

Issue 3

August 2008

# Mill Memories



Mills Archive Trust

*The Newsletter of the Friends of the Mills Archive*

## Happy First Birthday!

**This issue of Mill Memories marks the first anniversary of the Friends' foundation**

### Special features:

- Care of 35mm slides
- Large mill drawings in the Archive
- Peter Dolman and his collection
- The Frank Gregory Online Project

The culmination of our first year was the Garden Party and Exhibition held on 19 July (see page 9). Approximately 60 Friends and their guests attended and it was a great success! We will try to repeat the exercise in a year or two, so keep an eye open in future *Mill Memories* for the announcement.

Our membership tops 100, but like every one-year old we need to grow. Is there anyone you know who might be interested in joining us? Bombarding people with literature is expensive and we cannot compete with the big charities with their emphasis on children, animals and illness. Please consider giving a spare copy of *Mill Memories* to someone you know and asking them to join the Friends.

As the editor of the Lincolnshire Mills Group Newsletter pointed out in his review of *Mill Memories*:

*"For those of us who are rather disorganised and unable to keep good records, a small subscription to an organisation which can be a very attractive way of salving our consciences."*

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## Collections in Practice

*There are many ways to collect and store your records, but at the request of members, we will use this page to make some practical suggestions for you to consider. If you have a topic you would like us to include please let us know.*

### Care of 35mm slides



Changing technology is a major problem for archives and collectors. As digital photography becomes more popular, 35mm slides are on their way out. Several years ago, Kodak announced they were withdrawing support for their “Carousel” projector and sales of slide film have plummeted.

Although the future for slides is limited, the last 50 or so years has provided a photographic treasure trove of mills. The difficulty of examining and enjoying slides has often meant that they remain untouched in their original boxes for years. Unfortunately some slide films were very poor at retaining colour and some early slides have suffered as a result.

Storage conditions are an important factor in maintaining slide images; humid conditions, high or fluctuating temperatures and frequent exposure to light are all deleterious. In addition the common wooden slotted boxes and some plastic boxes are not appropriate containers.

Slide boxes (above) made of lignin-free, acid-free archival board cost about £4.30 each (just over 3p per slide). These boxes save space but do not make it easy to review slides. Having experimented with hanging files in filing cabinets, we have elected to use “BoxBinders” with pages of 20 transparent pockets (below). A box with 25 pages, sufficient to fill it, costs about £18.60 (almost 4p per slide). If you are interested in either approach or wish to consider alternatives, get in touch or contact our supplier directly. We use Preservation Equipment Ltd and their catalogue may be downloaded from <http://www.preservationequipment.com/>



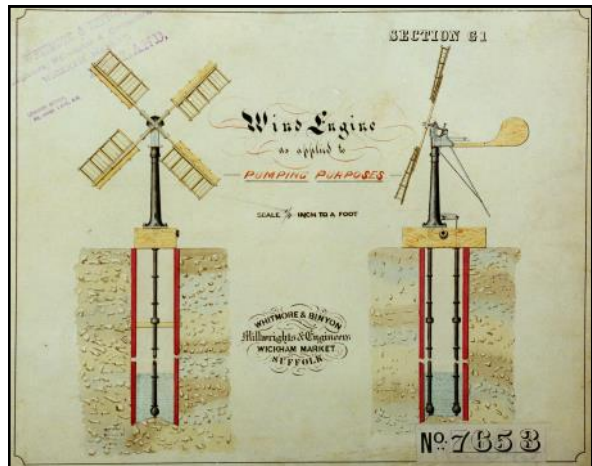
The cost of proper storage is much less than the cost of digitisation. Cataloguing slide collections is very tedious and we have found it easier to work with agency-scanned images. These cost at least 30p per slide, so ignoring labour, we need about £34,000 to scan and preserve the 100,000 slides we currently hold!

## News from the Archive

### Large mill drawings in the Archive's collections

Drawings by many well-known mill personalities feature in the Mills Archive's collections. As the original timber and metal components of mills gradually succumb to the ravages of the weather, neglect or deliberate alteration, the paper - and increasing numbers of digital - records held by archives may be the only elements of a mill to survive.

Drawings of mill structures and machinery are, arguably, the most important and useful elements of our records of a mill. A drawing can show the interrelationships between features that can only be suggested by photographs, and are often inadequately explained by written descriptions. Every mill is unique, yet many mills shared characteristics common to a local area or particular firm of millwrights. Detailed survey drawings allow such characteristics to be identified, increasing the authenticity of today's mill restoration projects.



The scope and content of our drawings covers a wide area of the UK, as well as further afield. For example, the collection of millwright Derek Ogden, who originally worked in England and is now based in the USA, features designs for a Portuguese-style windmill constructed by Derek and his team on the roof of an existing watermill at Cann near Shaftesbury, Dorset, during the 1970s.

