

## *Friends of Lowfield Heath Windmill*



11/1  
Mrs. J. M. SHELLEY  
4 NORWOOD HILL ROAD  
CHARLWOOD, HORLEY  
SURREY, RH6 0ED  
Tel 0293 862646

NEWSLETTER No.11

Spring 1996

Dear Friends,

The Summer of 1995 brought us two big awards. The first was the Surrey Industrial Archaeological Society's Conservation Award, a photograph of which you can see above. It is in the form of a metal plaque: just one is awarded annually. We have fixed it on the inside wall of the round house and we are very proud of it!

At this point I must confess a horrible and embarrassing mistake that I made in the last newsletter. I had wrongly understood that the great-grand daughter of the last miller (John Ansell) had died. It was a confusion of not just the same first name, but of a relative who had a very similar surname. The occasion was a donation to the mill. I thank Margaret Connor very much for her sense of humour. She said there weren't many people who had an obituary before they died, and she intended to visit the mill in person (and not as a ghost!) with her grandchildren when they came to visit her, in Essex, in the Summer.

They made that visit on the day of the above award, a happy day for all. The Connors also took the opportunity to visit Ifield Quaker Meeting house where some of their ancestors went to worship.

And now a very different award! The National Heritage Memorial Fund ( from the National Lottery) awarded us up to £35,000 to finish the windmill and get it into working order! I quote Brendon Sewill: "This grant is a recognition of the historical importance of the windmill. It is also a splendid endorsement for all the work put in by our volunteers and a reinforcement for all the financial help that we have received from many sources."

Thank you Peter, Jack, Barry and Gordon for all the good work you have done and will be doing. The award very much takes into account all the voluntary work carried out. That is all part of the financial equation.

You may wonder how it all happens. The many forms we filled in when applying for the award, included a schedule of work to be done, plus approximate estimates.

We now have to get out full specifications, which must be checked by a surveyor of the Sussex Industrial Archaeology Society. That is the stage we are at now.

This is then sent to the Windmill and Watermill section of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. With their approval, we send the specifications to three firms of millwrights for tender. (Our own millwright has dropped out for health reasons. It is not easy to find millwrights).

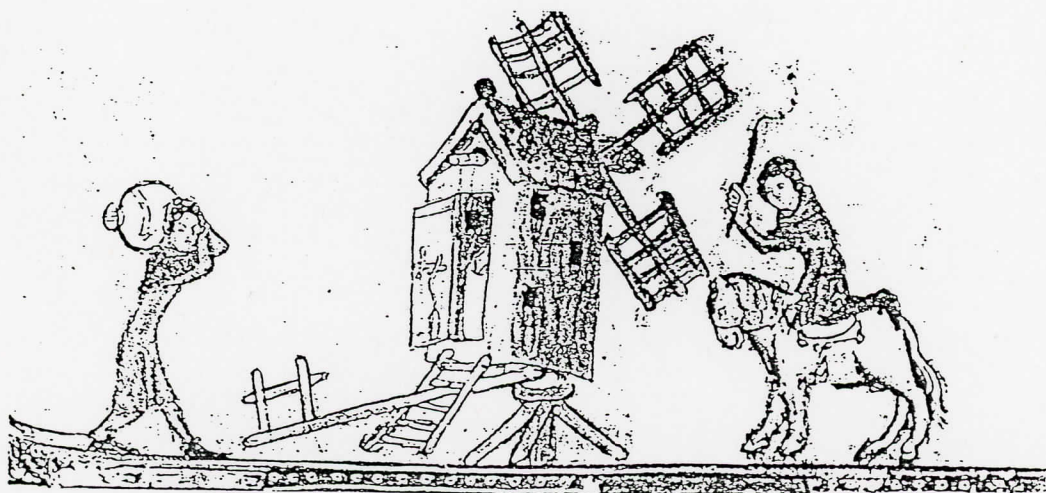
Having selected our millwright, we send everything to the National Heritage Memorial Fund who will (hopefully) tell us to go ahead. We are aiming to have a complete working windmill by Spring 1998.

Meanwhile, our volunteers are working as usual. At present, they are making a very good job of boarding the stone (top) floor of the mill, using local oak. Then they intend to floor the roundhouse.

Regarding the opening of the mill on Sundays in the Summer. It was suggested that we "played it as we went along". That is not so easy! We must have at least two people on duty if visitors can go up into the mill, and we are very short of volunteers to man the mill. It seems likely, that for much of the season the roundhouse will not be fit to enter. Later in the season, the millwrights won't want people up in the mill.

