

Mike Thurlow 1946 – 2013, An Appreciation

It is with great sadness that I write to share the news that Mike Thurlow, miller of Letheringsett Mill, Norfolk died suddenly in his sleep on the 22nd June 2013.

Mike and his wife Marion took over the mill in 1987 after they fell in love with the building, Mike having spotted it whilst working as a lorry driver for an animal feeds company. At the time, Letheringsett Estate had commenced restoration work on the building and were looking for someone to take over the lease.

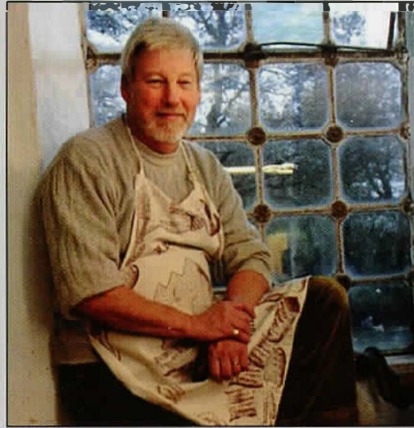
After significant conservation and restoration work, Mike returned the mill to working order and built a thriving milling business selling flour across Norfolk. He built up a large customer base, working with farm shops, restaurants, bakeries and direct customers including Michelin-starred chefs and, until recently, Harrods.

As well as winning several Norfolk tourism awards, Mike was the first 'Local Food Hero' of UKTV Food channel in 2006. Television chef Gary Rhodes was one of the judges and part of the prize was £40,000 which enabled Mike to purchase and install an additional set of millstones.

As well as developing the flour milling business, Mike and Marion helped the mill become an important tourist and educational attraction.

Mike was born in 1946 in Rushden, Northamptonshire, and joined the Royal Navy aged 15. He was a seaman radar operator and flight controller and travelled the world seven times. Mike had two sons from his first marriage and met his second wife, Marion, who was a naval nurse, in 1976 following an accident.

They married in 1978 in Middlesex and he remained in the navy until 1981 when he had another accident at sea. Mr and Mrs Thurlow moved to Winterton near Great Yarmouth after he was discharged. Mike's other passions included fishing, gardening and restoring his Thornage cottage.



Mike Thurlow
Picture - courtesy Eastern Daily Press

Mike had four children – Michael, Mark, William and Michelle – and was grandfather to Maeve, Connor and Luke.

Those who knew Mike remember a larger-than-life character, a man who had a true passion for milling and for traditional customer service. Nothing was too much trouble for Mike and to his fellow millers, he would go out of his way to find a solution to your problem or provide guidance and advice.

A man with many stories, Mike was a joy to spend time with and a willing butt for a warm-humoured joke. His lilting Norfolk accent ensured you recognised his voice the minute you answered the phone.

Mike was a pillar of the Traditional Cornmillers Guild, regularly attending meetings with Marion and their dogs, sharing his views, thoughts and opinions, promoting the art of traditional milling.

Marion and their daughter Michelle will continue to run the mill. We wish them and the members of their dedicated team every good wish as they pick up the reins and take Letheringsett Mill on the next stage of its successful journey.

Jon