



Officially opening the Milling and Grain room at The Mills Archive

On December 7th, 2019 the Milling and Grain team visited The Mills Archive in Reading, UK. One of the trustees, Mildred Cookson, is a regular contributor to Milling and Grain and her columns on mill history are a popular feature. While members of the Milling and Grain Magazine editorial staff are frequent visitors to the trust, on this occasion we were there to attend the official dedication of The Milling And Grain room, which houses the Rex Wailes' Collection, a recent addition to the Mills Trust.

The Rex Wailes' Collection

Reginald "Rex" Wailes OBE, FSA, F I Mech E (March 6th, 1901 – January 7th, 1986) was an English engineer and historian who published widely on aspects of engineering history and industrial archaeology, particularly on windmills and watermills. Starting in 1923, Wailes began to record the history of windmills.

At the time large numbers of mills were falling into disuse and dereliction, with many being demolished. Wailes was determined to record this important chapter of British engineering by documenting the nation's most important mills before they vanished. Not only did he record many of England's, but Wailes also travelled widely, and recorded the history of mills in Finland, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, the United States and Canada. The results of his many years of studying and surveying windmills were published in 'Windmills in England', 1948, and the longer work 'The English Windmill', 1954.

He came to be regarded as a leading authority on mills and was appointed lead consultant to the Industrial Monuments Survey then being undertaken by the Ministry of Works in an effort to identify historic industrial sites which were worthy of preservation under the Town and Country Planning Act. In 1971, in recognition of his efforts to preserve this vital part of our industrial history, Rex Wailes was awarded an OBE for his work.

The Milling Trust acquires the Rex Wailes' Collection

After a long negotiation, on July 23rd, 2019, the Mills Archive took possession of the Rex Wailes' collection, which had sat in the Science Museum's off-site store for more than thirty years. The 40+ boxes of materials

(which included many large drawings) were loaded into a van and driven to the Mills Trust building in Reading. Nathanael Hodge, the Trusts' archivist, has since begun the long process of cleaning, restoring and preserving the materials, which comes in the nick of time, since many of the items were suffering from mould and the effects of being stored in damp, outdoor sheds, etc.

To house this surfeit of material required the creation of a new archive space with the Mills Trust building. At this point Milling and Grain stepped in and have sponsored the construction of the new archive space, and will also donate to the upkeep of the collection. To commemorate this cooperation, a door plaque for the official 'Milling and Grain Room' was fitted with to commemorate the magazines' continuing support for the collection.

Preserving the past for future generations

The Mills Archive's Director of Programmes and Development, Liz Bartram, explains that the most efficient and sure way to ensure such materials last through the ages is to scan them digitally and upload them onto The Mills Archives' online database.

"It isn't a quick job and must be done very slowly and methodically" she explains, "but it is a crucial step to ensure that these documents are both easily accessible and suitably preserved for the future generations".

Now that the Wailes collection has a safe home, the long process of restoration and digitisation of the materials can begin.





Preserving these documents is crucial to preserve the history of milling through the ages. Milling and Grain magazine is especially proud to be a patron of The Mills Archive to help keep the rich history of our industry alive.

The charity trustees include:

- Dr Ron Cookson MBE (Chairman)
- Mrs Mildred Cookson (Owner of a Foundation Collection)

- Mr Mike Evans
- Mr Graham Hackney
- Dr Peter King
- Mr Charles Pinchbeck (Appointed by the SPAB Mills Section)
- Mr Martin Savage
- Dr Margaret Simons
- Mr Alan Stoyel MBE (Owner of a Foundation Collection)
- Dr Ashok Vaidya (Vice-Chairman)