The collection of the SPAB Mills Section features a series of drawings by Wilfred Foreman, author of a popular book about wind- and water-powered mills in Oxfordshire. His distinctive line drawings, approximately to scale and featuring several lively '3-dimensional' details, provide a valuable record of the working parts of more than 40 mills - many of which are no longer intact. Although Wilfred passed away a few years ago, his drawings provide a lasting memory of the man as well as the subjects he depicted.

## Recent work on the Peter Dolman Collection



*Tower mill at Old  
Bolingbroke, Lincolnshire*

Since acquiring the Peter Dolman collection in 2002, cataloguing work at the Mills Archive has proceeded at a pace. Much of this has been undertaken by one of our volunteers from Hampshire who has devoted many hundreds of hours to listing, scanning and cataloguing Peter's photographic and documentary material.

A task which took two years to complete was the digitisation of 2800 prints of Suffolk windmills which date from between the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the 1970s. They include internal views of mill gearing and equipment as well as exterior views of the mills and the people who owned and operated them. This is probably the most comprehensive collection of Suffolk mill photographs that is presently available for inspection by researchers. Every picture can be viewed through our website catalogue and high-quality copies can be requested; computer-sceptics can make an appointment to visit our research centre and inspect the original documents.

Peter's Lincolnshire windmills collection has also been digitised, catalogued and made available on the web catalogue, serving another important role as a gateway to other collections containing related material, such as that held at the Museum of Lincolnshire Life at Lincoln.

*Peter corresponded  
regularly over many years  
with the intrepid  
Arthur C. Smith (below)*



### Creating finding aids for archive users

Attention has now turned to the research notes, drawings, correspondence and other documents in Peter's collection. These have been transferred to a series of albums and reorganised according to date and subject matter. Each individual item has been briefly described and added to a digital list known as a 'finding aid'. The lists can be examined using our website catalogue and – more importantly – can be searched for a particular subject, person or mill, simply by typing in a key word.

A fascinating set of correspondence between Peter Dolman and Arthur C. Smith – whose collection is also held by the Mills Archive – relates to windmills throughout East Anglia and runs from 1973 to 1990.

## A finding aid from the Peter Dolman Collection

### Correspondence between Peter Dolman and Arthur C. Smith 1973-1990 (Item number 20209)

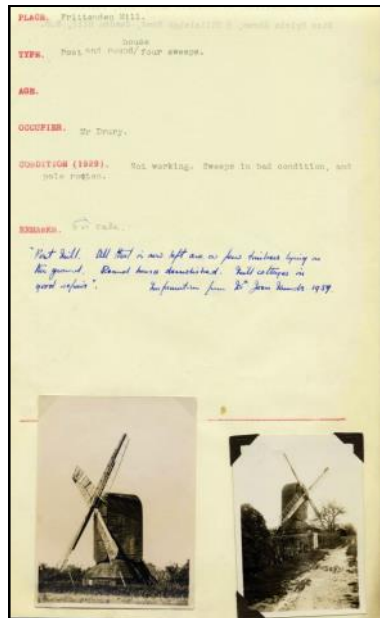
Date Correspondent Description

Date	Correspondent	Description
24/1/75	Smith to Dolman	Thanks for the information on French's Mill. Any more remains are going to be left out of my survey.
25/3/75	Dolman to Smith	Linton Mill was formerly a corn mill in <u>Hadstock</u> (Essex), before boundary changes. The Chalk grinding mill stood next to it. 3 mills labelled as <u>Bassingbourn</u> shown at the SPAB meeting actually stood at <u>Kneesworth</u> . Comments on Cambridgeshire mills.
6/4/75	Smith to Dolman	Notes based on above letter.
21/4/75	Smith to Dolman	Enclosed [Windmills in Bedfordshire]. Very grateful for your help.
27/5/75	Smith to Dolman	Account of visit to Acre Fen and a cycle ride into Cambridgeshire with current state of mills.
6/10/75	Smith to Dolman	Enclosed copy of "Windmills in Cambridgeshire. Information on mills in Oxon & Bucks, Sussex and Suffolk with details of mills seen.
15/10/75	Dolman to Smith	Thanks for windmill booklets. List of corrections to information in booklets. Have concentrated on Suffolk watermill survey.
23/10/75	Smith to Dolman	Thanks for corrections. General notes on mills. Request for loan of negative of Peterborough after 1969 before it was pulled down

## SPAB mill records

In 1929, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), which had been founded by William Morris in 1877, established a Windmill Section in order to preserve and protect the country's windmills which, at the time, were becoming disused and falling into decay in rapidly increasing numbers. Almost immediately, a countrywide survey of the condition of the surviving mills began; this was expanded in later years to include watermills, and formed the basis of the UK Mills Index, developed by the Mills Research Group, that we use today.

On the right is an example of the early record sheets used by the Section, most of which are now held at the Mills Archive and will be progressively catalogued as time and resources allow. Some of the results were included in Marjorie Batten's book (see p 11).



