



MILL BITS

The Newsletter of the CRANBROOK WINDMILL ASSOCIATION

April 2024

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

Kent Windmills for Sale?

The shock news – to many of us – was that Kent County Council is so strapped for cash that those in charge of the purse strings are pressing for some drastic cuts in expenditure. One measure suggested is the possible sale of the county's eight historic windmills. This would save KCC paying for their maintenance. The windmills are all Listed buildings, either Grade 1 or Grade 2*, which means that the owner has to keep them in good condition, as KCC have done for 50+ years. No other KCC Heritage Assets are affected. Just a year ago KCC confirmed their policy to retain and maintain their windmills. Selling them would require a change in that policy but heritage law means that a public consultation must first be held. This took place in December and January in the form of a questionnaire.

As a result, CWA and the other Kent windmill groups decided to raise public awareness of the issue and encourage people to oppose the suggestion. A "Save our Windmill" poster was created to be displayed around the town and was emailed to about 1000 local people together with details of how to complete the questionnaire, either online or on paper.



Thanks to the support of the local Co-op on two Saturday mornings, an extra 200 people completed paper questionnaires, helped by CWA volunteers.



On 11th January, a public meeting of over 100 was held in the Vestry Hall and this included the Chairs of our Parish and the County Council Committee. The CWA Chair reiterated the KCC proposals and how they could be opposed. He highlighted a major concern as being that despite having the law on their side it is very difficult for Planning Authorities to enforce maintenance by a new owner, citing the Providence Chapel situation in Cranbrook.

A good crowd gathering in the Vestry Hall.

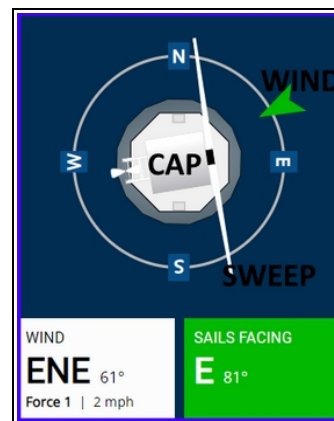
When the consultation closed at the end of January, KCC said they had received over 1500 responses online and another 500 on paper. An independent media company has been analysing them and their report, if ready, will be considered at the meeting on 21st May of the KCC "Environment and Transport" Cabinet committee. Their recommendation will be passed to the KCC Cabinet Members for a final decision.

Maintenance matters - Smartmolen (Dutch for smart mill)

This time last year we told you about the digital telemetry being installed in the cap to enable its orientation and the wind direction to be monitored remotely, ie from far away via the internet. At the time of writing, the screen showed the sweeps facing a cold wind from the east.

In normal operation the fantail turns the cap to face the wind and avoid the potentially dangerous situation of becoming "tailwinded". If the fantail mechanism develops a fault, a strong wind could blow the cap over with much damage caused.

Smartmolen allows the alarm to be raised and the cap turned manually to safety. In November the system notified us of an internal electrical problem. Andrew sorted this out and it is back to full working order again.



Millwright Cameron Southcott has been off-work for some months but expects soon to be fit again and will then return to complete various tasks. These include fine tuning the balance of the sweeps, installing the fantail brake, and fitting the missing shutters. Over winter we have had the sweeps turning monthly but it needs a breeze of about 15mph. Better balanced sweeps would reduce this nearer to 10mph.

Philip Russell – artist

Jane Pugh set up an exhibition about the Russell family in Cranbrook Museum during the Summer of 2023 which included a notebook belonging to Phillip Russell. Perhaps not surprisingly, it contained pencil drawings of two local windmills which are no longer in existence. They were of post windmills, one at Sinkhurst Green in Frittenden (right), the other being Paul Sharpe's mill, which stood a short distance South of Biddenden village.



Match Box Labels



Cranbrook Museum has recently acquired some matchboxes which were made by the Kentish Match Company, established about 40 years ago in Sidcup but still operating today from Orpington. This illustration of the Union Mill was no.2 in a series of 10 Kent landmarks. Both Sidcup and Orpington were in Kent prior to the creation of Greater London in 1965.

Eclipse of the Moon

Americans were amazed by the recent solar eclipse but Cranbrook residents were able to witness their own eclipse of the moon recently.



Tide Mill at Woodbridge



The Tide Mill at Woodbridge, near Ipswich in Suffolk, is powered by the River Deben and there has been a mill there for about 800 years, although the present building was constructed in 1793. It ceased working in 1957 but was restored in 1968 and is now fully functional and is open to the public. It contains interactive models and displays to show how tidal power is converted into mechanical energy to drive the millstones.

If you're contemplating a holiday in the West Suffolk area, or have friends or relatives there, you might consider adding it to your "to Do List". More details can be found on [the mill's website](#) where there is also a wide range of Learning Resources available.

What the Papers Said

Horse Killed by Windmill

South Eastern Gazette - Tuesday 9 September 1845

TENTERDEN.— A valuable horse belonging to Mr. George Budge, miller, having been turned into the windmill field on Wednesday last, while the mill was going, came in contact with the sweeps, and was killed on the spot. So violent was the concussion that it broke two of the sweeps from the beam*. (*I think he means the stock)

Ashbourne Windmill, near Tenterden >>

This windmill stood a short distance uphill from the watermill, the buildings of which still stand facing Rolvenden Station.



Two Unlucky Falls

Gravesend Reporter, North Kent and South Essex Advertiser - Sat 3rd December, 1859

ACCIDENT. - Rather more than twelve months ago, Mr. Ashby, miller and baker of Harmer-street, and who also works the old windmill close by the Ship and Lobster, was knocked from the stage of the mill by one of the sails and had one of his legs broken by the fall. On Thursday morning last, Mr. A. was on the stage which, being very old and decayed, gave way. He was precipitated to the ground, and again broke the same leg. The unfortunate man, remembering the skill and attention he had before experienced at the Infirmary, expressed his wish to be conveyed there again and was taken to that useful institution.

Final Bits

For newer members of the Association, you can read and print off back copies of Mill Bits by visiting <http://www.unionmill.org.uk/MillBits.htm>

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