

The Rex Wailes Collection

A remarkable man and some remarkable sketches

by Nathanael Hodge, The Mills Archive Trust

In the Rex Wailes collection at the Mills Archive, there is a file of correspondence between Rex and the editor of Milling, the predecessor to Milling and Grain. In 1954 Rex undertook to supply monthly articles on milling themes to the magazine.

It seems that the monthly articles only lasted until mid-1955, but the correspondence continues to 1959 with Rex supplying occasional articles and photographs as well as assisting in replying to enquiries from readers. The publication "Milling" also reviewed his book, The English Windmill, published 1954.

Identifying these articles in old copies of Milling is complicated by the fact that the author of the article was not usually indicated at the time, however one example I've found which is almost certainly from Rex is an article in the July 1958 issue entitled "About Windmills", which opens with an obituary of "a remarkable man who deserves the remembrance of all millers," regarding a Mr John Russell of Union Windmill, Cranbrook.

Born in 1888 at Swanton Watermill, Mersham, John Russell worked first as an apprentice millwright and then built submarine engines on the Isle of Wight during the First World War. When his father died in 1918, he took over Cranbrook Windmill

and restored her to working order, maintaining and running the mill by wind power from 1918 to 1950.

Drawing on the past

In the April 2021 issue of Milling and Grain Mildred discussed Rex's collaboration with artist Vincent Lines who produced drawings for Rex's book. Recently the Mills Archive were pleased to be offered 19 original Vincent Lines sketches of Cranbrook Mill, from the Cranbrook Windmill Association.

The sketches that were produced by Vincent Lines for use in Rex's book, and later sold to Cranbrook Mill by Vincent's sister, include the one of John Russell shown here – apparently John Russell disliked the drawing, saying it made him look wooden!

After decades on display in the mill the trustees decided that the original sketches would be better preserved in the care of the archive, with high quality reproductions on display in their place. We are grateful to the family of Vincent Lines for giving us permission to display these images online - you can see them here: <https://catalogue.millsarchive.org/drawings-of-union-mill-cranbrook>

Russell and from 1918 until 1950 he ran by wind the Union Mill at Cranbrook in Kent, doing most of the repairs himself. Born in 1888 at Swanton Watermill, Mersham, near Ashford, he took over



Union Mill, Cranbrook, Kent. Built 1888, taken down 1950, restored 1958.

Cranbrook Mill on the death of his father who had seemed to run her in wind. For two years he ran her with four "common" cloth-spread sweeps and no fantail. He then took four sweeps from Satter Mill,

Three days before he died the work of restoration of the mill was started by the



John Russell at Union Mill, Cranbrook, when the sweeps were being restored to the mill. The fantail was made by the millwright.

from Satter of Ashford in the Netherlands and this work will be in a very real

of the mill. He showed at Cranbrook. Mr. K. Russell was killed at Cranbrook Mill in 1918. He was a millwright and a millwright.

The man the mill as and Mr. K. Russell was a millwright and a millwright.

From D of a ladder (recovered) Army man.

This is a photo of the mill as it was in 1918.

When a lid on the be part of the mill was found near his on but this was not a lid and could not be used.

