

Friends of Lowfield Heath Windmill

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Dear Friends,

THE STORY SO FAR _ Part 5.

As this forms a diary of what has been happening at the windmill, I will continue in the order of events. The last newsletter was in December - from the end of October the volunteers had five very busy months, starting with weather-boarding the mill. There were many jobs to do. The complicated weather-boarding on the breast was all done by Keith. One had to admire his patience and good humour as he persevered with the same job every Sunday throughout the Winter. Peter James, the leader, worked out the solutions to many problems and did many tasks, especially the striking gear on the rear of the mill. Andrew remade the wheel of that assembly and deserves our congratulations for it. Barry took on the window shutters and their awnings and did a meticulous job and then made the doors, which are fitted with hinges, probably as old as the mill itself. How to reach the top of the mill to put on the top coat of paint needed a bit of thinking about but we got over the problem by erecting tower scaffolding on top of the ordinary scaffolding plus a ladder on the tower and Andrew and Jack at the top of the ladder!

In March two big problems were solved by the combined efforts of Peter and John. The first was changing the rear bearing under the windshaft and the second inserting the striking rod (26ft. long and 1 1/4 inch diameter) through the hole in the windshaft, which is horizontal and 37ft. above the ground. Both tasks had tense and exciting moments, but were very satisfactorily achieved. Also during March the oak steps which we had hoped to renew but had neither the money nor time to do, were reconstructed and lengthened. Other volunteers helped with many varied tasks, especially Jack and Ron, who were there every Sunday and their skills came into the picture all the time. A very big thank you to you all.

March 26th was the day that the scaffolding was removed by the contractors and so ended a memorable period of the mill's restoration. Although it was Winter, many bright sunny days had been spent on the scaffolding - and a few cold ones, damp ones and windy ones. It was great up there! The following Sunday the steps were lifted with winches etc. and fixed into place. They added stability and balance to the mill. At that point the volunteers work was done and it was the millwrights' turn.

The new stocks had been shaped in Edolphs Barn and the sweeps themselves made at the millwrights' workshops at Charlton in West Sussex. On April 5th the stocks and one pair of sweeps arrived at the mill, also a crane. Firstly they were fitted together on the ground, then taken apart again and then the crane lifted the stocks and put them in place in the

canister. Peter Darby then fixed them, both entertaining and alarming his audience by his precarious position on the canister (the metal part into which the stocks fit). Eventually the sails were fixed and then a snag was discovered. The sails just touched the top of the mill as they turned! The reason, we realized too late, was that when the roof was rebuilt in 1958, the top of the cap had not been shaped back enough. It did not matter at the time as there were no sails. The short term answer was to remove the top two or three weather boards, but in the next few months some alterations must be made to reshape that part of the cap and also move the stocks forward three inches.

The remaining work was the erection of the tail pole, the removal of the underpinning, (a moment of truth), and the turning of the mill itself! All this was achieved by sunset on April 9th. We congratulate Peter Darby and his team.

The next day, April 10th, was the great day we had been working towards; the visit of Princess Alexandra to our Ceremony of Restoration - and a very happy afternoon it was. She was so friendly yet regal and talked to a great number of people. The sails were turned by the millwrights using ropes and turned quite quickly, then the mill itself was rotated to the crowd's surprise.

A Sunday tidying up, a couple visiting other mills and now work has started again. The tail pole will have the temporary rope replaced by a metal chain shortly. A proper floor will be put on to the lowest floor of the mill, called the spout floor. The floor above that, on a level with the crown tree, is called the stone floor. One day, a spout will bring the flour down into the waiting sacks! A major job to be tackled this Summer is constructing a roof to the roundhouse. By the way the sails will normally be left facing west as in the event of a gale this is usually the best position.

