

Hampshire Mills Group Newsletter



No. 82 Autumn 2008

www.hampshiremills.org

registered charity number 1116607

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Eling Tide Mill Causeway with New Sea Gate Controls and View to Mill

HMG Dates for your Diary - 2008

Friday 19 September - Autumn Meeting and AGM - Eling Tide Mill. This meeting will be preceded by a slide presentation by Tony Yoward on the subject of "Old Tide Mills of the Portsmouth Area".

Saturday 13 December - Winter Meeting - Longbridge Mill. Venue tbc.

HMG Committee Meetings 2008

6th November. If there are specific items that you wish the committee to consider, prior to the next members meeting, please advise the Chairman or Secretary in advance.

Deadline for contributions to the Winter 2008 Newsletter

FRIDAY 21st November

If you have (or know of) a venue that you would like to share with the members of HMG for any future meetings, please let our Chairman know.

Dates for HMG Meetings and Committee Meetings for 2009 will be advised in the next Newsletter

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Hampshire Mills Group.
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Editors Comments

After 5½ years and 22 Editions of the HMG Newsletter, it is with some degree of sadness, that I have decided to retire as HMG Newsletter Editor with effect from the AGM being held at Eling Tide Mill in September this year.

I have calculated that, in my time as Editor, my trusty little printer (which was new, when I took over the responsibility from Mary Yoward) has produced a staggering 39,600 pages for the Newsletters alone. That does not include occasional Minutes and Agendas and other mail-outs for the membership, as and when required.

My printer is now on its last legs and I am just praying that it survives long enough to complete this, my final Newsletter. *Note: Sadly it didn't quite make it!!*

I would personally like to thank everyone who has contributed articles, pictures and anecdotes over the years, which have made my life, as Editor, so much easier. I must though, pick out one person for special thanks. That is our former Chairman and current President, John Silman. He has acted "above and beyond the call of duty". For 5½ years, John has (with very good nature) put up with my regular telephone calls requesting the next batch of notes from his diary and responded swiftly. I have even been able (on the whole) to read his hand writing!

We do, however, have a "volunteer"!!! replacement. Sheila Viner has been proposed and seconded, and I am sure that her nomination will be confirmed at the HMG AGM in September. Unlike me, Sheila is very knowledgeable in the field of Molinology and I know that she will fill the position with ease and enthusiasm. I am sure that you will give Sheila the help, support and Newsletter contributions that many of you have given me over the last few years.

On to other matters! To my shame, I must admit that, having lived in Hampshire for my entire life and, with a sister living (for over thirty years) just up the road in Timsbury, I have driven by Mottisfont Abbey many hundreds of times but I have never visited it.

Whilst sitting typing up John Reynolds extremely interesting contribution, (pages 11 and 12) I promised myself that this visit is one that is very definitely on my list of "things to do" this year. It wouldn't even cost me anything, as I'm a member of the National Trust!! Why have I not done it before?

Ros

Hampshire Water Festival Report 2008

John Silman, Mick Edgeworth, Andy Fish & Eleanor Yates manned the Hampshire Mills Group stand at the 2008 Hampshire Water Festival in Romsey on a very wet Saturday 9th August. Sheila Viner & John Mears also braved the weather to visit the Festival which had exhibits and displays, workshops, street theatre, films, talks and bands in the Town Hall, URC Hall and Memorial Park.

Your President and Treasurer represented the group at the 'VIP Breakfast' sponsored by Vitacress – no prizes for guessing the essential ingredient in each dish on the menu. The meal was followed by short talks on the importance of water and its use by Councillors and others from Hampshire County Council, Test Valley Borough Council, executives from the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency, Southern Water & the Hampshire Water Partnership.

Vitacress itself has new strategies covering its use of water for growing and washing watercress and other salads, processing waste water so it can be returned to its original stream or source. We heard that water shrimp don't like the mustard oils in water where cress has been cut, but diverting it through a reed bed removes all traces of the oil so that invertebrates and fish return.

The Test Valley's Planning Policy Manager's talk was very interesting, outlining the factors considered when looking at new developments – providing water and removing sewage and grey water, without creating more problems elsewhere. The President thinks that other members of HMG would be interested in hearing his talk at one of our meetings. The Festival Director, Martin Burton outlined the plans for the future of the Water Partnership to 2010 and recommended the VIPs tour the Festival site.

At least 2000 people visited the Memorial Park and when it rained they all crowded into the Marquees, so the Hampshire Mills Group's new display boards were seen by many visitors – although we discovered that double-sided sellotape won't withstand the weather in Romsey when there's a Water Festival.

Eleanor Yates

Presidential Notes

Wednesday 21st May - I spoke to Romsey Abbey Proboscis Club on the subject of the "Victorian Mobile Phone" (ie the speed of delivery of letters and cards a hundred or more years ago). Locally, delivery might be as swift as 1½ to 2 hours.

Saturday 24th May - Monthly milling at Longbridge Mill. Today, Fred was in overall charge of milling helped by the usual gang of enthusiasts.

Sunday 25th May - I somehow managed to miss John Lovell's Open Day at Lords Farm. I'm so sorry John! I will do better next year.

Tuesday 27th May - More work on the Bishopstoke Turbines site, aided by Mick, Basil and Fred.

Saturday 31st May - With others, I was at Eling Tide Mill for one of the special open days designed to encourage local people to come and visit the mill in their midst. Busy morning but regrettably short of visitors in the afternoon.

Monday 2nd June - Contacted Francis Paget at Stark House Farm and arranged for a gang of us to visit the barn to see what is left of their "barn mill".

Tuesday 10th June - Morning - Eastleigh Borough Council have said that they will remove the rubbish left after our cleaning efforts at Bishopstoke Turbines at no cost to us.

Afternoon - Spoke to Trinity Ladies Circle on the History of Milling.

