

National Mills Weekend at Bere Mill near Whitchurch.



They say that all good things come in threes, and so it is with the ageless scene presented by Mrs Deane's Bere Mill. The widow of Thomas Deane, Jane had the mill and mill house built in 1710, each three storeys high (the mill house also has three bays) near Whitchurch. Henri Portal began leasing the mill in 1711 and used it as a paper mill; a record shows that in 1717 '*he insured his goods and merchandise in his dwelling house at Bere Mill.*' When Henri moved on to Laverstoke, Overton and Quidhampton Mills, to continue his papermaking successes, Bere Mill's operations changed to flour milling but, it seems, to the detriment of at least three of the next millers there, two of whom were imprisoned for debt. The last of the three, Earle Wedge, is listed as a '*miller and corn dealer bankrupt*'. The next entry is for 1897 where Bere Mill is offered for leasing along with Overton and Quidhampton Mills.

In 1905, a Gilkes Landheer turbine was fitted by Rowley Eastman's father at the behest of Lord Portal. It's 1901 design with 12 doors and blades turned at 22rpm, driving a generator of 440v DC 40A. The resulting power, transmitted via a Siemens Co-axial Concentric cable to the Laverstoke Paper Mill two miles away, was used for a paper glazing machine. In the 1930s the cable was sold to supply cable to St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall. Armfields reconditioned the turbine in 1948 and Rowley Eastman rewound the generator to provide power to the house and mill. It is still used today and has been given some maintenance recently by HMG members, Mick Edgeworth, Basil Hunt and John Silman.

On Sunday, 12th May, several HMG members attended the mill to relate the history to visitors who were also taking advantage of enjoying the gardens which the owners, Rupert and Elizabeth Nabarro, opened to the public under the National Gardens Scheme combined with National Mills Weekend. Seeing inside the mill was a rare treat relished by many local people who

regaled us with their own tales last of whom, but no means least, of these were the Whitchurch Mayor and Mayoress, Barry and Janet Jackman.



These photos:1 &.2. Mick Edgeworth has a rapt audience as he describes the turbine and generator controls. 3. With the Mayor and Mayoress.

Top photographs are: the rear of Bere Mill with tail race; the iron sluice controls; a quiet lunchtime chat with our host.

Text and photographs by Sheila Viner with grateful thanks to our hosts and acknowledgement of HMG for Bere Mill Notes.