postmills which can lay claim to this title, Bourn Mill in Cambridgeshire, and Outwood Mill in Surrey. Post mills, unless fitted with a fantail much later, have to be winded, ie turned to face the wind, using the tail-pole (talthur) and visitors to Bourn Mill (below left) are usually invited to have a go as seen in the photo.



The Bourn Windmill website claims it dates from 1636; “at least that is the earliest record which we have ... so it may be much older. The machinery dates from the 19th century and the trestle itself was renewed using oak in 1874.” However, as readers of past editions of MB will know, windmills were often fatally damaged by gales or lightning, so is the mill essentially the original on the site or has it been replaced at some time?

The owners of Outwood Windmill have documents relating to a contract to build the mill in 1665 for Thomas Budgen, a miller from Nutfield in Surrey. It is claimed that the millwrights who built it could see the Great Fire of London glowing in the distance - about 25 miles to the North. Until recently, it was operated commercially by two brothers so they claim it is “Britain's oldest working windmill”.

Winding Outwood postmill >>



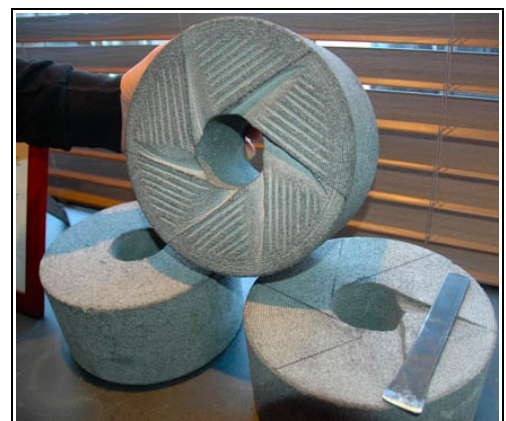
Footnote: For those with a more technical turn of mind, the Bourn Windmill website includes some splendid technical drawings of the timber framework of this postmill on this link: <https://www.cambridgeppf.org/history-of-bourn-windmill>

Stone Ground Chocolate!

A company in Massachusetts, USA, has decided to buy cacao beans from Mexico and grind them in the traditional Mexican way using granite millstones. They hand chisel each millstone with a pattern specifically designed for grinding chocolate. The cacao tree is indigenous to Central and South America and because of that, it became culturally important as a food stuff in the early civilizations of the Americas.

To find out more, follow the link below or search for “Stone Ground Chocolate”

<http://blog.massfolkarts.org/index.php/tag/stone-ground-chocolate/>



What the Papers Said

The Times, Monday, 1st February 1926, and several other newspapers.

Alarming Windmill Accident



Four men had a remarkable escape in the village of Ringwould, near Deal. This village contains a windmill erected in 1815 - one of the old-world landmarks to mariners passing up and down Channel. The windmill was working in a stiff breeze, when one of its four powerful sails, weighing nearly two tons, and measuring 33ft long and 6ft wide, snapped from its iron socket and, after tearing a huge hole in the mill roof, fell with a crash to the earth, narrowly missing four men working two to three yards away. At first the men thought that the windmill had collapsed. The miller, named Woollett, who was inside the mill, stated that he was thrown forward by a violent crash and the whole structure rocked.

Back in 1895, Trinity House had contributed towards repairs to the windmill, which was considered a navigational landmark.

From the Union mill Archives – The young John Russell family, c.1900



From left to right: Mum Helen, Phillip, Rhoda, Gwendoline, and John Russell

Final Bits

Past editions of Mill Bits can be downloaded from the Mill website by using on this link:
<http://www.unionmill.org.uk/Mill%20Bits.htm>

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