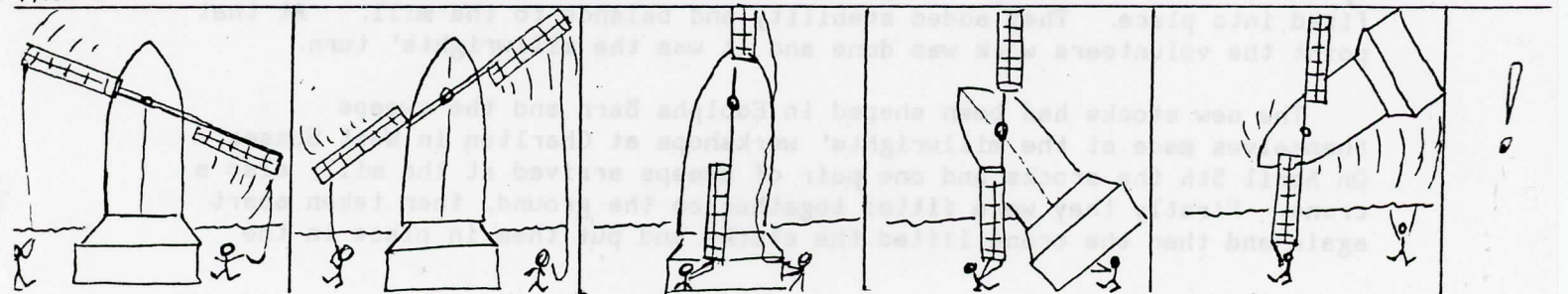
Future progress in completing the restoration of the windmill, for example making the second pair of sails, now depends on how much money we can raise. On May 13th, when the mill was open to visitors we collected over £30 in donations. Would anyone like to help us by offering to be at the windmill on other days to collect donations? If you would be prepared to sit in a chair in the sun on any Sunday afternoon, please give me a ring on 862646.

Subscriptions.

This year, when the mill became a reality, we decided to step up the annual subscription to Friends to £3.00. Those whose subscriptions are due should find a form enclosed with this newsletter. (Payment of a couple of years at once would be very helpful). Life membership has now increased to £50.00.