Our conclusion is that we will be open on Easter Sunday 2.30-5pm, and on National Mills Day, May 11th from 11am-5pm. Beyond that it is difficult to say. My phone number is:-  
01293 862646

Jean Shelley.



This is a mid-14th century drawing, so similar to the postmills that remain today. Note the tail-pole which turns the mill to face the wind. Watermills and windmills were the earliest form of power (other than animal power), and they were the only form of power for many hundreds of years.

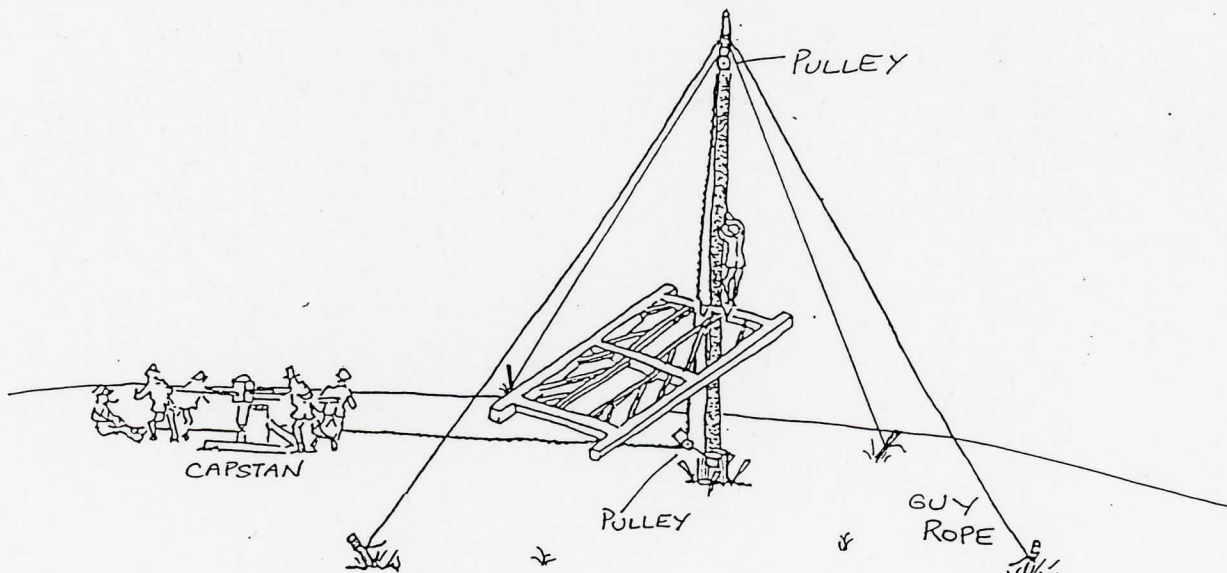
There were known to be a number of windmills in East Anglia as far back as 1190, but the greatest period of windmill building was the 1230's and 1240's.

(History Today, July 1989)

## WINDMILLS BEFORE CRANES.

On Sunday afternoons at the mill, I am often asked "How were windmills erected before we had cranes?"

I asked this in the S.P.A.B. Newsletter of the Mills Section. The reply came from Holland, and it included the diagram below. The writer said he remembered seeing this system in use when he was a child, "although the capstan was replaced by a more modern, but still handpowered, winch". He also added, "some years ago, a drainage mill which could be reached by water, but not by car was restored. The millwright used the same good old system which his predecessors had been using for many centuries".



### 1886 - THE LAST DAYS

Peter James received copies of letters from Mrs. J. Smith who is researching the Constable family who were miller and mill owners locally -

