

# The Rex Wailes Collection

## Rex the mill magnet

by Mildred Cookson, The Mills  
Archive Trust, UK

As Rex's reputation spread around the world and his expertise and advice became more widely sought, he developed mutually beneficial collaborations with architects, engineers, photographers and artists. Frequently they gave him drawings and images which are now safely lodged at the Mills Archive. Wherever possible, the provenance of each item is identified in our catalogue and where a sub-collection emerges we catalogue it separately under the name of the collaborator. As this series of snapshots develops, I will highlight the contribution some of these mill recorders made in their own right.

I have recently been contributing to a number of new web pages we have developed on the theme of industrial mills (ie those not involved in cereal processing) and these may now be seen by searching on <https://new.millsarchive.org/> for "mills make the world go round". Of the more than a dozen industries covered to date, I have selected three to illustrate what a wide range of mills came within Rex's orbit.

The salt mill was the last horizontal windmill at the salt pans, Salt Cay, Turks and Caicos Islands. In contrast the sawmill, with only one pair of sails remaining, was at Eckerö in the Åland Islands, an autonomous region of Finland. The photograph by Sven-Erik Krooks was taken in 1959.

In 1971, Rex updated his 1936 paper on the preparation of woad in England. Woad was used to prevent cloths blue-dyed in indigo from fading. He gave a short but fascinating account using a 1935 photograph by his life-long friend Hallam Ashley of Algakirk Woad Mill in Lincolnshire.

These three contrasting uses underline the wealth of our global milling history which we are making every effort to conserve.



Horizontal salt mill on the Turks and Caicos Islands



Derelict sawmill on the Åland Islands, Finland



Algakirk Woad Mill in Lincolnshire