Thursday 12th June - Visit to Stark House Farm, to investigate further the "mill" within a barn, discovered when I carried out a survey for SPAB. The work gang consisted of Ruth, Alison, Mick, Basil, Fred and myself.

I will not spoil or anticipate any report on our findings as Ruth is going to write up a little on the history of the site as a mill as well as what we found during the exploration. See Ruth's contribution which, I hope, will be in the next Newsletter.

If you do not know where Stark House Farm is, I will inform you that its post code (as a clue) is RG19 8AR.

Friday 13th June - Our quarterly meeting was held at Durley Mill, at the very kind invitation of John and Janet Hammond, who were also kind enough to provide light refreshments as well as allowing us to look at the proposed works to be carried out to the eel trap.

At the subsequent meeting, John detailed the history of the mill, from 1208 to the present day. His painstaking and meticulous work has obviously been a labour of love and his results made us feel that the Frogges were millers in the 20th Century, not the 13th.

Well done John, your work has introduced us to a whole new cast of characters in Hampshire milling.

On a different subject altogether, I spoke to Stephen Bryer about weed cutting and arranged to give some help, next week, at the Silk Mill.

The work is regulated by a strict timetable arranged by the Environment Agency.

Wednesday 18th June - I was delighted to see that Eastleigh Borough Council have removed the great heap of rubbish that we have accumulated during the clearance of the Bishopstoke Turbines site.

Received a Message from Stephen Bryers, last night, that weed cutting ends on Thursday.

Thursday 19th June - I was delighted (again!) to hear from Alison that she and Mick had arranged to go to the Silk Mill to cut weed and had, it seems, done a great job, with help from others, to clear the water courses. Many thanks to you both.

Thursday 19th June - I cannot remember if I mentioned this in my last batch of notes so ignore if I did!! Mick and Alison gallantly agreed to get in the River Test and assist members of Whitchurch Silk Mill in weed cutting against the clock (the cutting window closed that afternoon) and the Environment Agency are very strict. Many thanks to them both. Why wasn't I there? Driving a bus. That's my excuse and I'm sticking to it!

Saturday 21st June - Milling day at Longbridge Mill with Fred in charge of the production of good flour.

As there was a "Country Fair" in Sherfield-on-Loddon, we hoped that the people would over spill into the mill but I don't think many did. Never the less, we took a good number of visitors on the guided tour.

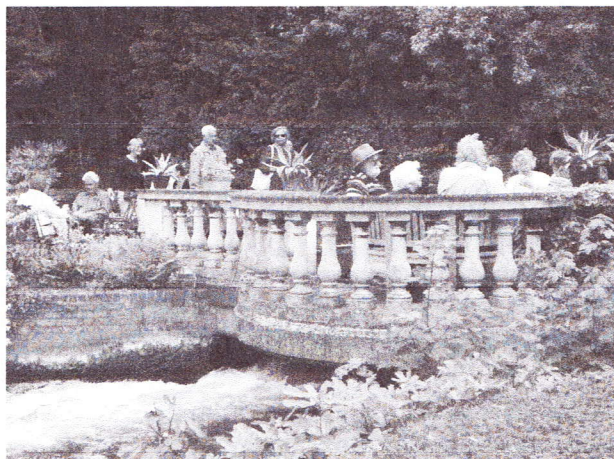
I bought myself a new white coat and, subsequently, a new white hat so now I look as if I know what's to do, even if I don't.

Thursday 26th June - I spoke to Winchester Civil Servants Retirement Fellowship on the History of Milling. Another donation for the cause.

Sunday 29th June - Margaret and I, in company with Mick and Tony, were delighted to visit Ashok and Janes lovely gardens at Donnington, open for the day as part of the National Garden Scheme.

Over 2½ acres of carefully tended land with streams passing apparently almost in opposite directions. Mysterious small tracks leading sometimes to tool stores, sometimes to nowhere and bridges raised to cope with winter flooding. It's a great place to visit and explore.

Presidential Notes



When you've explored the garden, there were superb refreshments available and all home-made.

Thanks Ashok and Jane. I'll be there again next year, if possible!



Editor's Note - David and I, along with several other HMG members, also visited the gardens of Ashok and Jane's Mill House where I took the photographs above. It really was well worth the visit. Wouldn't you just love to have these views right outside your kitchen window?

Tuesday 1st July - Mick and I had a meeting with Alastair Penfold at the Museum Service H.Q. at Chilcomb. They have been kind enough to store some of our spare items for the five or six years, when I believe that the original arrangement was for about six months.

Alastair is desperate to off-load some of the less attractive items as he has to empty out their biggest store (it's an ex-indoor riding school) in order that mezzanine floors may be put in at both ends.

I am making arrangements for John Christmas to come and look asap.

Wednesday 2nd July - Not really HMG news, but Mick, Carol Burdekin and I went to look at the Buriton Lime Works near Petersfield. Part of the site belongs to the Parish Council who are looking for ways to stop (or control) the damage being caused to the site by vandalism.

They hope to turn it into a public area with interpretation boards to explain the Industrial Archaeology (hence our presence). Await further news.

Monday 7th July - Again, a meeting reference the above mentioned Lime Works, held at the Queen Elizabeth II Country Park. This time with many more interested parties attended and a large measure of agreement was achieved. Await further news.

Tuesday 8th July - I spoke to Fareham Access Group with Mick. The subject was "Postcards".

We expect to be invited for another "go" as the time available was limited.

Thursday 10th July - With Nigel (who is a super photographer) to photograph the sluices at Throop Mill for SPAB. We also visited (and lunched at) Sopley Mill, now a restaurant. Very enjoyable.

Tuesday 15th July - I spoke on the History of Milling to retired members of Esso Refinery at Fawley. This was very well received and I have promised to return. Another donation to the cause.

