

## Longbridge Mill, Sherfield-on-Loddon

There has been a mill on this site for hundreds of years, one of many mills on the River Loddon. There is evidence that a mill existed on this site 800 years ago. Records show that a man called 'John the Miller' lived in Sherfield.

Structural evidence indicates that the building you see now housing the milling machinery is of 15<sup>th</sup> century origin and the granary, now incorporated into the restaurant, was added in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

At the height of its success, 'Lodbridge Mill' at 'Shirefield upon Loddon' was a major industry in the area. There may have been two waterwheels powering the four sets of milling stones. These produced a wide variety of milled products for both humans and animals. The waterwheels also provided the power to pump water to the manor house, over a mile away. (now Sherfield School). Heavy horses hauled carts loaded with sacks of grain to the mill, where it was stored in the granary until it was milled.

George Woodruffe was the miller at Longbridge for most of his working life, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He built a grain drying store in 1782 which was the last extension to the mill. After Woodruffe the millers changed frequently until, in the late 1880s, Charles and Fanny Lailey moved into the mill with their nine year old son Charles Junior who even at that young age began to work with his father. Four generations of the Lailey family lived at the mill for almost a century.

In 1977 milling at Longbridge ceased although Harold Lailey remained there as water bailiff. In 1991 a disastrous fire destroyed some of the buildings. The remainder of the buildings lay abandoned until they were bought by Mill House Inns in 1996. A major restoration programme began on the derelict, breastshot waterwheel and milling equipment. The mill is now fully restored and every month since then, wholemeal flour has been milled for direct sale to the many visitors. In 2006 the then owners, Whitbread plc, funded restoration and new building to the sluices and bulwarks in the leat channel with a sturdy bridge over all.

Members of the Hampshire Mills Group helped in the mill's restoration and have carried out the regular milling since the mill reopened, under the stipulation by the Hampshire County Council's Conservation Officer, that it must be used for milling at least 12 times a year. A good working relationship has been established with the new owners, Mitchells & Butlers, who are keen to see the mill being well utilised and visitors, restaurant customers, organized groups from societies, colleges and schools are all welcome.