

Presidential Notes

By John Silman

We are reprinting entries from 1999 as they have a wealth of interesting, industrious actions carried out by our erstwhile President, then Chairman, John Silman. The winter has seen a lull in his activities whilst he recharges his batteries with inactivity enforced by the harsh weather.

JANUARY 1999

Early Jan : *Still problems with Titchfield Mill. Fareham Boro' Council's planning committee has oked the work on the sluices & waterwheels without making Bass Leisure get the outer wheel to turn! The specification issued by the quantity surveyors on the job is almost laughable! No materials are specified – i.e. thickness of steel or type of steel! And it talks about “decorating” the wheel on completion.*

16th *Have received invitation from H.C.C. Countryside Division (Councillor Alan Rice T.D.) to attend reception for the partners in Chase Mill's Raphael scheme grant in the Castle at Winchester. Delighted to accept on behalf of all members of HMG. Spoke to Patrick Appleby who has agreed to give further milling course(s?) in April/May time at Longbridge Mill. SPAB Mills Section newsletter arrived today. Seems mostly to be by members of HMG!! Two articles by Tony Yoward: 1 on Dock Mills, Portsmouth and 1 on Ergot (both having first seen the light in our newsletter!). I assume that Mary Yoward did the review of group newsletters and finally the Watermill Meeting Report was written by Jeff Hawksley. That's rather more than a quarter of the newsletter. Well done all of you.*

17th *The joint SUIAG/HMG “Heavy Gang” is again working at the Man Wheel at Wellhouse Lane at Beech near Alton. Today we have to put new boards in the sole plate; replace one of the wheel's arms, replace many oak dowels, finish cleaning and levelling the floor of the wheelhouse and remove the worm infested and rotten softwood cladding. **Later:** Sole boards not done but dowels replaced and interior of wheelhouse cleaned up. Softwood rotten outer cladding all removed and burnt mainly by Barry “Bonfire” Duke and his daughter Christa. John Hone & George Jones working on replacement arm for wheel. Good lunch snack in “The French Horn” pub in Alton.*

18th *Was given phone no. of Dave Tilbury a member of Bishopstoke Parish Council -contacted him ref a possible millennium project to restore Bishopstoke Mill Turbines (they have some cash for this project.)*

19th *Lecture on “History of Milling” to Titchfield Local History Soc. Gave them current position on Titchfield Mill.*

23rd *Delighted to receive today a charming card from Edith Barreau in return for our letter of thanks following our visit to Limousin in October!! She also thanks us very much for the, in her words, “Marvellous Flowers” we sent after we returned. She also says that work will start on the Moulin du Got very soon!*

24th *John Christmas volunteered to have Chase Mill turning slowly (not grinding) when the Raphael party return to the mill at 3pm on Thursday next.*

28th In company with Ruth Andrews, John Christmas, Rupert Dawnay, Patrick Appleby & Mick Edgeworth we represented the group at the Civic Reception for the European Members of the Raphael Group Grant that includes Chase Mill. Very pleasant evening at the Castle Winchester and Jeremy was kind enough to give us praise for work carried out at Chase Mill in his presentation during the evening. Hope this raised our profile with the Hampshire County Council Members present!!

30th Following her chat with John Vear, have arranged with Sister Helen Saberton of Southampton General Hospital to address the Amandus Club at the General on 27th October, 8pm. Have also agreed to speak to patients & friends at Countess Mountbatten House West End on 24th March at 1.45. Both venues asked for "History of Water & Windmills". Spent day with the two ladies of the Italian Delegation from the Raphael Project, Peter Potts and Christine from the Hampshire Countryside Commission. Visited Hockley Mill, Botley Mill and Eling Mill. They (the Italians) were very impressed.

31st. Heavy Gang working at Beech wheel house again. John Christmas had delivered the wood for the cladding earlier in the week and we were able to get straight on with replacing this on the four sides. It sounds simple just to cut wood to size & nail it on, but it takes longer than you think. We hoped to finish today but I think at least 2 more visits will be necessary.

FEBRUARY

2nd To Eling Mill this morning with Mick & Rupert to take out the ancilliary machinery no longer required there for transfer to Chase Mill as a working exhibit. **Later:** Phew!! Very hard work for the 3 of us plus Brenda and Guillaume (for SubAcoustic). All equipment taken out of Eling Tide Mill transported to Chase Mill and stored there ready for re-erection on new floor when it is ready. **Later still:** Letter of acceptance from Midhurst Probus Club confirming my lecture to them on "History of Wind & Watermills" for Tuesday 3rd August 1999; should result in another donation to HMG's funds. **Even later:** Talked to Wickham History Society on the subject of "Milling History". Well received by 45 people apparently the biggest number they have had. Another cheque towards HMG funds.

3rd Further work at Chase Mill with Mick Edgeworth and Ruth Andrews. All parts of all equipment are now on the first floor of Chase Mill. We were all very shocked by the sad and sudden death of Robin Nedwell the actor brother of Jeremy Nedwell. On behalf of all members of the group I sent a letter of condolence to Jeremy & his family.