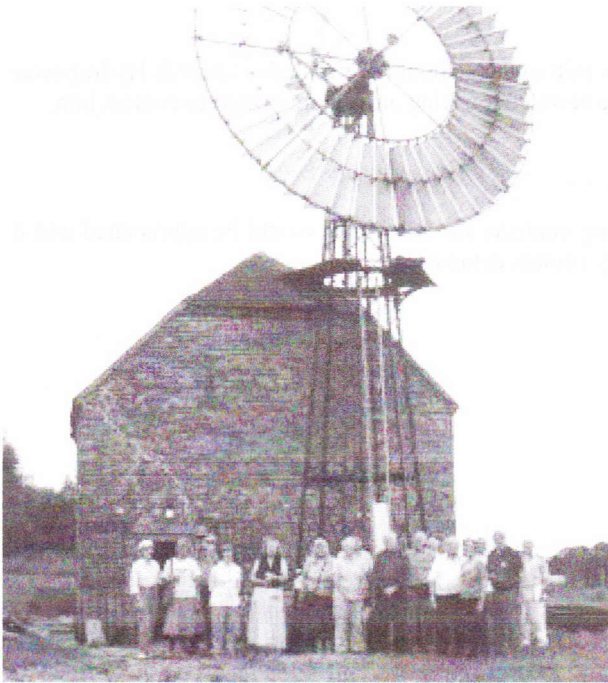
Friday 18th July - Margaret and I attended an excellent evening visit to Solent Sky Museum, organised by Jeff Paine (Chairman of HIAS). Alan Jones, the curator, gave us a splendid tour and we were then treated to a super buffet. Not strictly HMG business but most enjoyable. I recommend it to anyone visiting Southampton.

Saturday 19th July - Margaret and I, together with Mick and Eleanor, were invited to a garden party at the Mills Archive Trust in Reading. We had an enjoyable time looking at the work of the volunteers who sort and, where possible, digitise an enormous and growing archive of English Mills and Millers. This was followed by another great buffet. We thank the Mills Archive Trust very much.

Sunday 27th July - A number of HIAS and HMG members had a very enjoyable and informative field trip to visit the Crofton Engines in steam at the stonemasons yard at Great Bedwyn. Then to Wilton Windmill and, finally, we inspected the Wind Engine at Crux Easton.

This all made for a pretty busy day but, because most of the schedule was pre-booked by Andy, all went as it should have done and no members were (permanently) "lost or stolen". I was driving and I must say that all of the fourteen passengers were pretty well behaved.

Presidential Notes



Photograph by Nigel Smith

Basil was able to come and talk to us about Crofton although not officially as their new management team were not keen on him explaining the finer points to a number of us.

Elsewhere, all visits were pretty informal and seemed to be very much enjoyed by members.

Crux Easton Wind engine was viewed from close-up and we could see from the stock pile of equipment, that work will be starting soon.

Many thanks to all who came and all who helped, particularly Nigel and Tony for map reading and Basil for interpretation of the site at Crofton.

John Silman

On the left is a group picture taken on Sunday 27th July, at Crux Easton Wind Engine, at the end of a successful HMG/HIAS day trip to visit Crofton Beam Engines, Wilton Windmill and Crux Easton Wind Engine. Our thanks to John Silman who drove the bus on a very warm day!

Nigel Smith

Letters to the Editor

This may be old news and should have appeared in the last Newsletter. Sorry Jim!!! I am only reproducing part of the article and I hope the information is still relevant. - Ros

Ref: Portsmouth News Article - Cams Tide Mill

Hi Ros,

The attached article was in the News last week and updates our information on the Cams Mill plans. I hope this adds something useful to the Newsletter.

Regards, Jim Knight

* * * * *

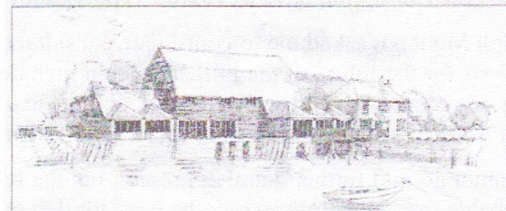
One of England's oldest tidal mills could be resurrected after almost 90 years if ambitious plans get the go ahead. Cams Mill was torn down in 1920 after being left to fall into disrepair 400 years after it was built. Now, developers want to create an exact replica of the timber-framed building close to its original home near the Delme roundabout in Fareham and turn it into an up-market restaurant. Stuart Waring, chairman of Strand Harbour Securities, which is behind the plans, said: "It would be a faithful re-creation of the original mill. Because the building evolved over some years, it is higgledy piggledy, and I think that this is part of its charm. I think it would be a lovely place to go and have a meal in a wonderful setting.

Proposals include plans for a car park with 72 spaces, a restaurant, function room and galley restaurant with a bar.....

DEVELOPMENT: Firm wants to resurrect property

Plan to build new tidal mill

CAMS ESTATE



An architect's drawing of the restored Cams Mill

PICTURE: HARRINGTON DESIGN ARCHITECTS LTD

THERE has been a manor house on the Cams estate since the 13th century.

In the 18th century a new building was created on the estate and purchased by the Delme family.

They re-built the house to form Cams Hall.

But the family's male heirs died out and the last one

decided to sell up.

The estate changed hands many times and fell into disrepair.

Strand Harbour Securities took over the estate in 1991.

Today it comprises a business park set in a golf course.

The mill would be one of the only places on the estate entirely open to the public.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Ros

The email below is from a student who is seeking to interview mill owners about their attitudes towards Hydropower generation. I said that I would see if we could put a note in the newsletter asking anyone interested to contact him.

