

Meeting Report, 2 September 2023

Ruth Andrews

Meeting at Shawford Parish Hall, 2pm

The meeting started with the AGM, for which minutes are being circulated separately.

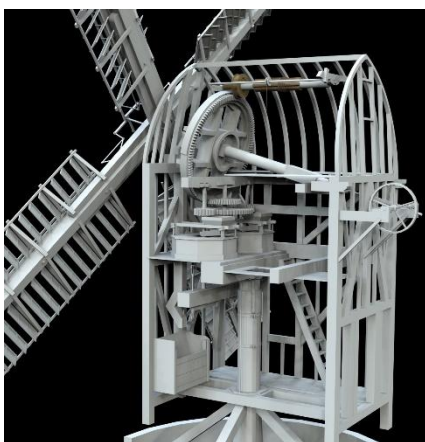
Following the AGM we enjoyed an inspiring account of the history, restoration, and conservation of the grade 2 listed post mill at **Saxtead Green** in Suffolk by millwrighting consultant **Luke Bonwick**. He has very recently finished writing a book about this well-known but under-studied landmark, and was involved in some of its most recent restoration.

There is a manorial record of a mill in Saxtead in 1287 but this would probably have been a simple buck supported on an earth-fast post. In 1796 the mill was built with brick supporting pillars and a single-storey roundhouse, with sails which almost touched the ground. The roundhouse was enlarged in 1854, becoming a 3-storey structure, and giving the mill a total height of 54ft. A fantail was mounted on the tailpole access ladder and two pairs of belt-driven steam-powered stones were installed in the lower part of the roundhouse, with an adjacent shed for the engine. A cross-section of the mill in 1854 shows how the buck was not mounted centrally on its post to compensate for the weight of the sails and millstones.

By 1953 the buck was beginning to lean and the sails had been damaged in a gale. Restoration began in 1957 when the buck was rebuilt under the supervision of Jesse Wightman using parts from Sweffling High Mill, but it never milled.

Extensive conservation work began in 2018 when English Heritage started a £250K restoration project. Luke became involved and designed, built, and installed new sails, repaired the fantail and stabilised the tail ladder with its huge wheeled undercarriage. The mill is now once again able to automatically turn into wind, which will help it to weather evenly. It is now watertight, particular care having been taken to soak the new timbers in preservative (rather than just spraying them), before meticulously covering all surfaces in paint.

Thanks to Eleanor Yates for providing refreshments during the meeting – although I noticed that almost no-one touched the wine!



John Brandrick's 3D model



Luke Bonwick

