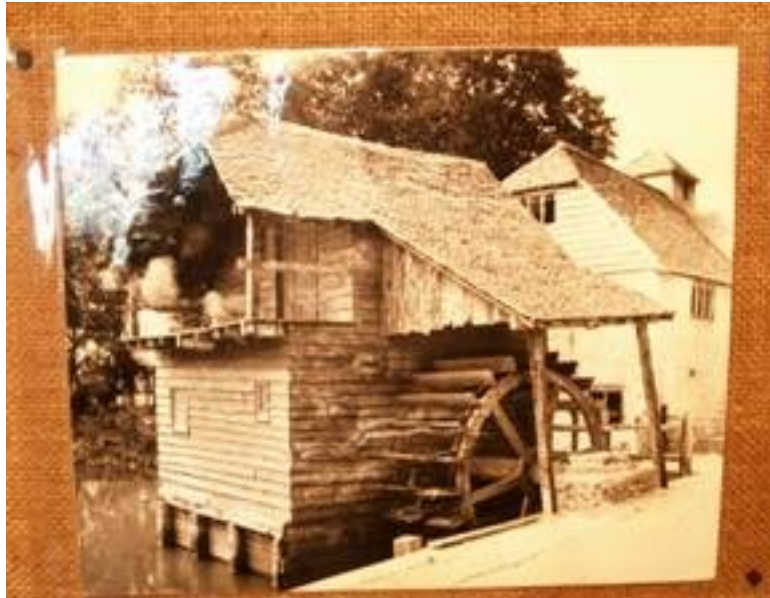


A Day Out on the Thames

Trip report by Tony Yoward



Arriving at Caversham Bridge we were pleasantly surprised to find that there was not a charge in the car park. About twenty members of the Hampshire Mills Group boarded the boat and noticed a plaque stating that she was one of the fleet of small boats that went to the Dunkirk beaches in 1940 to bring our soldiers back to England.

A pleasant trip up the river looking at the desirable residences and then on our left watching the trains passing on the GWR main line from London to the west, which is one of Brunel's great achievements, unfortunately not a single Castle or other steam locomotive appeared; sadly, you cannot have everything but we were to get a watermill, a grand house and a cream tea.

The boat moored at the island below Mapledurham weir on which the mill stands. Waiting there to greet us was the miller, Mildred Cookson, and we were soon inside the working mill and being told all about the machinery, the history of the mill and how high the water came in during the winter months. After checking the quality of the flour compared with ours at Longbridge we wandered all over the mill, looking at the exhibits.

There were pictures of the mill when it was being used as a film set for "The Eagle Has Landed," a 1976 film about German paratroopers who had taken over the village dressed as Polish soldiers with the intention of kidnapping Winston Churchill who was nearby. I well remember the film and the lovely shots of the mill and the wheel working but then disappointment, to find that the film set had been a replica mill and wheel, constructed in front of the real mill.

Having spent nearly an hour in the mill and purchased some flour, 85% and 100%, I went outside to look at Mildred's 1100 which she had brought along – it is in lovely condition and just looking at it took me back to memories of many decades ago.

I wandered off to find many of our group were already enjoying their scones and cream outside the café – I found the scones were a little on the heavy side, not quite like Grandma used to bake!

Others went on a trip around the house or visited the church, which also had appeared in the film, and wandered across to look at the weir – lots of photographs were taken and then it was time to go. The boat returned, we boarded for a very leisurely trip back to Caversham Bridge and were surprised how many boats and cruisers were also out on the river for an evening trip.

Then back home having had a marvellous day out capped by the only working mill on the River Thames. Thank you Mildred for spending so much time explaining everything and to Andy for organising it all.

