

Upton Windmills

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At Upton, Isle of Wight, the remains of two windmills stood in close proximity into recent years. Upton Mill is the name used on maps and cards of the time, though the site is in Haylands on the Upton Road near Aldermoor and Ryde. The mills are known by any of these names! Unfortunately they were rather neglected by windmill enthusiasts and books alike, probably due to them not being easy to reach from the mainland.

This photograph of a powerful looking tower mill and associated buildings recently appeared as an unidentified windmill on eBay, and was bought to my attention when it was then posted on the *Windmill Hoppers* facebook site. Gareth Hughes identified it as New Mill, Upton. There are a few views of the mill, but none of them have been taken from this spot, showing all the associated buildings and the rear of the cap in detail.

The mill had 6 floors and a rather complicated hipped multi-sided cap. Elements of its design could be seen on some other now demolished Isle of Wight mills as well as at Bembridge. The cap has supporting timbers for a stage, and wooden boards would be laid on these when maintenance of the cap was necessary.



At the rear, what looks like a pipe running down the tower must be a wooden chain guide attached to the cap. This is a common feature on a number of mills in the east of the country, particularly Norfolk, and is to steady the striking chain with weight attached that operates the patent sails.

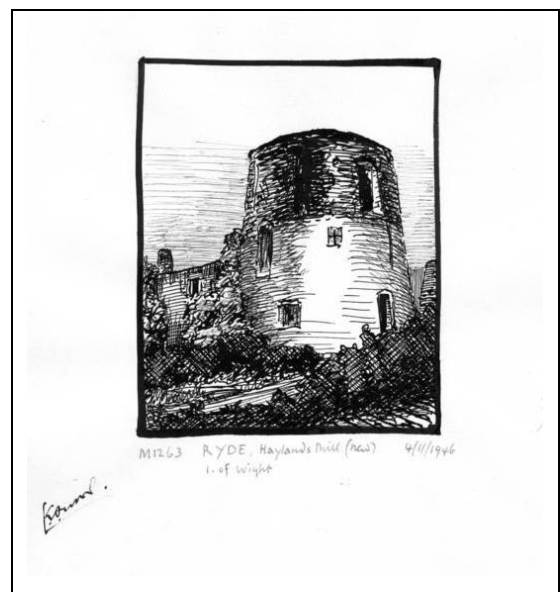


The stage is a wide one, giving easy access to the sails. Visible in the postcard 'front' view on the next page, just below door height at stage level, are what look like 3 equidistant holes, which I think are the sawn off timbers to which the endless chain that turned the cap into the wind could be attached to stop it swinging about. Once hand-winding was replaced by the fantail they became redundant. These were a feature very common on Anglesey windmills and would encircle the tower.

The postcard actually shows the other mill too, known as Old Mill. It appears as a whitewashed two storey stump (*marked S above*) just to the right of the New Mill. To the right of that in the garden near the house can be seen the cap (*marked C*) of the old mill being used as a store or summerhouse.

The Old Mill appears to have been built in 1804 and seems to have ceased work around 1851. It was cut down to a 2-storey stump in about 1861. Rather a short life for a mill, but perhaps a larger more powerful one was needed.

The dates for the building of the New Mill vary, one source quoting the early 19th century and another quoting the earliest reference to it as 1854. It is unlikely that both mills would have worked at the same time due to their very close proximity. This may also be the reason why the tower of the Old Mill was truncated, as its presence would have interfered with the wind flow to the New Mill. The New Mill had 3 pairs of stones and worked until at least 1895 and then became derelict. One of the sails was blown off in 1909 and it was reduced to a three storey stump in 1911 and then used for storage.



It was used as a lookout post by the Home Guard during the war and the last record we have of it is a Karl Wood painting from 1946 (*above*). It is said to have been demolished sometime between 1953 and 1963.



The Old Mill stump outlasted that of the New Mill and was also painted by Karl Wood in 1946 (*left*), the only mill enthusiast to capture it! By that time it was an empty shell with some broken walling at the top. The latest information suggests it was demolished following damage in the 1987 storm.

The site of the mills is now used as a farm supplies business.

Karl Wood paintings by courtesy of
The Mills Archive

Information from *Windmills of Hants & the IOW* (2016), *Mills of the Isles* (2019),
Nick Kelly, other photos and paintings.