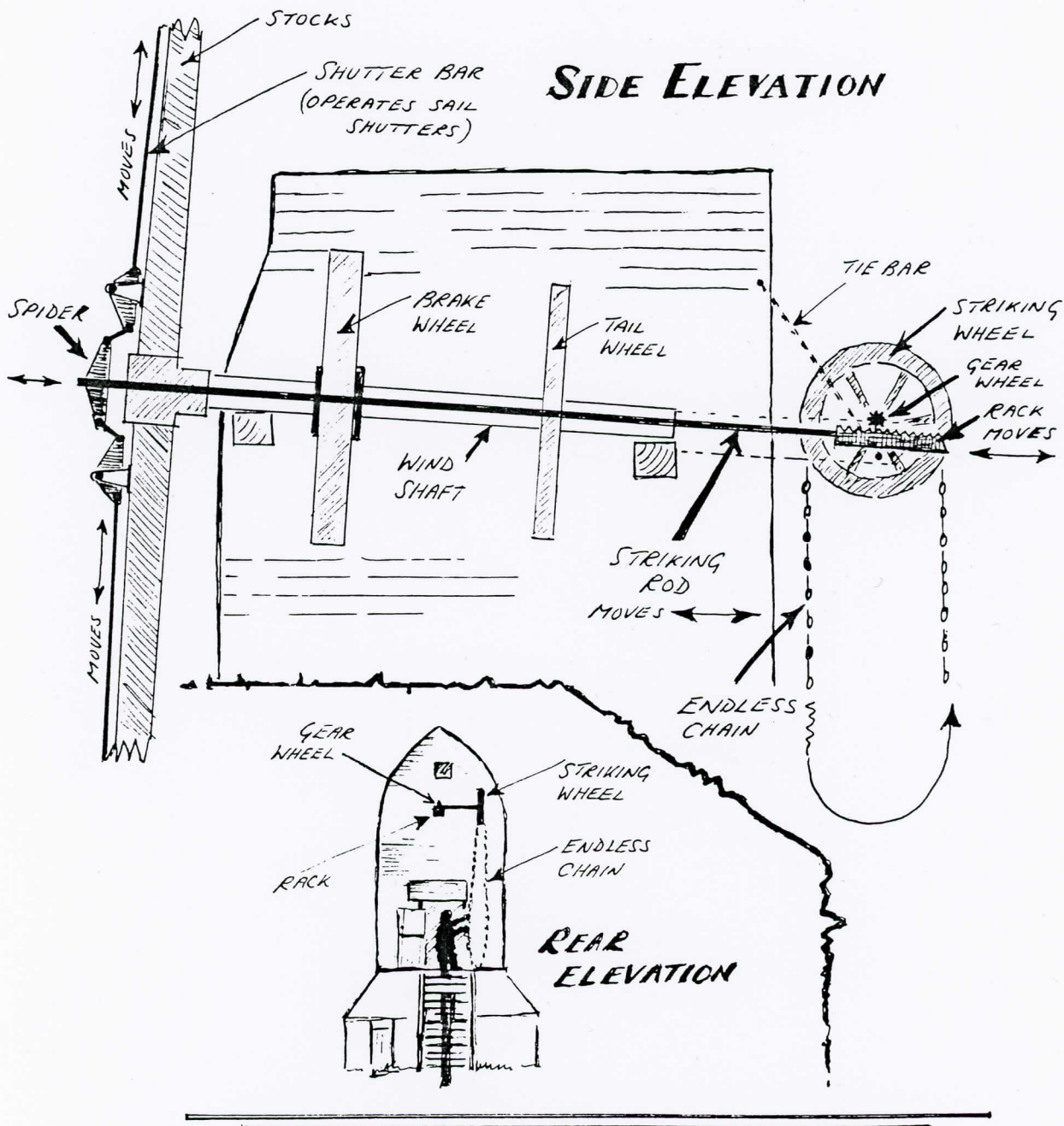
THE OPENING MOVEMENTS

THE SAILS WERE TURNED BY THE MILLWRIGHTS USING ROPES • THEN THE MILL ITSELF
• WAS TURNED TO THE CROWD'S SURPRISE!



Sails and the striking gear.

The pair of sails you now see on the windmill are known as common sails. They are the earliest type, and are fitted with canvas when working. The pair of sails which will be fitted later are known as patent sails, they have shutters, similar to Venetian blinds. The wheel on the rear of the mill is part of the mechanism to operate these shutters. A long endless chain will hang from the wheel, the miller standing at the mill door can pull one side of the chain and a series of movements take place resulting in the sail shutters opening or closing.



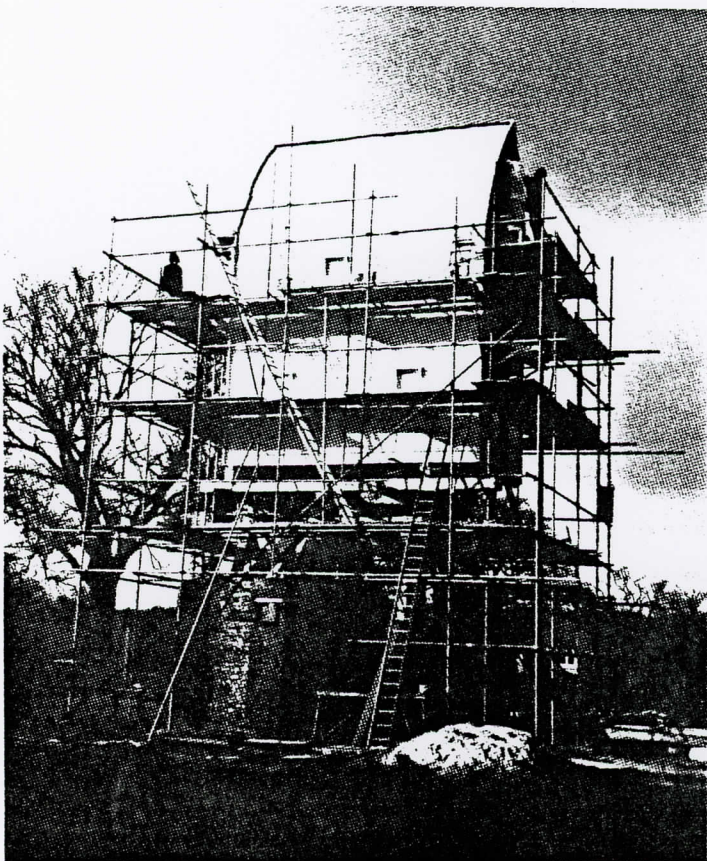
The miller pulls on the chain, the striking wheel turns, this turns the axle, this turns the gear wheel, this meshes with the rack, which pushes the striking rod, which moves through the windshaft, moving the spider, which operates the shutters! (No spider yet, it is a series of metal rods which look like a spider).

