

A Visit to Hockley Mill

We had made several attempts before to visit this Grade II Listed Watermill near Twyford, but always managed to overshoot the tiny turning in the mistaken belief that it “couldn’t possibly be down there.” Well, that can be half the fun of finding mills and discovering their settings – for each one appears to be unique. So it was with Hockley Mill, and we weren’t disappointed for the view which opened before us as we ventured down the track was a delightful surprise.



Hockley Mill, photo L N Smith

Our first successful visit was made on January 1st this year when the whole of the county was gripped in freezing temperatures but, despite the intense cold, we were given a cheery welcome by a very noble band of stalwarts: Angela and Nigel Smith, Mick Edgeworth and Alison Stott. (Never did find out what their flasks contained!) The free Heritage King Alfred Bus Service, run from Winchester, brought plenty of visitors in regular successive waves whilst some people called in because they were walking the River Itchen Heritage Trail.

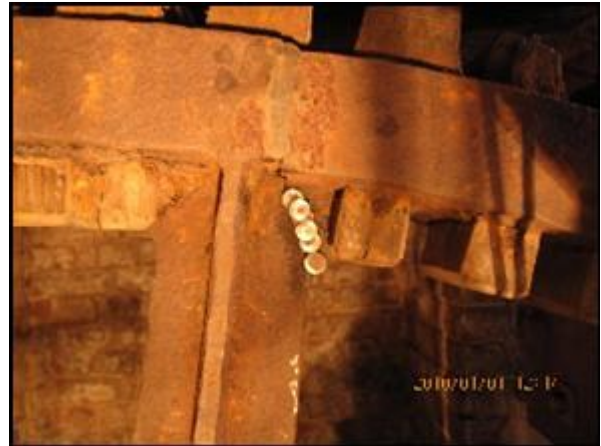
Sited on a leat which runs for about half a mile from the River Itchen, this mill is a rare specimen as it was designed to drive farm machinery by water. Both mill and attached seven bay barn date from the early nineteenth century. The adjoining barns now form residential apartments and therefore it is not expected that the mill will be allowed to operate fully again, although all of its machinery is in situ.

Recent repairs in the form of stitching have been made to the cracks in the metal pit wheel so that the wheel can be turned, although disconnected from the other working machinery. The Hampshire Mills Group funded this repair and it was satisfying to see the end product of much debate over the past couple of years. We salute our HMG committee for saving this important part of southern England’s agricultural milling heritage and presenting it so faithfully for the interest and education. And we recommend you to visit Hockley Mill on its next open day.

Text: Sheila Miles Viner and John Mears.



Above Alison, Nigel, Mick and Angela at Hockley Mill on New Year's Day photo Sheila Miles Viner



Right Cracked Pit Wheel showing recent repair by stitching, funded by the Hampshire Mills Group