Regards - Ashok

* * * * *

Dear Dr Vaidya Thanks for your response. Any help in finding contacts for interviews would be appreciated and it would be great if you could mention me in your newsletter. My contact details are:

Thomas Forster
Harroway Organic Gardens
Kingsclere Road
Whitchurch, Hampshire, RG28 7QB
Tel:01256 895346
Fax:01256 895346
Mob:07767724418

The working title of my project is "Hydroelectric generation in Hampshire's water mills: current status and barriers to future development". My idea is to investigate a small area of mills in order to get a detailed idea of any hydroelectric production taking place and the myriad of arguments for and against installing hydroelectric plant. As someone deeply involved in mills you probably know better than I the complexities such an issue creates including capital costs, environmental, historical and aesthetic concerns and the bureaucracy of planning and river authorities. It is because of this that I wish to interview as many mill owners and managers as possible to extract their views and knowledge on the subject. This valuable information will be combined with data from academic and government sources to create a detailed overview of the status and future of micro-hydro in Hampshire. I would be very grateful to anyone involved in this field who is willing to give up a small amount of time to grant me an interview. Such interviews would be concise and confidential and I am very flexible about when I can conduct them. Thanks again.

Tom Forster

Ashok Vaidya

Letters to the Editor

Dear Ros,

I thought you should have a progress report following the Group's meeting at Beaulieu last December.

Ralph Montagu asked me to coordinate consultants commissioned to investigate the condition, necessary repair and options for the future of the mill. The team included architects, structural engineers and a mill expert. Very thorough site inspections have been carried out, and the team has recently reported to Ralph, who has authorised development of a detailed scheme of repair in consultation with English Heritage and the National Park Authority.

I cannot go into further detail at present, but the scheme is to restore both the building and the machinery, though it is probable that the latter can only be used for demonstration purposes due to ducting of the surviving mill race into pipes carried out by highway engineers in 1969. Amongst other things that have come to light during the investigations is the discovery that the northern race was blocked, not during the war as we all believed, but prior to 1920 when the turbine was removed.

The interest and potential for help from HMG was acknowledged at meetings and, when matters have progressed further, I will let you have more information.

Regards, Michael.

Michael Carden - 23rd June 2008

hampshiremills.org is a Star ★ ★ ★

The BBC Magazine "Who do you think you are" has featured websites for researching Mill Workers, and Tony Yoward was invited to contribute. The August issue has the very pleasing result

Ashok

Below is edited copy of the article

Best Websites for Researching Mill Workers

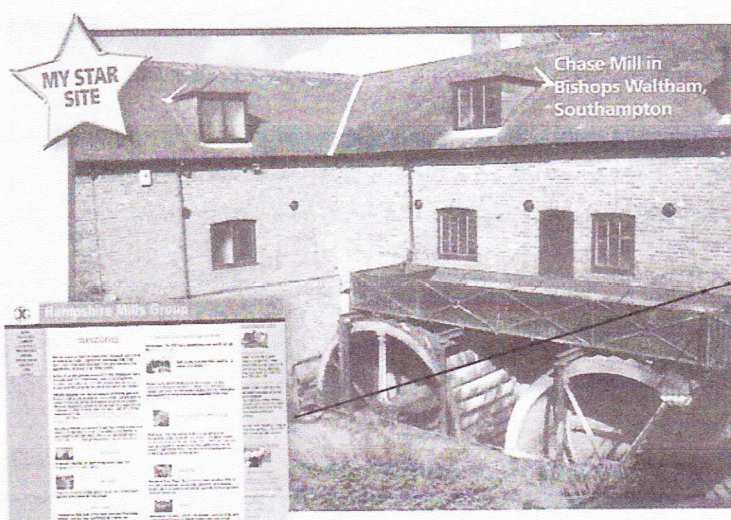
"..... Records of mill workers can be hard to track down. During the early Industrial Revolution, little detail was kept about individual workers. However, from the 1840s, as the factory system developed, more documents survive, including wage books and union membership records, often held at local archives.

On line, the situation is mixed. While there are few digital databases, specific to mill workers, there are many excellent social history sites covering specific sections of industry and even particular mills.

For cotton mills, the best single starting point is spinningtheweb.org.uk, but there are also several useful websites relating to agricultural millers and millwrights and paper mills"

The article then proceeds to list its five best sites and finally "The Star Site"

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Spinning the Web
www.spinningtheweb.org.uk</p> <p>3. Mills Archive
www.millsarchive.com</p> <p>5. Scottish Mill Workers
http://scottishtextileheritage.org.uk</p> | <p>2. Cotton Town
www.cottontown.org</p> <p>4. Trade Unions
www.unionancesters.co.uk</p> <p style="text-align: center;">★</p> <p>and then there was the STAR SITE
www.hampshiremills.org</p> |
|--|--|



Tony Yoward *compiler of the Mills Archive*

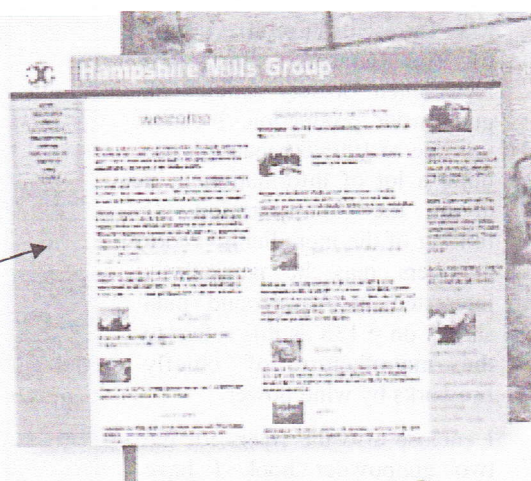
The Hampshire Mills Group website (www.hampshiremills.org) is a very popular site that attracts interest from all over the



world. People looking for ancestors, and those researching mill history and seeking places to visit, use this

gateway to the history and preservation of mills in Hampshire.

Of course, the mill is just the focal point, and the site also includes extensive archives of millers and mills. Researchers can also email me direct through the site (I am also the group's archivist), and I will delve into my extensive additional records, which can yield a mass of fresh information to help researches into family history.



What can I say but - well done Tony for putting us on the map.

And - well done Ashok. It is your hard work and enthusiasm that has created our ★ website (from scratch) a made it what it is today.

