

From the Chattering Damsel at the Editor's Desk

Let's begin with a cheering letter from Ros Plunkett who stepped down from the Editorship last autumn after producing the newsletter for five years:

Dear Sheila,

I would like to thank the Committee and members of the Hampshire Mills Group for their many kind words and the gift of a garden token, following my "retirement" as Newsletter Editor. After a great deal of thought and "browsing" around Garden Centres, I purchased two 10ft long (pre-constructed) polytunnels which have already done sterling work keeping the pigeons and mice off some of my still tender brassicas. I expect to put them to very good use for many years to come!! Once again, very many thanks.

Kind regards - Ros

News of another Plunkett retiring - David - who has given so much time, energy, and dedication to bringing Eling Tide Mill to life; but, he hasn't finished there yet, oh no, as he is now teaching not only a new miller, but also a new manager of the whole Eling Experience, the particular nuances involved in successfully operating the only working Tide Mill in England. I'm sure you all join me in wishing Mr and Mrs P many happy retirement years. At the same time we welcome Helen Robinson (Eling Experience Manager) and Chris Blandford (Miller) to the Hampshire Mills arena. Helen hopes to attend our March meeting so we should have a good chance to get to know her.

So, on with the motley, you've got a lot of reading to do.

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We are indebted to Ruth Andrews for submitting the Stark Farm article and photographs which appeared in the Winter edition. Humble apologies are due as left off her name. *Very sorry, Ed.*

Alport Mill, Matlock, Derbyshire, is to be the first micro-hydropower scheme in the Peak District Reckoned to provide power for 70 per cent of homes in Alport Village - 30 homes - it was until recently housing a fish farm.

Beaulieu Tide Mill, Hampshire, has got the go ahead to commence repair work. Estate Land Agent, Rachel Pearson, said that the £300,000 scheme is scheduled to start in the spring with the aim to preserve as much of the original building and machinery as possible.

Brill Windmill, Buckinghamshire, said to be England's second oldest dated windmill, is to receive extensive conservation work and repairs finally agreed after protracted discussion and debate by Brill Windmill Management Group, Buckinghamshire County Council, Aylesbury Vale District Council and English Heritage. Despite the £560,000 funding, and all its machinery still intact, it cannot perform its basic function of milling, as a steel framework was put in to ensure its stability some years ago..

Cann Mills, Shaftesbury, Dorset lost its landmark Portuguese windmill which sat above this commercial flour mill. It had to make way for a raised roof to allow additional flooring.

Maud Foster Windmill, Boston, Lincolnshire, had a 37 feet long sail blown off during a gale in November. According to a newspaper report, quite the reverse happened in 1990 when severe storm winds “*snapped through the mill’s brake and set the machinery whirring. Almost 3 tonnes of flour produced in one night* “ Normally it took a week to mill that amount.

Shirley Windmill, Croydon, Surrey, has problems of another airborne kind. Ring necked Parakeets (now feral descendents from escapees many years ago) have turned their beak sharpening attentions from the parish church shingle roof to the windmill’s sails! Croydon Council are monitoring the situation whilst they consider what action could be taken to deter the birds.

Remember to let me know your mill news, of home or abroad, that we can add to the next newsletter.