

The Third Annual Historic Tide Mill Conference - Boston, U.S.A. 2007

Since my days of practical tide mill research within the states of Maryland and Virginia, back in the early 1980's, I have known and fostered an interest in the eastern seaboard tide mills of the USA. I have made good friends with a number of like-minded people from Virginia up to the northern state of Maine. I was therefore most pleased to hear a few years ago of the formation of the Tide Mill Institute fostered, in part, by the Dorchester Historical Society based in the south of the City of Boston. I had been invited to attend the two years previously, but always had to decline. November 2007 was to change that.

I had arrived in Boston from London on Hallowe'en Night and had been warned to stay clear of Salem that night due to the monster festivities which increase the city population by 60,000. So, having collected the necessary hire car, I booked into a local hotel in north Boston for an uneventful night. The next day started late with a tourist perambulation on minor inland roads north to Rockport and its old fishing village and port. Following a light lunch I took in all the scenic views of this rocky coastline and its architectural history, before heading south via Manchester on Sea and Gloucester (both supporting tide mills years ago). I arrived in Salem at sunset, to stay with my good friend and conservation architect, John Goff.

The next day we drove down through the Boston Road Tunnels to the Souther Tide Mills at Quincy. In our usual mode (as we had been here before) we made our way around the insecure fencing and investigated the mill remains and foreshore, taking regular photographs enabled by the low tide. We uncovered a small piece of dressed millstone in the wharf retaining wall and took it into care, after measurements and photographs. While in Quincy area, I was shown the minor remains of the Black River tide mill site. So, on to Dorchester Historical Society on Boston Street where I met chairman, Earl Taylor and discussed the Conference the following day before heading to my local hotel.

Saturday 3rd November. I shared a breakfast table with Claudia Silveira, one of my fellow speakers at the Conference, whom I had last met in conjunction with the Tide Mills of Western Europe Exhibition. We were collected and taken to the Third Historic Tide Mill Conference venue on Boston Street - advertised as "Two Continents - One Technology. Tide Mills on both sides of the Atlantic".

The programme started at 9.00am with introductions by Earl Taylor and John Goff, leading into the first speaker (myself) with **'Searching for the Origins of the Tide Mill'**. Starting from the oldest known tide mill (Nendrum in Northern Ireland) and reaching back in time into the Phoenician trading ports and central Mediterranean Sea. It was a Powerpoint presentation which I had prepared and researched over the past ten years and had last presented it at the TIMS Symposium in Portugal. The following presentations were: Claudia Silveira from the Seixal Ecomuseu in Portugal with a Powerpoint presentation on the **'Tide Mills within the Estuaries of the Rivers Sado and Tagus, South of Lisbon'**. An area once containing an immense number of horizontal wheeled tidal mills. I feel this area will reveal more historical facts on tide mills in the future. My second presentation: **'Anglesey Tide Mills - A 2006 Assessment of Surviving Sites'**. Bill Drew of New Castle in the state of New Hampshire, speaking with colour slides about the **'1650 Walton Mill: The Mill in my Front Yard'**. Bob Goodwin from Maine next spoke about **'Excitement on Sedgunkedunk'** a newly found tide mill in Brewer, Maine.

There were shorter presentations on **Boat Mills** and an update from Carolyn Marks on the **'Friends of the Souther Tide Mill at Quincy'**, followed with news and developments by Bud Warren and John Goff as a taster for the mid afternoon site visit to the converted tide mill at Revere Beach Parkway, about 40 minutes drive away to the north of Boston. This was the **Slade Spice Mill** on Chelsea Creek; now an imposing, fine restoration into apartments and flats with the ground floor retaining much of its mill history, museological display and equipment. We talked in depth with the owner and one of the tenants, who all seemed satisfied with the outcome of this major restoration to a large timber-framed and clad, three storey tide mill with later brick additions incorporating a full sprinkler fire-fighting system.

Returning to the hotel in Dorchester, Claudia and I had a farewell meal in a fine, busy, local family restaurant whilst the rain hammered down for hours and we begged a free taxi ride back! So ended the 3rd Tide Mill Conference.

David Plunkett.