You've done a fantastic job!!

Ros

Letter from Brenda J. Buchanan, BSc (Econ), PhD

Dear Mrs Plunkett

I write to thank you for the complimentary copies of the Newsletter that I have received as Chair of the Gunpowder & Explosives History Group and to tell you that we are now in "abeyance" and function only as an e-group, attached to the website of the Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills.

I have always read the Newsletters with interest, passing on information where appropriate.

I am now presenting most of the collection to my molinologist colleague, Owen Ward, keeping back especially that for Spring 2006 which contains the obituary of our good friend, Mary Yoward. Her death was a great loss to us all, especially of course to Tony.

May I present, in return, a copy of the first of my two Newcomen Society articles on gunpowder production. I chose this one of 1995/6 because it has quite a lot of information in it about the incorporation or milling of the ingredients. Your members may be particularly interested in the ground plan shown on p.138 as this refers to the manufacture of chiefly fireworks by wind power.

I enclose also the flyers for the two gunpowder book I have edited. The first (yellow paper) was re-printed in 2006 after selling out. The second was published in that year. I am afraid the "special offer" no longer operates. Chapter eight of the first volume explores the use of wind power, mentioned above.

Again, many thanks and I wish the Group well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Brenda Buchanan

The Technology of Gunpowder Making in the Eighteenth Century

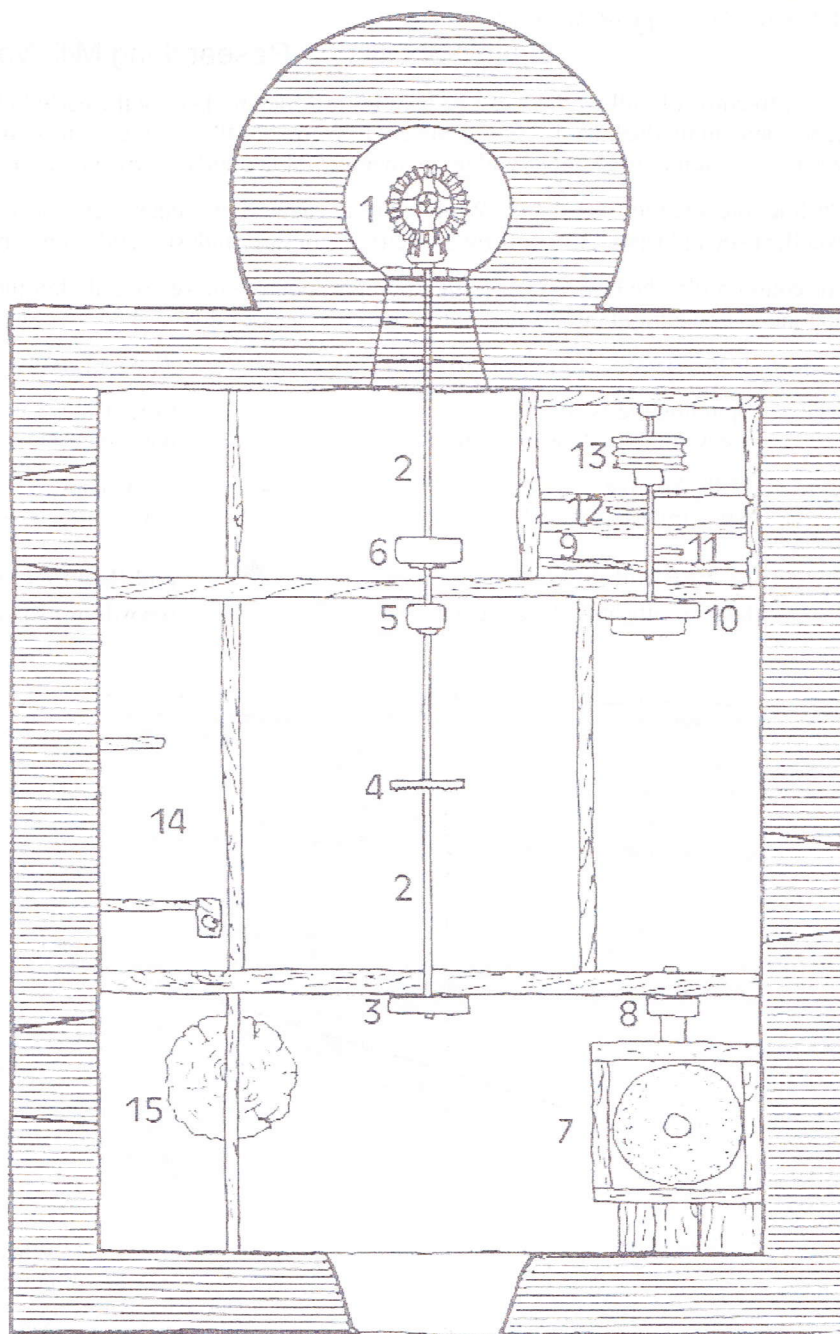


Fig. 11. Ground plan of powder works in Galicia worked by wind power until the mid twentieth century, showing: gear wheel at the foot of the vertical shaft (1); horizontal lay shaft (2) located near the ceiling; wheel (3) which carried the motion via wheel (8) to the sulphur mill (7); wheel (4) which may have carried the motion to the sieves (14); wheel (5) which drove wheel (10) and by iron cams (11&12) operated the stamps (9) that crushed the flash-enhancing antimony in stone basins, now outside the mill; and wheel (13) which was used for a belt drive.

Other processes were carried out in adjacent buildings. I am grateful to Begonia Bas for allowing me to reproduce this plan from her account of the subject in the chapter on "Fireworks for the Community....." see n.22.

