

One-Piece French Burr Millstones

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Background

Monolith millstones were the principle product of La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, France until the early 1800's. Around 1835¹ there was a pronounced change in production to millstones constructed from a number of stone blocks (French burr stones) rather than them being of one piece.

Whilst researching material on millstones for my soon to be released book "Watermills & Stoneground Flour Milling", I came across a booklet by Owen Ward,² in which it stated that La Ferté monoliths are rare outside of France. However, there was mention of one being on show in Heckington Windmill, Lincolnshire. I emailed Heckington Windmill Trust to inquire if the stone was still on view. My intention being to visit the mill at some time in the future to view this rarity.

In response, Jim Bailey kindly confirmed that it was still there and very helpfully sent me some pictures. Jim has agreed to share these with 'HMG Newsletter' readers. The stone is exactly 4ft (1220mm) in diameter and averages 10.5in (267mm) in thickness +/- 0.25in (6.35mm). It is banded and has a rhynd in the eye.

Owen suggested that the Heckington example probably came from the nearby long-converted watermill of Ashby-by-Partney.

Do readers know of another whole or part monolithic example in the UK? Please do email me at (nigel.harris1@virgin.net) if you have any information.

Ref 1. Ward, O.H. 1982 Millstones from La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, France. Industrial Archaeological Review. Vol 6, No. 3, p206

Ref 2. Ward, O. 1993 French Millstones, Notes on the Millstone Industry at La Ferté-sous-Jouarre. The International Molinological Society. ISBN 9291340189, p27

