



MILL BITS

The Newsletter of the CRANBROOK WINDMILL ASSOCIATION

October 2023

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

Notice of CWA AGM

This will take place on Sunday 26th November at 3pm, in the Russell Building as usual.

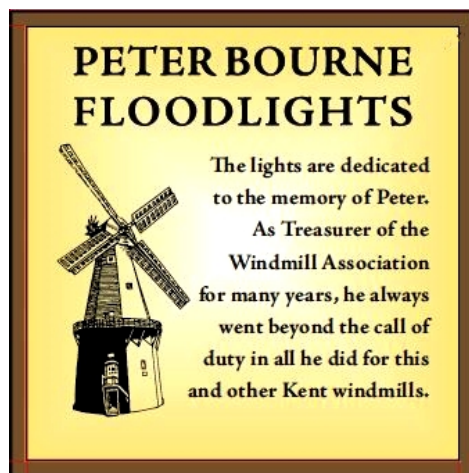
Maintenance

The July Mill Bits mentioned that the sweeps did not turn as easily as they should because they were not properly balanced. One sweep was heavier than its opposite twin, making it hard to rotate upwards. The solution was to add a weight to the lighter sweep to make them balance. With car wheels they are spun on a fancy machine which tells the operator how much weight to add, and where, but this is obviously not possible with windmill sweeps. It's more a question of pot luck but when millwright Cameron Southcott bolted a 10kg lump of lead to the end of the lighter sweep it was just about spot-on and the sweeps now turn much more readily even in a modest breeze. There hasn't yet been enough wind for grinding but we have several times been able to free-wheel which always brings in visitors. Flour for sale in the shop has been produced on the electric mill.

Items still for Cameron to deal with are to re-fit the fantail brake and to fit the four small shutters that are still missing. The latter is largely for aesthetic reasons, they will not significantly improve performance.

Peter Bourne Floodlights

Peter spent nearly four years bringing the new lights to fruition, interrupted first by Covid then by refurbishment of the Mill. Sadly he did not live to see them in action. In recognition of the enormous contribution that Peter made over nearly twenty years to Union Mill and to other windmills in Kent, the floodlights have been dedicated to his memory. A polished brass plaque, mounted on hardwood will be installed on the Meal Floor by the door leading out to the Stage and the lights.



Special events



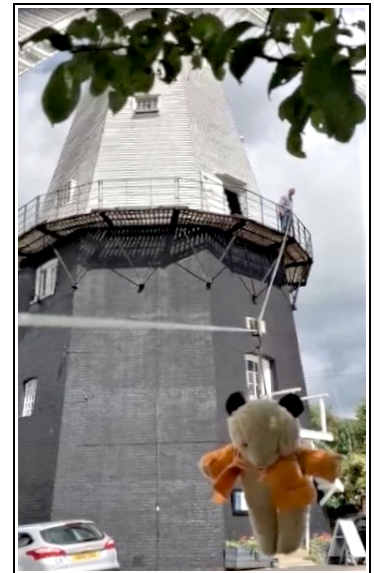
Earlier in the summer we changed the Mill evening colours so as to highlight **Nuts in May**, the **Coronation**, and the **NHS 75th Anniversary**. Recently, in response to a local request, we turned them Gold for a week to support the charity [Childhood Cancer](#), and later in October they will become purple for a week in support of a charity that specialises in helping children with **Language Disorders**. In each case the local Facebook page is used to publicise the event. Other worthy causes can also be considered as using the lights for such purposes makes the windmill a more integral part of Cranbrook community.

August Bank Holiday

Advertisements invited Teddies and their owners to visit the mill for a trip on a Zip wire. The teddy (or other favourite toy) was first fitted with Goggles by our air hostess, Hazel, then placed in the basket and hauled up to the staging by the Zipmeister, Andrew Riddell. The idea was first tested in July (photo right) with the teddy in a small harness. This was later modified for ease of use by employing a basket, hanging flower variety.



The chairman was very pleased with the day and commented: Many thanks indeed for everyone's help and support on the day. It was very much appreciated and helped make the event a big success - we had nearly 100 visitors and donations amounted to just under £420.



Special thanks are due to Susan and Elizabeth for the super "Teddy Tea" enjoyed by all, to the background of Andrew's suitably Teddy music. Also to Susan for the Raffle and "Name the Bear" prizes. I was tasked with choosing the bear's name from the list of 100 most common names but it basically chose itself when I saw that the list contained the name 'Russell'. I don't know if it was luck or smart thinking by the winner who chose it.



It was great to see the smiles of the children and parents as their Teddies zipped down the line wearing their Biggles-like goggles. The Union Mill is already regarded with pride and affection by many local people and thanks to members' efforts the event will have enhanced those feelings even more.

< *Teddy Bear's Picnic Cake*

Exhibition: "The Russell Family and their Mills"

Cranbrook Museum mounted an exhibition devoted to the Russell family in the Reception area since the beginning of August. It has been researched and assembled by Jane Pugh and is well worth a visit but there's a limited time left as the Museum closes for the season at the end of October. One of the many photos of members of the family was of Sydney Russell with a (his?) Penny Farthing, taken in the 1880s. Sydney was the brother of Caleb Oyler Russell and helped to maintain the mill machinery and, in his spare time, was a keen model maker and cyclist. His diary describes how, in 1893, he cycled to Winchester and back.



Road Works – no Water!



On 8th July, the editor visited the mill but was met with a “Road Closed” sign. It transpired that the road would be closed for a day or two more, so he left his car with another parked there. Evidently, a water leakage nearby had to be fixed and the mill and its immediate neighbours were without water, which meant Terry, the manager that day, had to knock on a few doors to find someone with water for the afternoon refreshments.

What the Papers Said

Fire threatens Union Mill

The following report refers to buildings behind the house on the Hill where the Dobell family lived, now called Greycoats. The front part, next to the entrance to the Mill yard, had become a grocer's shop by the 1840s and continued as such until the early 20th century.



Maidstone Journal, 24th Jan 1843

Cranbrook.- At a quarter before 12 o'clock on Monday night, a cry of fire alarmed the inhabitants of this quiet town which broke out at the bacon drying house of Mr. William Scudders, grocer. It was first discovered by Thomas Jenner, jun., who was retiring to rest and looking out of his window into his father's carpenter's yard, saw the fire breaking through the building. Supposing it to be on his father's premises, he gave an alarm which quickly brought the (fire) engine, and most of the (local) inhabitants to the spot. It was then ascertained that there was gunpowder on the premises which for a few minutes made some afraid to approach, but it was soon removed by a man of the name of Hinkley, miller to the Messrs Russell's, whose windmill was very close to the fire. The inhabitants formed a line to supply the engine from a pond and pump belonging to Charles Willis, Esq., and in less than an hour it was put out. Every person present rendered every possible assistance and no accident happened, except to Mr. Thomas Owlet who in dipping for water at the pond pitched in. The fire is supposed to have originated in a heap of white rags, and not in the drying house but a room adjoining. The damage is supposed to be under £50.

Thomas Hinkley, some years later, in his “Sunday best” >>



Final Bits

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