



Friends of Lowfield Heath Windmill

<http://www.ockleywindmill.co.uk/lowfieldheathwindmill.htm>

Newsletter No 22

Spring 2008

News from the Committee.

2006 & 2007 have been reasonably successful years for Lowfield Heath Windmill. Work has continued on the construction of the bolter and this is now nearing completion. It is installed on the stone floor and work should be complete once the chutes have been made. Surrey Historic Buildings Trust visited the mill in November 2006 to inspect the bolter and agreed to release their promised grant towards the construction costs. There is rot in the stocks and it has been necessary, on safety grounds, to take the sails off the mill. It is hoped that a new pair of stocks will be made before the end of the summer. Some rot has also been noted on the striking wheel frame and this is also to be checked soon. The roundhouse roof was re-painted during the summer of 2007 as some paint flaking has been noted at the board joints.

The two plots of land between the road and the Millfields housing development have been sold to Charlwood residents and Terry Thorpe, former owner of Gatwick Zoo, has informed the Trustees that, at this time there are no plans to sell the mill plot.

Open Days in both 2006 and 2007 again showed considerable variations in visitor numbers. In April 2006 we were quite busy and on National Mills Day in May we had plenty of visitors and our guides were kept well occupied! The last Sunday in May was poorly attended and in June, numbers were low, probably as the day clashed with the England v Ecuador World Cup football match. July and August, visitor numbers picked up significantly and our openings on the two Heritage Days in September attracted large numbers and again our guides were very busy. In 2007, April was slow but steady and National Mills Day in May was poorly attended. May, June and July also had very poor attendance. By August, visitor numbers had improved and the two Open Heritage Days in September were extremely busy.



Full details of our 2008 Open Days can be found on the website www.ockleywindmill.co.uk by using the link to Lowfield Heath on the home page. We are extending our advertising of Open Days and we are using the Surrey Mirror Guide, RH123 Events and Surrey Countryside Walks and Events Programme to this end. We are also seeking other means of advertising and would be very grateful if you could tell your friends and neighbours about our Open Days.

The experiment of having sheep grazing around the mill proved successful and will be continued this year. We now have a new postcard of the mill on sale and an updated 2007 'Mills Open' booklet is also available. The film 'Sussex Mills' has been transferred to a DVD. All these items can be obtained at the mill. Once again, we would be pleased to hear from anyone who would like to help on Open Days or who would like to consider joining the committee.

Reigate's Windmills.

Michael Yates

Windmills were once very common throughout England. Now only a small percentage of these remain. Reigate is luckier than many towns in that it still has two windmills within a 1½ mile radius of the Old Town Hall. These are **Reigate Heath** post mill, a nearly complete mill whose roundhouse is used as a Chapel, and **Wray Common** tower mill, a luxury house conversion. In the heyday of corn milling by wind, there were also four other mills within this same area, of which two have photographic records and two are only known from documentary evidence.

Blackborough Mill, built c1736, stood near Shaw's Corner and was demolished in 1938. A weather-boarded and tarred post mill, it was very similar in style to Reigate Heath Mill. It was owned for many years by Edward Lambert, baker and miller, who in 1877 and 1878 was Mayor of Reigate. It had the misfortune of causing the death, in 1799, of Elizabeth Webb who was struck by the sweeps. It stopped work in the 1880's. Against our roundhouse wall is one of the peak stones from this mill.

Two further post mills stood on the same site at the top of Cockshot Hill (near the A217). These were probably built in the early 1700's. One had gone by 1848 but the second stood until about 1893 when it was demolished. They were both owned for many years by members of the Dewdney family, a family well known in Surrey milling circles.

The white smock mill at **Trumpets Hill** stood very near Reigate Heath Mill. It was probably built about 1760 and ceased work in about 1895. It was built on a low brick base and its cap was turned into the wind by a fantail. It was operated by the Bowyer family for many years, another well known family of Surrey millers. By 1950, it had become very unsafe and it was demolished in that year.

Reigate Heath Mill was built before 1750 and stopped work in about 1870. The Bowyer family were also millers here for many years. The roundhouse was converted to a consecrated chapel in 1880 and is now owned by Reigate and Banstead Borough Council. It still retains much of its machinery. The key to the chapel is held by the Reigate Heath Golf Club and the buck can be visited by special arrangement with R.& B.D.C.

3.



Wray Common Mill dates from 1824, it ceased work c1895 having been run in its later years by the Cooke family who were also local bakers. A brick built tarred tower it is now in splendid condition with new sails after nearly 28 years. The replacement took place in December 2007 and as this picture shows two large cranes were used. It took between 4 and 5 hours to put all four sails on and during this operation the sails were turned, if only by a quarter turn, for the first time in many years. It still has its windshaft and brake wheel in situ and has recently been sympathetically restored and is now a £1 million plus house conversion.

It is perhaps worth speculating that if the density of windmills noted in Reigate had been repeated throughout the rest of Surrey, then this county would have had over 600 windmills of which over 400 would have been post mills. There would also be about 200 windmills still standing. Reigate was obviously exceptional for its number of mills.

From our Treasurer

Accounts : Our takings for open days during 2006 were disappointing, being some £150 down on last year. We have gratefully received the balance of the monies for the new bolter from the Surrey Historic Buildings Trust Ltd. This means that our expenditure for the year was also less as last year we had to stand the cost of the bolter. We have also halved the cost of mowing the windmill site as the sheep are doing an excellent job for us! **As always, a plea for donations!** However small, they are always gratefully received.

The summer of 2007 was a washout in more than one way. Sadly our visitor numbers were depleted and therefore our income was much less. Our income from open days was under £400. We have also had to pay nearly £3000 to take the stocks down so it will be the same again to put them back up, not to mention the expense of the new ones. The interest from our savings account just about pays our insurance premium. Outgoings are much the same as usual.

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This picture of Lowfield Heath Windmill may well have been painted by our Treasurer's great grandfather, Clair Grece, or his daughter Susanna around the turn of last century.

Open Days

for the rest of the year, are

SUN 29th JUNE 2pm - 5pm

SUN 27th JULY 2pm - 5pm

SUN 31st AUGUST 2pm - 5pm

SAT 6th SEPT Heritage Open Day 10am-5pm

SUN 7th SEPT Heritage Open Day 10am-5pm