

## Spring Break on the Isle of Wight.

**Ruth Andrews**

Photos by Keith Andrews

Keith and I stayed in Shanklin on the Isle of Wight for 4 days recently. It was planned as a short holiday to test my hip replacement, but we were also aware that we needed a newsletter article. Also, Keith had just purchased a new camera so we were testing that as well. Dave and Ros Plunkett had a similar idea in 2016 and their visit was reported in newsletter 112.

We started with **Bembridge Windmill** which is cared for by the National Trust, and now has its new sweeps and stocks which were replaced by Dorothea Restorations in 2021, after a fund-raising campaign: see report in newsletter 126, Autumn 2019. It was not open but there was an information panel on a wall nearby. We read that the mill was built around the early 1700s and was famously painted by J M W Turner in 1795. It was owned by the Dennett family for almost all its working life, which ended in 1913.



In 1933 SPAB launched an appeal for £100 for repairs. The mill was then used as a cowshed and store before being taken over as a Home Guard HQ and observation post; it progressively became more and more rotten.

In 1959 the Island National Trust raised £1000 to start restoration and it became the property of the National Trust in 1962. Its missing millstones were replaced by ones from the old tide mill at Wootton Bridge, which was demolished in 1963. In 1987 and 1991 it suffered considerable wind damage.

The 38ft limestone tower is faced on the weather side with cement rendering (*see cover picture*).

An interesting feature is the 6ft wooden wheel (without its chain) which engages with a wooden worm gear, which in turn meshes with the beechwood teeth on the the oak curb to turn the cap into wind.





Our second photo stop was at **St Helens** where a tide mill was built in about 1780. By 1930 the mill was no longer operating and it became derelict. It was finally demolished in 1969 and a much smaller house was built on its site. The exit from the wheel race is behind the the pontoon, and is disguised with seaweed.



We were intrigued by the large timber object lying alongside a stone wall; it certainly looked like part of a mill but was it this mill? And was it the axle of a water wheel or an upright shaft? If somebody knows, please tell me. Notice the sawn-off ends of 6 compass arms towards the nearer end.

The tide ponds had two masonry dams which worked together to maximise the milling time on each tide. The inner dam (**A**) is now a popular footpath and the remains of the outer one can be seen at low tide (**B**).



Looking north east (*above*) and back towards the mill site (*below*).





Our third visit was to **Yarmouth**, where the tide mill is an original building but now converted to residential use. It was built in 1793, replacing an earlier wooden mill dating back to the mid-17th century. In the 1880's a railway viaduct and embankment were built across the mill pond to carry the Newport to Freshwater railway – various writers have suggested that the building of these features disturbed the flow of water and resulted in the pond silting up and the mill ceasing to operate. It frequently appears in photographs (see again newsletter 112), but here are two less usual views.



Finally we photographed **Yafford Mill**.



There was probably a mill on this site by 1750 but its foundations seem to be older, maybe 15th century. The present building dates from the 1800s. It was open to the public for a while until 2000, and included a magnificent collection of old farm wagons, threshing machines and harvesters in the grounds but it closed in 2000. It was restored in 2007-10 as you can see in the plaque below.