Visit to Gayle Mill near Hawes in May 2008

On a brief visit to North Yorkshire, Angela and I decided to visit the village of Hawes in the heart of the Dales with a view to seeing how much had changed since we regularly used to camp near there many years ago. Hawes has many attractions including a working ropeworks, cheese factory and a market on some days, but as we approached from the Skipton direction on a very narrow and winding road you pass through the small village of Gayle which is right next to Hawes. Negotiating the narrow road that turns to cross Hawes Beck we spotted a sign for Gayle Mill and it looked as if it was open! (*this was a Sunday*). Parking nearby, we entered the mill to find that visits are by guided tour only and last tour had just left, but we were allowed to tack on to the other 2 visitors for what was a most interesting experience.

Gayle Mill came to our notice during the 2004 BBC Restoration series when it was one of the six finalists and, although it did not win, the exposure accelerated the preservation activities and facilitated winning grants and greater publicity. As I said before, we have been through Gayle many times before in the 1970s, but had never seen the mill – it's all a question of knowing where to look and, if you were driving, you would probably miss it due to the nature of the roads!

The Mill was built in 1784 as a textile factory for spinning cotton using Arkwright spinning frames driven by a large pitchback water wheel. The spun yarn was then sent to Manchester for use in the clothing industry. Probably due to the increasing industrialisation of the cotton spinning process and the use of steam to power ever larger factories, the mill went out of use about 1840. After a period when the building was used as housing, it was leased by a local carpentry business and was developed into a saw mill c1865.



The Mill was one of the first in the area to exploit the use of more efficient turbine power and the wheel was replaced by a double vortex turbine from Williamson Brothers of Kendal in 1879 – this is still in situ and operational. It is said the mill was visited by Sir William Armstrong to see if turbine technology could help overcome the problems he was having at Craggside with the pioneering domestic electric light system that was then

powered by a water wheel. Armstrong was so impressed that he ordered an identical turbine from Williamsons which turned out to be a great success.

Perhaps inspired by this, William Alderson (the owner) installed electric lighting in the mill and his house, driven by a generator attached to the turbine at some time between 1890-1900. This was the first electricity to come to Hawes (which at this time had gas lighting). Later, in 1911, Hawes came off gas and the Hawes Electric Lighting Co was set up in a redundant woollen mill using a variety of generating methods but, when extra capacity was needed, in 1925 the company installed a second Gilkes (*formerly Williamsons*) turbine and generator in Gayle Mill, which supplied power to the village until 1935 when the Electric Co relocated to larger premises.

The saw mill supplied all manner of domestic and farm equipment ranging from carts, gates, wheel barrows, prams – in fact anything that was made from wood. The workshop contains a wide variety of machinery to handle the process from cutting felled trees to making complex timber products into the finished article.

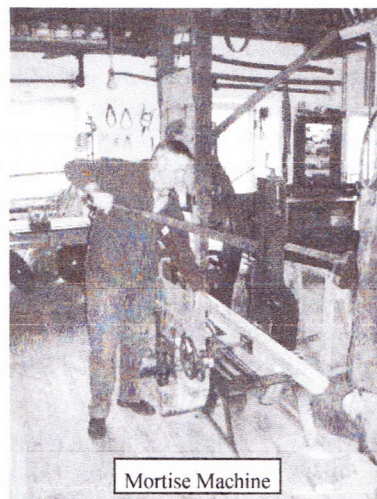
During the War and into the fifties the mill remained busy, but as agriculture and the domestic market moved away from wooden products and equipment, the business declined. Finally the last owner, Brian Alderson, closed the mill in 1988, by which time the wooden leat was in a state of collapse. Despite attractive offers to sell the site for housing, Brian realised that this mill was unique in that it was a virtually intact Victorian sawmill with all the original machinery and fixtures.

Visit to Gayle Mill near Hawes in May 2008

He supported the formation of a Trust to restore the building as a working mill to show future generations how people worked in times past. Ironically, the mill now contains a state-of-the-art new Francis turbine which generates all the electrical power needed to support the museum and any excess is sold back to the grid. The plan is that the site is not just a museum, but is once again a working sawmill using and demonstrating sustainable technology to supply timber products and locally-made craft goods in the Dales.

If you are in the area, Gayle Mill is well worth a visit. But check the website: www.gaylemill.org.uk for opening times – a guided tour is £5.00 per adult, but note there is no parking on the site.

Nigel Smith, May 2008



Mortise Machine

The Queen Goes Green

Edited article from the Daily Telegraph - Tuesday 19th August 2008

Balmoral, the Queen's Scottish estate, is to become the first in the Royal Household to be self sufficient in energy. The Queen, who set up an energy saving committee at Buckingham Palace to look at how to reduce consumption, has installed a small hydroelectric plant at Balmoral that is selling electricity to the national grid. Privately owned and funded by the Queen, Balmoral is the only estate with a "comprehensive biodiversity" action plan.

At the centre of the plan is the hydroelectricity plant, which was developed on the Gelder Burn - a stream in the estate forest. The stream runs into the River Dee about a mile south-west of the castle, which flows from Lochnagar, the 3,800ft mountain that dominates the estate. The plant generates sufficient power for the Queen's residence and 1,000 private homes in the area.

A water driven turbine was installed at the Queen's Highland retreat in the 1920s to provide electric light. In the 1950s, it was used to power the estate sawmill. As the mill now lies idle, a generator was installed that allows the turbine to be connected to the national grid.....

..... A spokesman for Buckingham Palace said "Balmoral has always been our beacon in green work. The Royal Household is constantly looking at new ways of saving and supplying energy so as to remain as environmentally friendly as possible".

Alastair Gill the project manager of the hydroelectric plant said "The powerful year-round flow of water should generate about one megawatt (MW) of electricity and runs like a miniature version of the massive Scottish hydro plants that can produce 300MW of power. These initiatives have been welcomed by environmental campaigners.

Daily Telegraph Editor's Comments of the same day - Stately Ohms

The Queen is contributing electricity to the national grid from a water-driven generation plant at Balmoral. Hydroelectricity has powered the lights of the royal retreat in the Highlands since the 1920s and the Queen, who has also ordered staff at Buckingham Palace to switch off lights at night, is determined to increase renewable energy production.

