

## Presidential Notes by John Silman



**Friday 29<sup>th</sup> January** I spoke to Eastleigh's Hard of Hearing Club. We talked about the "History of the Postcard" and I promised to return later for further examples.

### FEBRUARY

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup>** HMG's committee Meeting at Ashley Close by kind permission of Keith and Ruth.

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup>** Attended with Mick, Andy and Alison, an excellent lecture on Portsmouth Dockyards' "Block Mills and the Optigon". These Block Mills are inside the Dockyard and are an early experiment with the mass production of blocks for the sailing navy. A typical ship of the line (of battle) had some 1,000 blocks in its rigging and for handling things like cannons and barricoes (pronounced breaker) of water. The Optigon was a building which enabled unskilled workers to be watched over making parts for the blocks while not permitted to speak to or communicate with their workmates. A very interesting lecture.

**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup>** Project Manager, John Christmas, and John Bardwell of No. 4 house at Hockley Mill, the farmer of the land surrounding the mill, and myself, met to discuss whether we can repair and re-align the control gates of the head-race at the mill. An amicable meeting resulted in a request for further quotations from the farmer (who is the riparian owner) with more details of exactly what needs doing to complete the job. John, Carol and I then proceeded independently to Longbridge Mill for the monthly milling plus for work to take place to remove two timbers which had come down the river in recent rains. By the time that we arrived, Basil and Fred had removed the medium sized tree and disposed of it; the second item was a different story, being about 4' - 6' of the trunk of a very large tree, with the centre rotted out, which had been in the water and mud for a very long time. Using his 'Turfir' winch John and Gavin, Andy, Fred and Carol, eventually brought the trunk out of the river and it was swiftly dealt

with by John's chainsaw. Mick, Sheila and I watched all this activity from the not very warm mill and produced some good flour for the restaurant to sell. A very successful day all round. My thanks to all concerned.

## **MARCH**

**Thursday 4<sup>th</sup>** Following a phone call from Basil, some of us again attended Longbridge Mill to remove yet another large lump of tree which had come down the river. (Who is throwing these timbers in?) This time one large and several smaller timbers, covered in mud, had arrived in our headrace. The usual crew got them out and cut them up. After all this activity, a well deserved and excellent lunch was enjoyed in the restaurant.

**Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup>** I was invited by Mick to say a few words about the HMG "on air" to Radio Solent's Morning Show. So, I sat at home today waiting to be interviewed with some notes. I hope I sounded okay. The problem now is that the Group is interested in such a wide variety of subjects that three minutes goes by in a flash and afterwards you think, "Oh, I forgot this and that." I apologise if I missed your particular interest.

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup>** Following our decision to rewrite and expand the book, *Water & Windmills of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*, Mick Eleanor, Alison and I began the task of revisiting the rivers and mills of the county. This time we hope to expand the information given and to include other interesting items such as Donkey or Man wheels and animal engine houses. We began by looking at the mills of the River Meon. Our reception varied from the pleasant and welcoming to quite short shrift from one mill. We worked down as far as Chesapeake Mill at Wickham to discover that the mill (now a collection of small shops) had recently opened an excellent history room with a fine potted history of the ship and the battle! Do go and have a look, the coffee shop is also very good. Eleanor has gathered in the information and photographs and will let Tony have the results for analysis.

**Friday 12<sup>th</sup>** I had the pleasure of accepting an invitation from Peter Hill, Chairman of Sussex Mills Group, to address their Annual General Meeting held at West Blatchington Mill, on the subject of Hampshire Mills. As **Hove** is a fair way from Chandlers Ford, Peter and Joan invited me to stay at their delightful home, just down the road from West Blatchington Mill. Thank you Joan and Peter for your kind hospitality!

**Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup>** Tony and I drove to Devizes to talk to the Wiltshire Family History Organisation on Industrial Archaeology. A very pleasant evening.

**Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup>** Spoke on the History of Wind and Watermills to Liphook Modellers Club. Some difficulty in finding the venue, but a very nice crowd who handed me a cheque towards our restoration work.

**Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup>** I was contacted by Basil as he was having difficulty in obtaining suitable grease, equivalent to Castrol CL, for the bearings of Longbridge Mill.

**Friday 26<sup>th</sup>** After quite a lot of research I placed an order for 12½ kgs of ES Grease from Total-Butler Ltd., in Southampton, and arranged for Mick to take grease to Longbridge on next milling day.

**Monday 28<sup>th</sup>** Attended Crux Easton Committee Meeting.

## **APRIL**

**Saturday 10th** Thanks to Andy who drove some of us to Caversham in Reading, and arranged the the day's visit; where we boarded our boat for the journey to Mapledurham House and Mill. We travelled up the Thames (and back) on the "Devon Belle" - a little ship that went to the beaches of Dunkirk

At Mapledurham Mill we met Mildred Cookson who was running the mill machinery to dress some milled wholemeal flour. Afterwards, we went into church which, over two aisles, serves the needs of CofE and RCS. I freely admit that I indulged in the "Special" which was scones and cream at their café. The weather was kind both up-river and down and all who went enjoyed the day.

**Saturday 17th** With Alison to the South Wales and West I.A. Conference at Cheltenham. We found some other members of H.I.A.S. attending. Quite an interesting programme. The meeting was followed by various visits. We decided to go to Saul Junction on the Glos. And Sharpness Canal, where the Stroudwater Canal crosses the Ship Canal. Unfortunately, the guide did not show up. Nevertheless we had a look around and returned via the Golden Valley to Cirencester. Alison acted as our driver and I enjoyed a delightfully smooth journey, thank you Alison.

**Saturday 24th** A bus full of members, and others who went independently, enjoyed the SERIAC annual conference; held this year at Chertsey. Very well organised, we were treated to a series of excellent lectures. I think I enjoyed best a railway talk on the Trains of the Devils Dyke, but all were very good. How pleasant not to drive. Thanks again Andy, for organising and driving.

**Thursday 29th** A sad day for all our members, being the funeral of Bill Allford at St Mary's Church, Eastrop. Ever since Basil brought Bill to Longbridge on a milling day, Bill became an enthusiastic team member; his speciality being working with Sheila on the finished product. Bill and his lovely family came visited the mill and we were always delighted to see them. Bill was a man of many sides and all of these were to help anyone who needed it. Sheila, who worked with Bill, has written an appreciation of his life which appears in this newsletter. Thank you Sheila.

**Friday 30th** I addressed the Farnborough U3A on the subject of the History of the Postcard. This resulted in a donation for the Group.

## **MAY**

**Tuesday 4th** Mick and I commenced chipping and wire brushing the repaired pit wheel at Hockley Mill. Quite a lot of rust flakes on the wheel but the repairs by Tony and John Christmas have been so well done that when we've chipped and painted the wheel I think it will be difficult to tell where the repairs have been carried out. Thanks John and Tony.

**Sunday 9th** Attended Hockley Mill for Mills Open Day. Gavin and I spent some time in clearing the head race of weed floating on the surface of the water and Alison and Basil pulled out as much of the growth as possible. We must soon try to get out some of the silt building up in front of the control sluice. A delightful pair of yellow wagtails appear to be prospecting for a nest site in and around the mill. A pair seems to nest here most years.

**Tuesday 11th** Further work by Mick and I on Hockley's pit wheel. Getting the wheel to stop revolving on the small amount of leakage by the control sluice is a problem. Perhaps more hands might do the trick! Any other volunteers??

**Friday 14<sup>th</sup>** To Tony Yoward's to scrounge the loan of some slides for a talk to Southampton Canal Society, due to take place in early June.