



MILL BITS

The Newsletter of the CRANBROOK WINDMILL ASSOCIATION

July 2023

Chairman: Nick Vinall, Secretary: Andrew Riddell, Treasurer: Susan Hooper

Coronation Cream Tea

The Chairman declared it to be an excellent day with well over 100 visitors and the treasurer was delighted with donations of over £250, which included the splendid cream teas. Many visitors, having enjoyed their scones, etc, were pleasantly surprised to be offered sandwiches AND a piece of iced fruit cake with another decorative iced topping appropriate for the occasion.



< Iced Topping on the cake



Many of our visitors learned about us from the local Facebook site. FB users can now get pinged direct to their phone about 'Local Events', which helped boost our numbers. One trio of adults came from London, a drive of 1½ hours!



There was a light breeze and the sweeps were turning, albeit intermittently, for much of the afternoon. The event was such a success that the committee have decided to have a repeat on August Bank Holiday Monday with another attraction for the younger visitors. Involving teddy bears.

Chairman's Bits

Maintenance: Our most pressing problem is the reluctance of the sweeps to turn. We've tried a couple of times recently when there was a breeze (15mph) and they did turn but not as freely as they should. Why not? One problem is that the sweeps are not balanced and Cameron Southcott knows that this is his next job with us. He plans to put lead weights on

the sweep opposite the heavy one, like balancing car wheel tyres. We haven't seen Cam for a month or so as he is very busy but we are due another 7 days of the 12 that Luke Bonwick (KCC) is paying for. There are STILL four small shutters to be fitted though they won't make much difference to the performance.

Another possible problem is more subtle: We've known for at least 20 years that the rotation of the cap is slightly off-centre so the alignment of the wallower wheel and the vertical shaft change by a few inches as the cap faces different directions. A couple of remedies have been suggested but they involve quite drastic and expensive action and it's not a certainty that these will fix the problem without causing other problems. Luke has decided that it is not worth the risk and it's hard to disagree.

Group Visits: We had 55 French students (in groups) in April, then 60 Dutch ones (3 groups) on a day in May. The students are from 'grammar' schools so they show much more interest in the Mill than students generally. The first group on the "Dutch day" were booked for 8:30am but didn't arrive until 9am and had to be away by 9:30am!

Wheels of Time Presentation – Platinum Award!

Arthur and Hugo received their Platinum awards on 13th May for visiting 40 of the 56 WoT sites available. Mum said that they have now visited 43 but the boys chose to have the award presented at Union Mill. They also did some electric milling while they were with us.

BTW: As result of its success in Kent, the Wheels of Time scheme is now being adopted by museums, etc, in Dorset and at the time of writing, there are seven heritage sites to visit in that county. So if you are likely to be in Dorset with youngsters sometime you might like to find out more by visiting the [Dorset Wheels of Time website](#).



Cranbrook goes "Nuts in May"



Sunday the 28th May was a gloriously sunny day and the High Street was filled with stalls and a public eager to spend their money on whatever was on offer. Many ventured up the hill to the mill and there was a steady stream of visitors (147 in total!) of all ages and sizes - many were tiny tots being carried! Most left with broad smiles and appreciative thank-yous but had obviously spent most of their money in the town, as the donations were about £1 per head. The mill was illuminated in orange in honour of the occasion.

By contrast, on Saturday 17th, the mill had THREE visitors and on 24th, only SIX!

BTW: The mill will be blue on July 5th to mark the 75th anniversary of the NHS.

(Ed: Checking back, I found that during the "Nuts in May" event in 2019, there were "298 visitors at the windmill on Sunday 26th May!" Now, that's a record!

CWA Summer Party

A dull and drizzly day may have contributed to a lower turnout than usual but Susan Hooper provided another splendid selection of nibbles and sandwiches and Pat Hall supplied the traditional strawberries and cream in the Russell Building. Nick acted as mine host, firing off the corks and serving the "bubbly".



CAUGHT! - An unwelcome visitor



Traps are placed in one or two corners of the mill to deter mice in their search for a free meal. The editor was on duty on the stone floor in June and encountered this unlucky victim.

Visit to Ripple Windmill, Ringwould, near Deal.

David Hall

Pat and I visited on Father's Day (18th June) - it's only open about once a month. The mill is believed to have been moved to the current site in about 1810 from Hawkinge and worked, producing flour and animal feed until the late 1940s. It was acquired by Rediffusion TV who removed the cap and all the machinery before converting it into a television relay station. After it became redundant it was purchased in 1987 by the Atkinson family, who have restored it to working order, including the manufacture of the cap and sweeps and most of the internal machinery. This involved making patterns for casting the metal gearing (see below) using drawings acquired from the millwright's family plus photos and drawings from Rex Wailes' book. They were able to get their hands on lots of cheap timber including a massive Douglas Fir for the vertical shaft after the 1987 hurricane.



When we arrived the sweeps were free-wheeling in a moderate breeze. The owners, who are builders, hope to start grinding flour in the near future. The standard of restoration is excellent; they can already run the flour dresser from an electric motor and the next phase is to install a gas engine which is on site. Outside is an attractive garden and tea room where we enjoyed a cuppa and a slice of Victoria sponge. To sum up, it's well worth a visit.

For more information on the mill, visit [their website](#) and/or the mill's write-up on [Wikipedia](#).

(Editor's footnote: Disaster hit this windmill in 1926 and you can read about it in "What the Papers Said" in the August 2020 edition of Mill Bits. You can find a copy on the [Mill Bits Webpage](#).

Dutch Windmills

A Dutch couple visited the mill on 20th May and the husband was keen to show us (on his phone) photos of two (retired) windmills, which stand at the side of a lake in a national park near where they live. The mills were called "de Ster" (the Star) and "de Lelie" (the Lily) and, like most mills in Holland, they were probably built originally as drainage mills but "the Lily" (right) in more recent times was used to grind dried tobacco leaves to make snuff when this was fashionable in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Snuff was also produced in England from as early as 1700, using water power, at [Watermeads](#), part of the Morden Hall Park estate, now a National Trust property in South London (previously Surrey).



Dutch (style) Mills in England

In the Fens north of Cambridge and in the Waveney Valley on the Norfolk/Suffolk border, land was reclaimed centuries ago by using drainage mills built by Dutch millwrights. Most have been replaced by electric pumping stations now but some of the old mills have survived and are being preserved, with their distinctive arrangements of tail-poles for turning the cap to face the wind.



< Herringfleet mill in the Waveney Valley, Suffolk.

Wicken Fen Mill near Ely >



Final Bits

(part of) Epitaph on a miller:

Here lies "Double-Dance Joe", ...

Poor Joe was nobody's foe but his own

He wagered, and wenched, and drank to his fill,

Then he fell on his head from the top of the mill.

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