

## Presidential Notes by John Silman



### NOVEMBER 2008

**13<sup>th</sup>** I was delighted to have the opportunity to address the “Friends of the Curtis Museum” at Alton, on the subject of The History of Milling. There was a very good attendance and I was given a generous cheque for HMG funds.

**24<sup>th</sup>** John Christmas (HMG Project Manager) and I met with a member of the Engineers Office at Eastleigh Borough Council, to learn what they wanted to do to the turbines of Bishopstoke Mill, since their visit to look at the occasional flooding problem experienced in heavy rainfall. They are proposing building a new wing wall outside the current wall on the lefthand side looking upstream. Removing the plethora of trees, large and small, that have grown up on site will be followed by the

removal and replacement of the existing trash screen; this should allow us to inspect the turbines from the working side. We also took the opportunity to explain in some detail how we hope to get the water held back both above and below the turbine house to create a reasonably dry area in order to clean out the turbine draught tubes. This will now be discussed by the Council and the Environment Agency; we await their pronouncements.

**26<sup>th</sup>** My talk on Milling History was given to the Eastleigh Valley Railway Engineering Society plus I was able to update them on the latest position regarding the Bishopstoke turbines; several of their members helped us clearing the site earlier this year.

**28<sup>th</sup>** Met with various friends of Eling Tide Mill and Dave Plunkett, to check the wedges on the pit wheel at Eling. On a previous milling, he had seen what had appeared to be movement on the pit wheel axle and he was quite rightly concerned lest the whole axle moved when the mill was running. Dave Hibbert and I, with the help from Nigel Smith, checked all the wedges on both sides of the axle but thankfully could not find any loose wedges. A job worth doing just to be sure.

### DECEMBER 2008

**5<sup>th</sup>** To Longbridge with the usual milling gang, to lift and clean out the stones since no flour had been produced for some time. We also took the opportunity to vacuum clean the interior of the tun which we are using, lift the runner stone and inspect the dressing which looked to be in pretty good order. Sheila recorded all of this activity, in photographs, for inclusion in a record to show visitors unable to get up the stairs or ladder. Having replaced the stones and tun and cleaned out the spout work, we milled some fresh flour for sale at the bar.

**6<sup>th</sup>** At the invitation of Mitchell and Butler, the new Longbridge Mill owners, Margaret and I attended their pre-opening evening in order to test their new staff’s cooking and service. This

went very well and we tried as many dishes as possible before we could eat no more. Thanks M&B!

**13<sup>th</sup>** The winter meeting of HMG was held in the premises of Eling Sailing Club; a very good attendance AND a full range of topics was discussed. After the formal meeting, many of us stayed to be reminded of our trip to Herefordshire with photographs expertly projected by Nigel and Angela. Thanks to Mick, John Mears and Sheila for the photographs and Malcolm for arranging the venue.

**17<sup>th</sup>** Eleven of the regular milling crew plus partners foregathered at Longbridge for our traditional Christmas Dinner arranged by Brian Archer. A good time was had by all. I have to say that the Belgian Chocolate Mousse (amongst other food) was superb.

I had two appointments in the week before Christmas. One was with the optician and the other was milling at Longbridge. Luckily, neither required any change of programme for me. Milling went well and we were able to fill the new display section behind the bar with bags of freshly milled flour. The new team working in the restaurant are much more interested in selling flour which they now display at eye level in the bar and, consequently, much more is sold. I wonder if we shall have to regularly mill at least another 20 kilos if demand keeps up at the current level. We could still do with a least 2 more volunteers to learn the art, and it is an art, of milling so why not contact Mick or I and watch a milling session to see if you would like to be a team member. The new restaurant Manager, Lyn, is keen to take over the marketing tasks now that Brian has accepted an opportunity of educational consultancy demanding his time elsewhere.

## **JANUARY 2009**

**15<sup>th</sup>** I am sorry to have to report that I have received a card from Commander John Rayner R.N. (Retired), a former keen HMG member, telling me that he suffered a severe stroke in August at his mill in France. He is currently living in Wiltshire where he has embarked upon a strict regime of physiotherapy and exercise in order to get back to fitness. Some members may remember helping to restore the wheel a few years ago at his lovely watermill in Deux Sevres. I hope to go and see John in the reasonable future. Meanwhile, I am sure you will join me in wishing him all the best of luck and success in his endeavours.

**17<sup>th</sup>** I am delighted to hear from millwright, Malcolm Cooper, that he has been working on Yafford Mill; renewing the waterwheel among other items. This mill, on the Isle of Wight, has changed hands recently. Perhaps we ought to have another trip to the Island; I will try to ascertain if we would be welcome. We could definitely find enough of the mills for a day visit. Malcolm is nearing completion of his work on the Armfield turbine at Bindon Abbey Mill near Wool, in Dorset. The mill is being converted to residential use and the turbine will be coupled up to a generator to produce electricity. I have a final inspection to do for SPAB shortly on the mill. I'll report when that is completed.

**21<sup>st</sup>** I addressed the Wellow History Society on the subject of mills and found in the audience a lady who was in my class at school in 1949!! I'm showing my age, am I not?

**23<sup>rd</sup>** Tony and I spoke to Farnborough U3A on the subject of Industrial Archeology. Over 80 people attended and they want us to go back at some time to finish the talk as we ran out of time.

**24<sup>th</sup>** Milling day at Longbridge Mill. This proved to be the busiest day we have ever had at Longbridge. We milled 5 X 25kg sacks of "Solstice" wheat and had many, many visitors to the mill. Before we could insert the weir top boards and lift the tipping sluices we had to clear the

*headrace of several large lumps of wood , presumably brought down river by the previous night's heavy rainfall and thus swollen flow of the Loddon. All seven of us in the milling team had an action packed, non-stop day. May I say how keen the new Mitchells & Butlers Manageress and Staff are to be as helpful as they can to us and what a difference they make to our efforts.*

*We would still like a couple more volunteers to come and "learn the ropes" in order that we can have the odd day off. So how about coming to join a busy team on a regular basis?*

## **February**

**12<sup>th</sup>** *I spoke to Nursling & Rownhams history society on the subject of Milling History which was well received.*