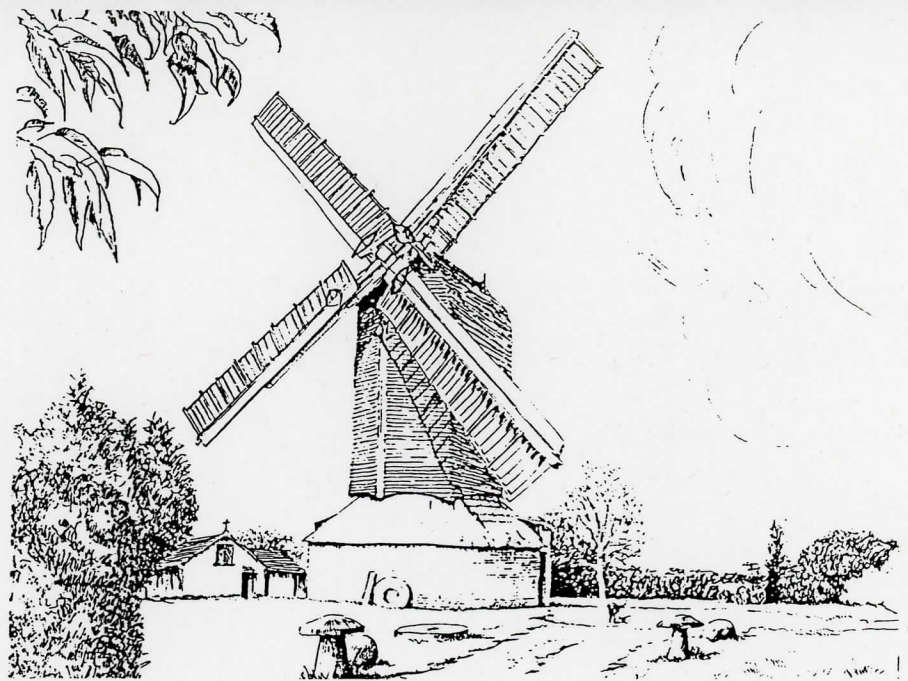
28.9.1885 From Joseph Robinson, Manor Farm, Crawley, to Clair J. Grece - "...the Mill has become of no value as a mill, altogether left in the lurch by modern machinery and steam power. The surroundings more and more each year are lessening the wind power. Cheal and Sons are offenders, and they will become worse, as they have taken two fields which they intend rapidly covering with their trees. If so, the poor old mill will be nearly suffocated." (Cheals were nursery men at Lowfield Heath).

Enclosed with this letter was their notice "To Clair J. Grece..." "We hearby give you notice that it is our intention on the 29th day of September 1886 to quit and deliver up the mill and land and all appurtenances situated on Lowfield Heath which we now hold and occupy of you. Joseph Robinson, Henry Robinson."

The other letter was written in 1905 to Robert Blundell of Gordon Square, London, from Clair James Grece. He refers to.. "...the shifting of the windmill from Horsham Common. 1737 was the date of the marriage solemnized at Guildford between James Constable and Mary Dabner and the mill was not erected upon Lowfield Heath until several years later." (This ties in well with the date of 1741 on the sackhoist pulley, but we know nothing more about this suggested dismantling and re-erection).

11/4

## OUTWOOD MILL



Outwood windmill is the earliest working windmill in England. It was built in 1665 by Thomas Budgen, miller, of Nutfield. (There is a photo and a transcript of the document in the Outwood Mill booklet). It was not working when Raymond and Gerald Thomas bought it in 1960.

The brothers set to work repairing it and making new sails. And it was not too long before the mill was grinding corn again. It was a very courageous act. Neither were millers, carpenters or engineers. Sadly, Raymond died suddenly in 1992, but Gerald valiantly carried on in the same manner opening the mill as usual. But he too, died "with his boots on" in January 1996.

Both were still in their 60's, and one feels full of admiration for them and the job they did. Both appeared to be real countrymen, just right for the task of showing the mill to the public and especially to the children. They were full of humour, knowledge and patience when coping with them.

Almost every person who grew up in these parts during the last thirty years will remember the Outwood millers with affection.

I remember when we had our first open day at Lowfield Heath windmill following the erection of the main post. Raymond and Gerald visited, and one of the volunteers said with a big smile: "Worried about us? Competition?" The answer came with another big smile and a challenge, "We'll be dead before you get that mill working!"

Well, we are late and you were early, but thank you Raymond and Gerald, you were very rare and valuable men. And thank you for the times we visited you to see how certain things needed to be constructed at our mill.

And what of Outwood mill itself? The sails need attention, but it is very beautiful sitting so comfortably on the hilltop, confidently facing the world, almost alive in it's mellow but strong personality. How exciting it was to see and hear the sails turning. Inside, the timbers seem rounded and polished. The polish was not from a tin, but from the touch of human hands over hundreds of years. (I confess that Lowfield Heath windmill is a different being to me).

What now? Wonderful Outwood mill must not change. It must work again to show children and adults that amazing early technology and the dedication of the two men who kept it alive.