

Mapledurham Mill Visit

Alison Stott

On what turned out to be the hottest day of the year members of HMG converged at Mapledurham on the afternoon of Thursday 25 July. The mill was the last commercially working watermill on the River Thames: it is situated within the country estate which has a Grade 1 listed Elizabethan house – lived in by the same family for 500 years – and a 14th century church with a long and fascinating history.

The miller, Corry, welcomed us and as it was so hot we all gathered in the church where he told us many fascinating tales of the history of the family and the estate and church. The estate has several different enterprises including providing a huge campsite for Reading Festival revellers; also the slurry produced by their herd of 800-1000 cows is mixed with chopped maize (grown on the estate) to fuel a biomass heating system.

The family who own the estate are Catholic and the church has a division inside marking off one part of it as Catholic with the rest of the church being Church of England! Having very much enjoyed the miller's most entertaining stories from the past we all walked down to the riverside and the mill.

Records show that there has been a mill on this site for 1000 years. The central section is 13th century; in the mid-18th century a wharf was constructed to supply refined (white) flour to London by barge. Now the mill has one waterwheel and regularly produces flour – except when the Thames floods and the water enters the mill. In 2011 an Archimedes screw was installed on the side of the mill, originally to produce electricity for the main house, but now in fact all the electricity is sold directly into the national grid. Another unusual side line is that the mill has been used as the setting for several films, including the famous *The Eagle has Landed*; all these films produce royalties whenever they are shown!

This was a particularly delightful visit. The miller was a most enthusiastic and interesting guide, and at the end of the afternoon we walked along to a nearby barn where a delicious cream tea was laid out for us by the miller's wife Jane.



Alan Cullen