There is something engaging about hydroelectric production on grand estates. It's fun, like having one's own full sized train set. The green antecedents are notable. In 1881, William Armstrong made his vast, daunting mansion, Cragside, in Northumberland, the world's first hydroelectrically powered house, set among a new plantation of seven million trees. At Chatsworth, the Cascade, built in 1694, generates electricity for 2,084 light bulbs in the house. No doubt, the current that flows through those wires is blue.

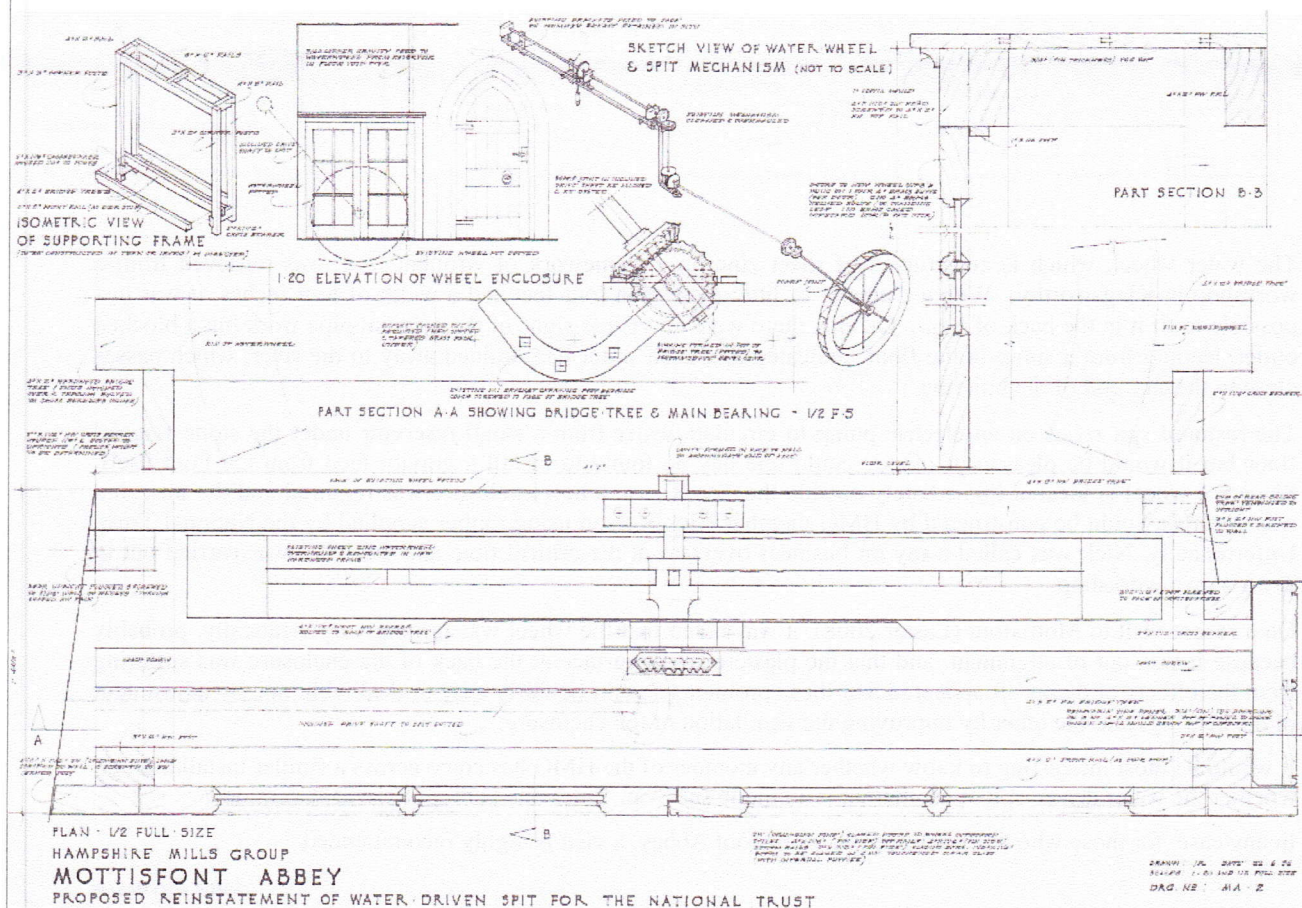
The Smallest Working Water Wheel in Hampshire?

Members of the Hampshire Mills Group, familiar with Mottisfont Abbey, will know that the building has the rare distinction of possessing a water powered spit. Spits driven by hot air fans are relatively common. A good example can be seen at St Cross in Winchester and both small dogs and small boys sometimes provided motive power but, a water driven spit is surely very unusual.

