

New Training for Matt the Miller

David Plunkett

Mathew Painter has been appointed the new miller at Eling Tide Mill, undertaking training with David Plunkett. Training started on Monday 10th March between Matt and me with all the obvious health and safety considerations, work clothing and familiarisation of this tidal mill and contents. I had also brought my expanding Training Manual which was to be slowly extracted and acted upon over the first four days of rigorous training. Safe access within the tidal undercroft and water wheel was also completed on this first day.

The second day was shared between Patrick Appleby (MD of Botley Mills) and me, with Matt's first time, hands-on milling, producing quality wholemeal and analysing the results by sieve analysis. Knowing why the "grade of flour" produced is of such great importance is an essential part of training. Knowing what makes a good loaf of bread is another. A list of good practical publications for millers was issued - with print outs from my Training Manual.

Day three commenced with Patrick having a "one to one" session with Matt on 'identifying pests and deceases', followed by 'what to look out for when buying grain' to 'moisture content and conditioning of wheat for milling'.

There then followed another session of milling under lower head conditions and incoming tide. Knowing how to maintain optimum rate of milling with varying tide conditions is an art in a tide mill.

Day four was without Patrick so, only the two of us. We re-capped on what had been taught on previous days and went over some technicalities (more than once) to be sure that they were instilled, to gauge importance and recall.

A tide mill is a powerful machine and in the wrong hands, can do immense damage.

Good maintenance is essential so all aspects of care for this tide mill must be instilled during training.

Training continues with Matt (usually on a weekly basis) and his professionalism is coming though with good commitment and a willingness to tackle almost any task asked of him. External training away from Eling Tide Mill, has been included. So, one day in June, we spent most of one day at Alderholt Mill, near Fordingbridge, with Richard Harte, learning how to operate his watermill and produce good wholemeal flour.

Repairs and maintenance at Eling Tide Mill are regularly required and Matt is now used to getting more than his hands dirty and crawling into confined spaces. I hope Matt succeeds and is a great benefit to Eling Tide Mill and the local community. Due to the poor quality of repairs contracted by NFDC in 2012-13, the water wheel has been difficult to control and safe operation during milling often had to stop.

As a result, flour production has been very low and has currently ceased. Earlier this August, on three consecutive, very early mornings, HMG volunteers helped Matt, me and John Hurst to expose parts of the water wheel and breastwork, to define the true details and dimensions of

the sluice gate seating. With the addition of a sectional drawing, a report has been passed to both Eling Experience and NFDC.



Part of the Team: (L to R) John Hurst, Mick Edgeworth, Dave Hibbert, Matt Painter

Other Volunteers were: Nigel Smith, Ivor New, and (of course) David Plunkett