

# The Rex Wailes Collection

## *An Artistic Collaboration Part 1*

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Rex's dominance as a consultant on traditional wind and watermills during the 20th century was illustrated in my previous article about Karl Wood, a schoolteacher, windmill enthusiast and talented amateur artist.

Wood's work was so successful that he created a modest business from selling his art. From Rex's point of view this relationship was much less important than the associations he built with established artists and photographers.

Thomas Hennell (1903-1945) was one such collaborator and they became close friends. Hennell's artistic legacy ranged from his portrayal of rustic crafts and their associated artefacts in rural England to his work as an official war artist and forms part of the collections of many national institutions.

His war work took him to many countries ranging from Iceland to India and Burma. He was captured by Indonesian terrorists in Java and disappeared without trace aged 42.

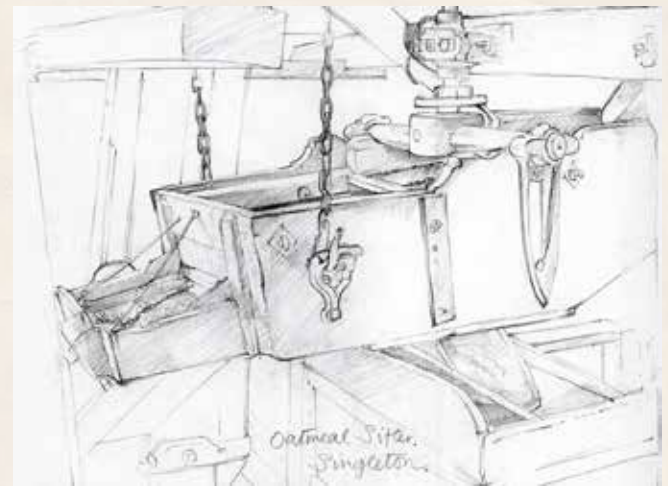
Fortunately much of his windmill work has been published by Alan Stoyel MBE, one of the Mills

Archive Trustees and it was Mr Stoyel who rescued and dried out much of Rex's collection, "after Rex's death some of Hennell's works were found languishing in one of the numerous sheds in his garden," he lamented.

"Unfortunately many of the pictures were on paper of poor quality. Years of storage sometimes in damp conditions have left their mark and some were past redemption. Regrettably they could not be separated from their sodden surroundings."

Nevertheless, thanks to Rex, we have a large portfolio of sketches, particularly of the detailed arrangements of machinery, often pointed out by Rex as worthy of recording. Between them we have an invaluable record of regional differences in arrangement and function. In his book Alan describes the importance of many of the drawings.

They capture the detail and spirit much better than could be achieved with a camera; sometimes a detail was emphasised or



subdued, a viewpoint chosen or a perspective altered to great effect.

As a Lancastrian born and bred, I have chosen a couple of my favourites as examples here. Not surprisingly Rex intended to work with Hennell to illustrate the two major windmill books he was planning to publish after the War.

That was not to be, and that distinction fell to Vincent Lines, a friend of Hennell's and I will introduce him in the next article.

