

John Silman's Presidential Diary Notes

FEBRUARY

4th Went on a trip around the New Forest with Andy to check the mills out for volume 2 in our new book series. We were lucky (or persistent) enough to be invited into the Fordingbridge Museum (which was officially closed for redecoration) by a lady called Mrs Seaman to look at their collection of mill details and photographs. We found this very useful indeed. Later we went to various mill sites to verify if they were still there. As a piece of industrial archaeology, we also went to see a farm suspension bridge. A suspension bridge in the New Forest - how many of our members know of its existence? Not many, I'll bet, but it can be found on a footpath route across Burgate Farm. Thanks, Andy, for an altogether very enjoyable day.

9th. On a personal note, workmen today finished repairing and rebuilding our central heating unit so that we can at last turn heat on. Margaret and I have spent five weeks without the heating system in the coldest weather for years. Thanks to Mick and Andy for the loan of portable electric heaters.

21st and 23rd. Spent these two days checking on Mills with Mick, again for volume 2 of the new publication series. A very enjoyable two days including visiting three mills in Hampshire I have never seen before!



MARCH

2nd With Mick to Bere Mill near Whitechurch, to inspect the Gilkes turbine in the mill belonging to our member Rupert Nabarro. Minor adjustments were carried out and we hope that Rupert may be able to encourage visitors to the mill over National Mills weekend in May as his gardens will also be open then.

5th. I contacted Alison Davidson at Winchester planning department with reference to possible help with woodworm treatment and other repairs needed at Hockley Mill.

6th. Attended Bursledon Windmill committee meeting.

13th. Spoke to Hamble Valley U3A on the subject of milling history.

16th Attended a very good presentation on the history of the Itchen Navigation given by Bishopstoke History Society.

17th. HMG meeting at Ashlett Tide Mill. Good meeting at a good venue but a bit out of the way for members coming from North Hampshire as it is right next to the Fawley oil refinery, but worth the drive to see this lovely old building and the small harbour beside it. When you are there you don't see anything of the refinery site so it still appears restful and rural.

19th To Hockley mill to meet Helen Parvin, from the Winchester planning department. We discussed various repairs plus looked at the evidence of woodworm; hope they are recommended for a grant.

26th Went with Mick Edgeworth and Dave Plunkett to Kingsley Mill, Bordon, to see Richard Hills regarding Environment Agency instructions for particular work on the watercourses affecting the mill.

28th Gave a talk about postcard history to the citizens of Pudbroke House in Botley. My favourite period is that of 1900 to 1910 when so many good quality artistic landscapes were created on postcards (mostly printed in Bavaria). I have concentrated on collecting Hampshire scenes.

APRIL

11th With Mick to finish off research volume 2 of the 'Mills and Millers' to visit Sherfield English Mill and Wellow Mill. Thanks Mick for accompanying me on this interesting trip.

12th To Longbridge Mill to check on progress of waterwheel repairs. Regrettably, no permission yet given by the owners.

18th To Woodley and Crampmore Group to give my talk on the British canal system.

28th Attended the annual SERIAC Conference for the day, this year held at Newbury. There were some good lectures on agricultural history, tools and their manufacture centred on the Reading area including talks by some of the people from MERL. Especially enjoyable was the talk by Mildred on the Mapledurham turbine installation and which I look forward to hearing again as we have booked her to give us this presentation at our summer meeting at Whitchurch Silk Mill. (The food was good too!)

MAY

4th Trustee meeting at Crux Easton wind engine.

12th A delightful, and largely sunny, day at Bere Mill along with Mick, Basil, Sheila and John (Mears) where we enlightened visitors to the mill about its history and how the turbine created power for equipment at Laverstoke Paper Mill, a couple of miles up the road. The gardens were open under the National Gardens Scheme. We were joined by John Christmas as we had our lunch in the meadow on the opposite bank to the mill and Rupert very kindly brought us liquid refreshment which was very much appreciated – although one or two of us had to ensure steady feet going back over the little bridge!



Mapledurham turbine, and discussing Bere's hefty iron sluice controls with John Mears



Basil and John at Longbridge

Sheila took all three photographs.

*Images above: Official Fordingbridge Sign and Fordingbridge Museum © HantsC.C.
www.fordingbridgemuseum.co.uk.*

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