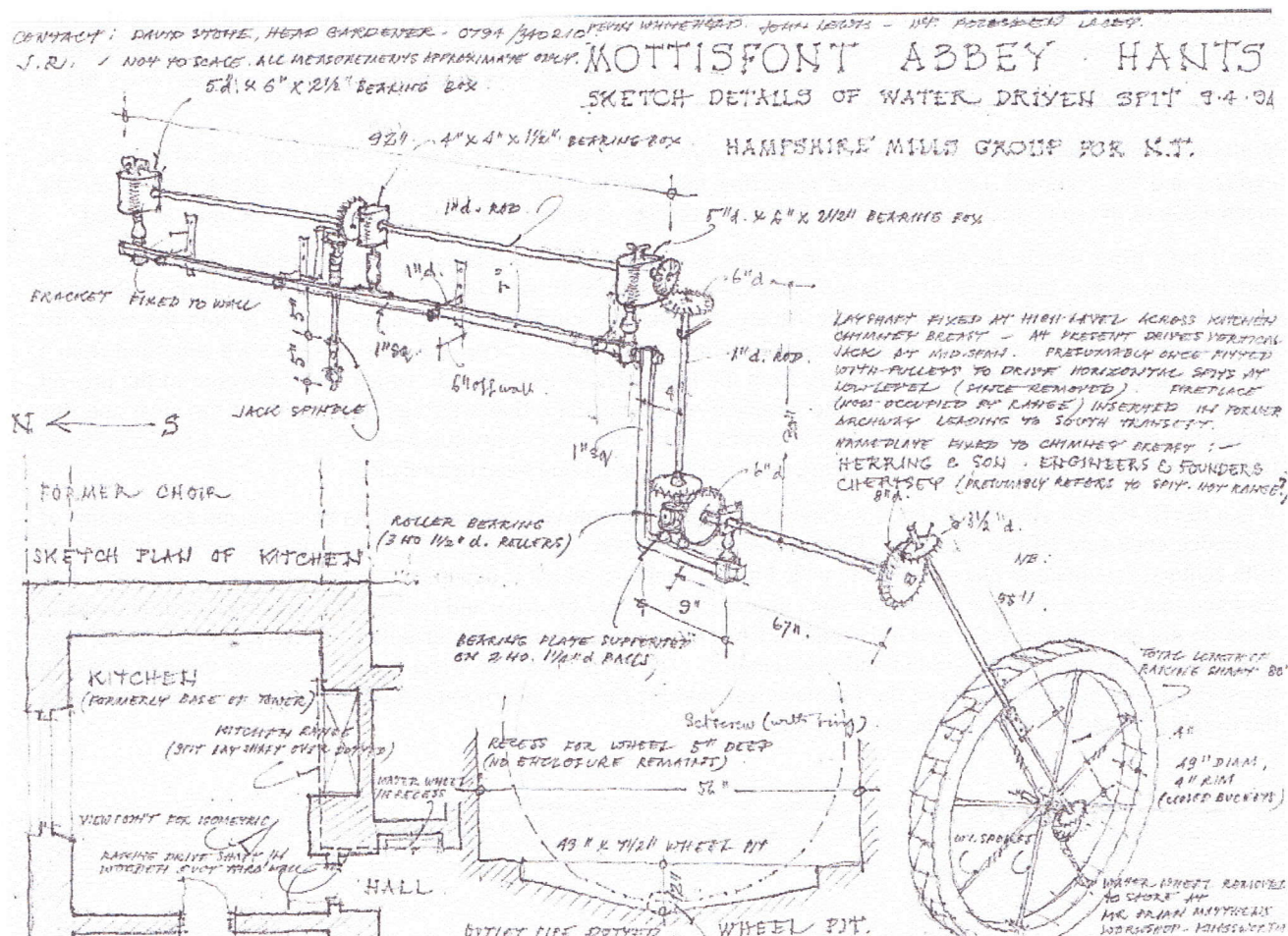
While the Abbey was occupied by a tenant, it was not possible to gain access to the interior but, when the lease expired and the National Trust set about preparing the building for public opening, it was decided to repair the mechanism of the spit which had long since fallen into disuse. It was at this stage that the HMG became involved.

The 'Font', from which the village takes its name is a natural spring located on rising ground close to the S.W. corner of the Abbey buildings. Its flow is remarkably constant with very little seasonal variation. It feeds the braid of the River Test which flows through the Abbey grounds, the outflow falling sharply down to join the river just above the site of the former mill. The monastic buildings lay at a lower level and must always have benefited from a reliable supply of clear water, fed by gravity from the Font. The Priory Church, which forms the core of the present house, was modified in Tudor times by the insertion of intermediate floors through the length of the nave and this makes the marked difference in levels less apparent. The kitchens occupy the base of the former Crossing Tower which now forms the east end of the building, the choir beyond having been demolished.

When the HMG first visited the site, the waterwheel had been removed, together with its bearings and any remains of a wooden enclosure (if one existed). The surviving mechanism, which appears to date from the second half of the 19th century, remained in place above the wide kitchen fireplace which is occupied by a massive cast iron range. It is assumed that there were once horizontal spits at low level, turned by drive and pulley from the drive shaft above, but these do not survive and were probably removed when the present range was installed. There is also a vertical fork spit, for hanging meat to be roasted and this remains. The drive from the water wheel passes up through a raking wood lined duct in the thickness of the fireplace wall and the linkage incorporates an elegant roller bearing to support the weight of a vertical shaft on the kitchen side.



The Smallest Working Water Wheel in Hampshire?



The water wheel, which is constructed of sheet zinc on a framework of wrought iron, was retrieved from a workshop in Kingsworthy. With a diameter of little more than four feet and a width of four inches, it was just possible to fit it in the back of a car. On site, there were no visible signs of the original pipe work but a blocked outlet, leading from a sump in the floor, indicated that used water had drained away to the river, which passes close to the east end of the building

The restored spit relies on an electric pump to circulate water from a small reservoir under the stone flagged floor but it would be pleasant if money could one day be found to install a gravity feed from the Font itself. Since the wheel is located immediately outside the Tea Room, a new enclosure was required and the intention was that this would be constructed by HMG member Nick Kerson using timber supplied by the National Trust. Unfortunately, Nick was called away on business overseas at the critical time and the work was carried out in Trust's own workshop.

On a recent visit to Mottisfont (Easter 2008), it was noted that the wheel was turning very erratically, probably because it was out of alignment, and that the plastered wall surface at the back of the enclosure was suffering from the effects of damp. It appeared that these problems should be fairly easy to deal with: one by adjustment of the bearings and the other by improving the ventilation of the enclosure.

It would be most interesting to know whether any member of the HMG has come across a similar installation or, whether the water driven spit at Mottisfont is a unique survival. Does one perhaps exist at 'Cragside'?

In any case, for those who have not been to Mottisfont Abbey, a visit is highly recommended.

John Reynolds