



The history of milling and two days cramped up inside an eighteenth century cellar!



The Mills Archive recently salvaged from the cellars of an old house in Hull, thousands of documents that described in detail the construction of roller flourmills from the start of the last century.

Now why, did my wife Mildred, a traditional miller and one of our trustees, and Nathanael, our young archivist, spend two days cramped up inside an eighteenth century cellar saving all this paper?

Essentially, to preserve an important part of our cultural heritage destined for landfill within a few days. Without their intervention these architectural records and all that was left of the Gelder and Kitchen roller mill archive, would have been lost forever. It is easy to be sentimental about traditional mills, their history and their place in society, but for some reason the history of the modern milling industry is in danger of disappearing into the mists of time.

Gelder and Kitchen started designing Rank's Clarence mills in the early 1900s and expanded to Allied Mills and many others during the rest of the 20th century. These drawings have now been saved for the nation, but too much of our milling heritage has already been lost. We should all consider what action we could take to rescue the remains, but first we need to address two questions.

Why should we care, and what can we do about it?

Altruism is the first reason why millers, managers and directors should be particularly concerned with our industry's heritage. If we can afford the time and the money, it is worth preserving a lasting legacy of what we have achieved over the years. We would be unwise to wait for a philanthropist of some persuasion to fund the work, or allow someone else to document our past. We should take the initiative, or at least support those with the right attitude who are prepared to make the effort.

A second more cogent reason to secure our heritage is that it can give participating firms a commercial opportunity. As might be expected, those who move quickest have the most to gain. The opportunity is there in the shape of the Mills Archive, recently awarded the accolade from the UK's National Archives as the national accredited specialist archive service for mills and milling. Their work is creating exceptional opportunities for interested companies and organisations.

This young and energetic archive has flourished, even in an era of funding cuts. It has established itself as the

centre of excellence for the history of traditional mills and milling. It is now responding to the need for a similar resource for the modern flour milling industry, addressing both the need to move quickly and the required increase in scale to encompass the history of modern milling.

There are obvious, unique branding opportunities for a commercial partner who wishes to collaborate with this premier documentary and image repository of worldwide milling history. Possibilities include helping to create the world's first roller flourmill archive and library and laying the groundwork in building the leading research institute on all aspects of the history of milling. Working with the centre of excellence for research, learning and understanding on the history of mills and milling would underline one's own milling heritage.

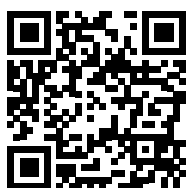
Apart from taking significant steps towards preserving our heritage, collaboration would send a clear message to shareholders, staff and customers, particularly as the Mills Archive is a registered charity. Founded in the UK with an international remit, their dream is to pay credit to those who have gone before, to inspire those yet to come.

At the commercial level, it is possible to identify with a specific aspect of the Archive's work and make a permanent mark on history. They are responding to an urgent heritage need and span all over the globe, bridging 8,000 years of technology from querns to computer-controlled milling. Many of their 220 collections document the major consequence to peoples and firms of changes over the last 150 years. With more than three million records already, there is plenty of scope to make an early impact in an area best suited to a particular profile. The Archive's rapid growth provides chances to contribute to the development and care of their collections or the ways in which they make the information available.

The appeal of preserving our industry's heritage goes beyond branding and investment opportunities, it also offers many opportunities for individual employees and representatives of companies to get involved. The National Archives have already commended the Mills Archive for its initiatives in the wider mills heritage community by providing practical help and advice on archiving, cataloguing and effective communication.

We have so much to be proud of, so why do we not do more about it?

*Dr Ron Cookson MBE, Chairman
'The Mills Archive Trust'*



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