3rd FEBRUARY Continued Further work at Chase Mill with Mick Edgeworth and Ruth Andrews. All parts of all equipment are now on the first floor of Chase Mill. We were all very shocked by the sad and sudden death of Robin Nedwell the actor brother of Jeremy Nedwell. On behalf of all members of the group I sent a letter of condolence to Jeremy & his family. **Later:** Phone call from an old friend Gwen Houghton saying she was coming to my lecture on "Mills & Milling" at Botley Historical Soc. on 19th March. I was immediately in a state of panic as I had no record of this engagement!! Contacted their lecture secretary who confirmed that I am speaking on 19th. So, Mick will have to take the A.G.Meeting at Longbridge Mill. **Later still:** Another phone call from Gwen Houghton of Durley to say she has now obtained translations of the Rent Books of the Lords of the Manor of Waltham for 1330 to 1464 and 1630 to 1693. There's lots about mills in them. I'm going to see them tomorrow.

4th With Margaret to see Gwen Houghton at Durley and sure enough she has translations of Rent Books and Pipe Rolls going back to 1208!! This is undoubtedly a labour of love for all has been

translated from Latin or Norman/French for our benefit. We are taking off all the relevant information on Mills. Mary has done this using her expertise in local history – many thanks to her. There appeared to be 4 mills on the Hamble adjacent to Durley 3 cornmills & 1 Fulling Mill.

5th With Margaret to Slipper Mill to meet Tony Y & Mary Y to show Gwen Houghton's Durley material. Then with Tony to meet John Hinton, Commodore of Bosham Sailing Club. Clubhouse is ex-Bosham Mill; it still has two overshot waterwheels under a common launder. Inspected these from above and arranged to come back with the "Heavy Gang" for a full survey of what's left. It is very like Chase Mill in power layout but with overshot wheels instead of pitchbacks. Delivered model windmills to Bob at Botley Mill & returned slides of Chase Mill to Brenda Potheary.

6th Very disappointing report in the Hampshire Chronicle on the meeting of the various Raphael members - just a picture of Chase Mill and a bald report that members of mill groups from England, France, Italy & Slovenia had met together in Bishop's Waltham and Winchester to discuss their common problems in restoration. ~ This in contrast to all the photographs taken showing the leaders meeting at Chase Mill and the Castle Winchester.

8th To Gwen Houghton at Durley to return her material from the 13th, 14th & 15th century having had permission to copy same. Wonderful stuff proving that in the 13th century Durley had not 2 but 4 mills including a fulling mill! Spoke by phone with David Nichols of The Chiltern Partnership and arranged with him to meet at Longbridge Mill at 11am on Sat 13th to find out the quirks in the mill machinery prior to our operating the mill. Phone call from John Lovell (SUIAG) a very good friend who advises me that he is meeting the new owner of Greatham Mill tomorrow. In case Cindy has not told him of the group I arranged for John to advise him of HMG's existence and the details of how we can help.

9th To see Gwen Houghton again ref the four mills on the Hamble river in Durley (called in 1200 The Lord Bishops River). She has lent me further translated pipe rolls and rent books giving further details also two photographs of Durley Mill to copy for our records. To see Patrick Appleby ref visit to Longbridge Mill on Sat. and meeting with David Nichols.

10th Copied Pipe Rolls and had laser copies made of details on Durley Mills. Went to Eling Tide Mill to assist Mick Edgeworth, Ruth Andrews & Rupert Dawnay (the Wednesday Gang) in dismantling and removing Fountain Mixer & line shafting to go to Chase Mill. I was I admit not very much help as I arrived late and had to leave early. Surprised to see that the tidal pond containing quite brackish water was frozen over! Must have been a pretty cold night?

11th 7.30pm phone call from Burrridge Community Assoc. asking me to speak at their AGM on 14th April on "History of Mills". Accepted. Advised by Peter Potter that a friend of his has bought Shawford Mill as a base for an Eco Company. Delighted to hear this.

12th Invitation in post to the launch of the new "preserved power" leaflet at Whitchurch Silk Mill on Wednesday 3rd March at 11am. Replied accepting invitation and asking for 3 more places. County Museum Service are arranging all details. 10am to Bursledon to look at Mrs Woodhouse's fallen windpump in Kew Lane. It's a long way from any metalled road about 20 – 25ft tall or was before it fell over. S.C.A.T.S. or D.A.N.D.O. type; very rusty tower but still some useful angle iron. Wind wheel bent by fall. None of the original 18 wind vanes present. Gearbox at top & pump at bottom worth getting out. Wellhead or tankhead need inspecting for safety. Appears to be a no. of possibly Victorian bottles around wellhead. Spoke to JC and put it on the list.

13th *Spent a very enjoyable day with Patrick Appleby, Mick Edgeworth & John Christmas at Longbridge Mill with David & Geoff of the Chiltern Partnership learning the wrinkles in operating the mill; also made arrangements with Sheena Archer for the AGM at the mill. We are having the meeting in half of the upstairs restaurant. A very useful & enjoyable day in preparation for us operating the mill for milling courses and for open days.*

14th *To Beech Barns Wellhouse for more repairs to the house. Completed the side facing the garden with 4" (nominal) larch nailed or screwed on. John Hone with help from George Jones and John Christmas completed replacing oak ribs in the wheel itself. Mick Edgeworth, Ruth Andrews & your chairman worked on the larch planks.*