Lowfield Heath Windmill first had all common sails, then one pair were replaced by patent sails, and later the other pair. Patent sails were invented in 1772 with improvements in 1807. To run with one pair of each is quite efficient.

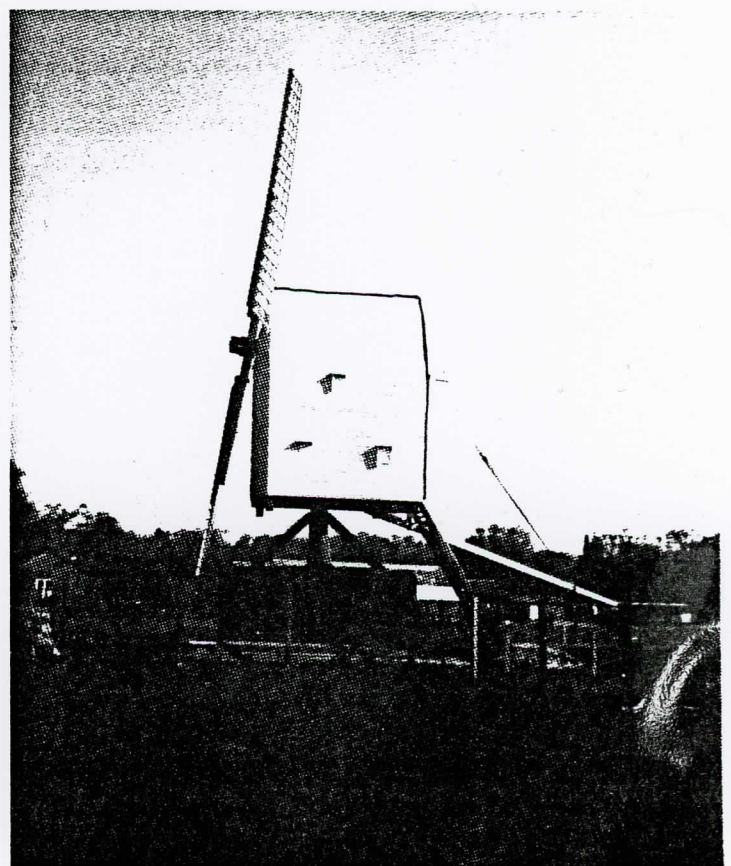
The very good photographs which remain of the mill soon after it stopped working have been a great help in the rebuilding. Much of the original machinery was found, not in the mill, but in a briar patch nearby.

OPENING TIMES OF MILLS
until the end of September.

Outwood, Surrey	Every Sunday, 2 -6pm	TQ 328 456
Ifield Watermill	Last Sundays, 2.30 - 5pm	TQ 245 365
Nutley	Last Sundays, 2.30 - 5pm	TQ 451 291
Jill Windmill, Clayton.	Every Sat & Sun, pm	TQ 303 135
West Blatchington, Hove.	Every Sunday, 2.30 - 5pm	TQ 279 068
Shipley	First Sat & Sun, pm	TQ 143 218
Chailey Windmill Museum	Every Thurs & Sun, pm	TQ 387 214
Polegate, nr Eastbourne	Every Sun, Wed in Aug, 2.30 - 5,	TQ 582 041
High Salvington, off A27	1st & 3rd Sun, 2.30 - 5pm	TQ 123 067
Lowfield Heath, Charlwood	Ring 0293 862646. J Shelley.	TQ 235 407



March.



April.