

Gunton Water-Powered Sawmill

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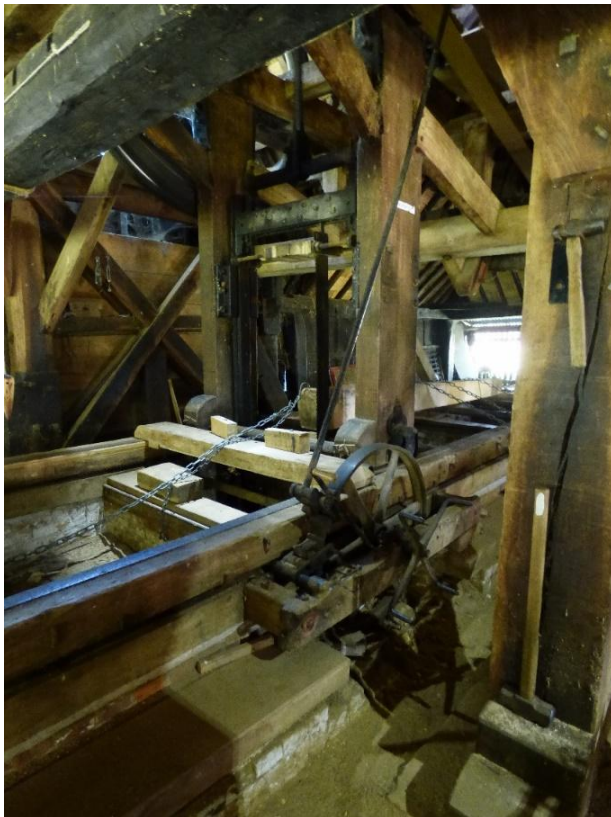
Photos by Alan Cullen except as noted

Nestling in against the banks of the lake on Gunton Park Estate can be found a water-powered saw mill that has been used by the estate for many years. It is believed to be the only working one in England. The lake provides the water to turn two waterwheels that produce enough power to drive the saw bench which in its heyday was able to cut a tree using four saw blades at once but now uses only one reciprocating blade.



The Mill before rethatching *Ruth Andrews (2007)*

The band of volunteers open the mill several times a year on open days and private parties can be catered for also. Thanks to a lottery grant the mill was able to be rethatched by two local brothers using local grown reeds from a Norfolk estate. What an excellent job they did and when you look on the inside the craftsmanship can truly be admired.



The saw bench



The head race from the lake
and the two waterwheels



Editor: With some other HMG members I visited the sawmill in 2007, where I photographed the crane (right) used to move logs.



Below is more information about the sawmill from their website
www.guntonparksawmill.co.uk

The third Lord Suffield who took over the estate in 1821 decided to build the watermill. With a considerable head of water behind the dam it made sense to use this as the power for the sawmill. The mill became a reality in 1824, a timber and thatch structure that housed a frame saw and an early circular saw. These were driven by separate waterwheels. The original circular saw was replaced by one from Holmes of Norwich.

Norfolk Industrial Archaeology Society were alerted to the parlous state of this unique mill and arranged a survey in 1976 and alerted the relevant bodies that action was needed if this historic artefact was to be preserved for the future. Soon Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Windmills Trust, and Norfolk Industrial Archaeology Society had drawn up a plan to preserve both the saw and building for future generations.



The belt drive

A small corn mill which enabled the estate to produce its own flour. The card reads:

CORN or GRIST Mill
1868 Bought from Ransome & Sims,
Ipswich, price £60
1952 Last used.

