

## Meeting Report, 16 March 2024

**Eleanor Yates**

Photos by Ruth Andrews

Joanna (Jo) and Jonathan Appleby kindly welcomed 17 members of HMG to Botley Heritage Centre. Most members met in the 1086 wine bar for a delicious snack lunch first and then met our hosts for a guided tour of the buildings.



The tour started in the Heritage Centre which is part of the watermill, where you see Jo (left) and Jonathan (right) discussing some of the exhibits.

Ralph de Mortimer, a friend of William the Conqueror was gifted this mill, and it first appears in the Domesday Book. The Applebys, originally from Appleby-in-Westmorland have owned and run the mill since 1921, and either let or own the businesses now on the site.

To quote the Mill's Website "*Botley Mills is teeming with centuries of history and fascinating stories. The Heritage Centre is an immersive time space to learn about the local heritage and history that exists, right on your doorstep. From 200-hundred-year-old machinery and equipment to the mill's ancient architecture and time-honoured stories of key people and local families through the ages, there is so much to explore and uncover.*"



The watermill bin floor is not yet safe to enter



In the Old Mill Restaurant you can still find the metal hurst frames of the millstones which were belt-driven off a turbine and a Ruston diesel engine which is still in its original position.



Whilst no longer milling flour, the Heritage Centre explains the methods used over the years to create white, wholemeal, and other flours. There are still a lot of original fittings and fixtures in the mill and a lot of original machinery and equipment. There is also some machinery which has come from elsewhere.

The Applebys are repairing the bin and stone floors so visitors can navigate the stairs to the upper levels of this complicated building and see the site of the original water-powered stoneground mill, together with the later additions to the site which include large granaries – now offices – and a whole new structure linking the original building with the more recent roller mill. We were not able to go in the roller mill but we saw some of the machinery from it, and were assured that most of it is still in its original position.

There are photographs of HMG members working on the mill displayed in the Heritage Centre. We were allowed to use the board meeting table in the Heritage Centre for a short meeting after our tour.

When Ruth and I visited while researching the *Mills & Millers of Hampshire* books in 2011, Patrick Appleby was replacing a large section of tiling on the water mill roof.



Jo (in pink) and Jonathan (to her left) welcoming HMG members



The roof of the watermill leaked for many years before Patrick retiled it in 2011.

Our thanks to all the Appleby family including Jo, her husband Joseph, Jonathan her father-in-law, and Patrick his younger brother for making us so welcome.

The Heritage Centre is open to visitors Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm and entry is free. The link to their website is [https://www.botleymills.co.uk/heritage\\_centre/](https://www.botleymills.co.uk/heritage_centre/)