

Two Mills in Finistère

Ruth Andrews

Photos by Keith and Ruth Andrews

Whilst Robin was photographing mills in Pembrokeshire, Keith and I were in Finistère. I was struck by the very complex histories of two of the mills we encountered.

Moulin à Mer at Lagonna-Daoulas is a derelict tidal mill, outwardly similar to Carew tidal mill, but bigger. The mill pool is fed by the Camfrout river as well as the tide. An information plaque states that that it was originally built in 1520. In the French revolution it was confiscated from the Count of Rosmorduc. Since then the mill has had many owners.



In 1808 the mill with 6 pairs of stones was one of the biggest in the region. Its flour production reached 1500 tonnes in 1854. A thriving economy grew up around the mill: a small shipyard and a fish market with plenty of scallops from Daoulas. Unfortunately at the end of the 19th century the mill ceased operation when its then owner became bankrupt.



However, in 1939 the state renovated the building to house refugees, but later under German occupation it was turned into a hospital for officers. After the war it became a military training centre. In 1965 it became a place of entertainment: first a café-dance hall, then a restaurant and disco. Sold in 2002 to a property company, it is now derelict awaiting a new lease of life. However, the adjacent mill house appears to be occupied.

The mill at Daoulas (**Moulin du Pont**) dates back to 1173, the same period as the construction of the nearby abbey. According to FFAM (La Fédération Française des Associations de sauvegarde des Moulins) the mill was probably a textile mill, important in the region since 1452. Its wheel turned horizontally: it is known as a *pirouette* mill.

At the beginning of the 20th century it then became a flour mill. In about 1936 it was converted to a *minoterie* (roller mill). to install all the roller milling machinery the building was raised, and a generator driven by a turbine was installed on the ground floor. It ceased production in 1970.



It does not have the same uniform massive architecture as the tidal mill. Its base is made of kersantite from several different quarries, which can be identified by the colour of the stone: lighter, from the port of Kersanton; darker, tending towards black, from L'Hôpital-Camfrout.

There is an interesting millstone displayed outside the building. I thought it was unusual that the central part of the stone was a solid block of gritstone surrounded by the usual pieces of French burr.

The mill is open as a museum in July and August; unfortunately it was September when we were there.

