

Lincolnshire Windmills, May 2019

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HMG's recent study tour to Lincolnshire managed to visit 4 outwardly quite similar windmills in 3 days. This was really interesting experience, as it enabled us to compare the different strategies employed to attract funding and visitors. The mills shared similar fortunes and misfortunes which allowed these giants of their type to avoid the usual fate of dereliction and house conversion.

Moulton Windmill: At 9 storeys and 100ft to the top of its ogee cap, this is the tallest mill we visited. It was built in 1822 with a large adjacent granary and it is grade 1 listed. It has 4 double-sided patent sails, a fantail, and a reefing stage. The sails were removed after gale damage in 1894, at which time a steam mill with a 2-sack Turner roller mill was installed in the granary. Inevitably the mill fell into disrepair.

In 2003 the mill featured in the first series of BBC2's *Restoration* programme. It won a large HLF grant, and the Friends of Moulton Mill were able to restore and refurbish the mill's structure and add a new cap. The fan stage and the sails were restored in 2011.



The mill contains a good explanatory diagram (*left*) but it does highlight just how much ancillary machinery has not survived. The basement contains engine driven gearing which then ascends to a set of stones (*right*) on the first floor. Note the unusual stones furniture. The roller mill seems to have vanished without trace.



At present, I suspect that the café in the granary is more popular than the mill itself.



Heckington Windmill: This was built in 1830 as a 5-sailed windmill, but it was destroyed in a severe thunderstorm and then repaired in 1892 using a cap and 8 sails from Skirbeck Windmill in Boston, dating from 1813. Some of the Skirbeck bricks were also used for the adjacent mill house. The mill ceased working in 1846 and was acquired by Kesteven County Council in 1953, being restored in 1986 and 2004. It is now owned by Lincolnshire County Council and run by Heckington Windmill Trust volunteers. The mill shares its site with an award-winning micro-brewery, which attracts more customers than the mill.



Wholemeal flour is at present being produced on a pair of free-standing Derbyshire gritstones, mounted on a hurst frame by H Onyon of Sleaford, and powered by a Ruston & Hornsby oil engine housed in an adjacent cart shed.



The millstone on the left at Heckington is made from a single piece of French burr. On the right is a grey stone of black lava from Mayen near Cologne, hence the alternative name 'cullen' or blue stone. It is dressed to run anti-clockwise and comes from Dobson Windmill, which is unusual because its sails rotate clockwise.

Dobson Windmill, Burgh-le-Marsh: This grade 1 listed 5-storey windmill was probably built in 1813, although the mill tower was not completed until 1844. It worked commercially until 1964. It is unusual because its 5 single-sided patent sails rotate clockwise, driving 2 pairs of grey stones and one pair of French burrs. The mill was purchased by the local council in the 1960s and refurbished with a new cap and sails in 2014. It is now run by Burgh-le-Marsh Heritage Group, which also has a small and interesting heritage museum in some of the ancillary buildings. This is the only mill of the four that doesn't have a reefing stage.



Maud Foster Windmill, Boston: Picturesquely situated by the River Witham in the middle of the town, it was built in 1819 and has 5 single-sided patent sails. The adjacent granary and bakehouse was built in 1820, and later a steam engine to power a bone mill was added, but the business failed in 1833. From 1914 to 1948 it ran successfully until the windmill became inoperable. It was finally rescued in 1987 by the present owners who had totally repaired it by 1998. This is the only commercially operating windmill that we visited. Perhaps fortunately there was not enough wind for milling so we were able to look round.



Everything was covered in flour as seen below on this Stamford Stone Mill – and the 'Henry' next to it.



All the mills we visited had stones which were overdrift (driven from above) via a square quant (stone spindle). These photos taken at Maud Foster show that instead of using a damsel grain was scattered into the eye of the stone by a small piece of wood mounted on the shoe which rubbed against the quant as it rotated. In the photo on the left this piece of wood has recently been turned round and the worn surface can be seen on the right.



This gives a possible explanation as to why the mill was full of flour: the tuns do not completely enclose the stones.