

## Bere Mill Meeting Report, 8 June 2024

### *Keith Andrews*

About 20 members met at Bere Mill, Whitchurch, by kind permission of the owner Rupert Nabarro.

Rupert gave a short talk about the mill. The Portals, Huguenot refugees from France, leased the mill in the early 18th century for paper making. They later moved the operation to a new location in Laverstoke, and later to a large newly built factory in Overton, where paper making continued until earlier this year. Meanwhile Bere Mill went over to corn milling. In 1904 a Gilkes Landheer turbine was installed – one of only about 30 made, and now the last remaining – to generate electricity for the paper mill at Laverstoke 2 miles away.

Rupert bought the mill in 1994; by 1997 the electricity generation was not working but Rowley Eastman, son of the installer of the original turbine, was hoping to get it going again. He did, but it proved very noisy and also it caused a lot of silt in the river, resulting in complaints from the owner of the fishing rights, so it was abandoned. Below the mill there had been extensive water meadows, which Rupert tried to put in use again. Once again there were complaints – the usual one about “taking my water” – so that was also abandoned.

In 2017 came the disastrous fire that destroyed the mill and much of the house and the generator, and broke the mill machinery, but the turbine survived. The house and mill have been rebuilt to a very high standard, and the machinery has been reconstructed. However, the generator has not been replaced: there are just the holes in the wall for the belt drive remaining. Rupert commented on how helpful the planning authorities had been. Tony Kirkby who, with John Christmas, had been doing the reconstruction of the machinery, gave some details of the work; all is now good, except that he can't get the turbine to turn, despite applying significant force!



**Left:** The mill straddling the River Test



**Below:** View upstream from the mill



**Above:** The tailrace



**Right:** the rebuilt mill



After tea and cake, we were able to look round the mill and the splendid gardens.



The wheels with the turbine below



The cast iron sluice control wheels

## Sherfield-on-Loddon Fete, 8 June 2024

**Keith Andrews**

In response to a request from HMG member Ian Deeprise of the Sherfield History Group – who have a major interest in Longbridge Mill – Ivor New, Ruth Andrews, and I took the HMG display to Sherfield-on-Loddon fete to support them. This is a reworked reduced-size version of the display to fit on HMG's display boards that were bought in memory of Mary Yoward, while the original large display from HRO was still at Eling Tide Mill.



The history group's stall mostly featured items from Longbridge; in particular the hand quern which attracted lots of children to have a go – for the reward of a cookie!



**Left, top:** The new HMG display and Sherfield History Group's stall

**Bottom:** Your newsletter editor shows her prowess with the quern – but she refused the cookie that Ivor was offering!