## The Frank Gregory Online Project

*Frank Gregory Online (FGOL) is a collaborative digitisation project, hosted by the Mills Archive in partnership with the Sussex Mills Group and the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum (WDOAM) and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.*

Frank William Gregory (1917-1998) was the Sussex authority on traditional mills, happily sharing his information and knowledge with everyone who had a similar interest. He painstakingly sketched, photographed and took notes at each mill he visited. Frank's collection is an unrivalled record of windmills and watermills of the UK and further afield – many of which have been lost in the years since he visited them. Frank was a driving force behind the restoration of several notable Sussex mills including the small post mill at Nutley.

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*Frank Gregory adjusts the canvas on one of the sails at Nutley mill, a restoration project he was closely involved with*



### **“There is usually one close by, or on the way there”**

Although mainly concerned with mills, Frank had a passion for many aspects of the countryside. To quote windmill author Martin Brunnarius, writing in 1979, *“Frank Gregory is a countryman and takes great pleasure from walking. Many Sussex ramblers owe much to years of route planning and organisation by him. Holidays, not surprisingly, often take him walking or to other mills here and abroad. There is usually one close by, or on the way there, he told me”.*

The project began in earnest in Spring 2008 with the transportation of 130 boxes of material from the Museum to our premises in central Reading. Derek Stidder and I were assisted in the removal by Colin Smith, whose firm kindly loaned a large van to double the transporting capacity available to us!

Once at Reading, the first task has been to re-house the collection in new archival boxes. This process has provided the additional benefit of a glance at the entire collection, allowing us to gain a much clearer idea of the scope of the material in it.

The sheer numbers of pictorial items were brought home to us. Within the collection are thousands of packets of prints and negatives, and equal numbers of postcards, created or collected by Frank throughout his

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## The Frank Gregory Online Project *(continued)*

life. These cover a wide variety of mill themes and several other subjects besides, including the Sussex landscape, tools and trades and world travel. In addition, there are more than 12,000 35mm colour slides with mills as their subject. The cataloguing challenge presented by these alone is considerable, especially as most of them are not dated or labelled! As I write, all the slides have already been examined and reorganised by the Archive's trustees and a handful of our longstanding volunteers. The digitisation of the slides – a rather repetitive process – is being undertaken by an external agency, and this process is currently 50% complete.

Although we have a great deal of mill expertise immediately available to us, help on all fronts is always welcomed. We will be relying heavily on the detailed local knowledge of the Sussex Mills Group, particularly during the middle stages of the cataloguing process. A meeting with local members who knew and worked with Frank, and have offered to contribute to the project, will take place at West Blatchington Mill at Hove in September.



*(above)*  
Derek and Colin load up  
parts of the collection at  
WDOAM



*(left)*  
The new shelving ready for the  
arrival of the boxes at  
Watlington House

## Friends' Forum

*These pages are set aside to discuss matters of particular interest to Friends. If you wish to send a letter or comments, they will be very welcome. We will announce new Friends' projects and events and explain how you can get more out of the benefits of membership.*



### Auction news

After a short interlude, our eBay sales of surplus postcards have resumed. You can see what we are listing at any time by going to [http://shop.ebay.co.uk/merchant/mills\\_archive\\_trust](http://shop.ebay.co.uk/merchant/mills_archive_trust).

Friend and Trustee Tom Derbyshire is leading this important activity for us. If you would like to help Tom by scanning and listing cards, please let us know at [friends@millsarchivetrust.org](mailto:friends@millsarchivetrust.org).

### Visit by the Hampshire Mills Group

The Hampshire Mills Group started supporting us in 2002, so it was a particular pleasure to welcome the Group to the Mills Archive in February (photo), where they heard what we have been doing and our plans for the future. Prominent in the discussions was Tony Yoward, one of our first Trustees and now an Honorary Life Member of the Friends.

Quite a few HMG members are individual Friends and it was gratifying to see the interest they took in our demonstrations and talks.

Luke Bonwick presented the work of the Archive and set up an exhibition with a Hampshire emphasis. The visit was so successful that we now offer a similar facility to any small group that Friends may wish to organise. We suggest a maximum of 15 people, but we are very happy with fewer. We cannot offer catering, but there is an excellent pub across the road.

Contact us if you are interested.





## The Friends' Garden Party & Exhibition

July 19 dawned bright, sunny and breezy, but with a threat of showers. Fortunately the day kept its promise and the weather was fine for our first Garden Party. Mildred and Luke had done much of the preparation the day before, aided by local volunteers Sheila Viner, John Mears and Colin Mitchell. On the day, Helen Major handed out badges to 56 Friends and their guests, who were catered for by Mildred, Moira Stidder and Susan Harverson, with a little help from M&S. A real team effort!

The Exhibition and food were available in the large "Garden Hall" (see collage below) and this was supplemented by a slide show of Archive material put together by Colin. The Archive and Library were open to allow visitors to look behind the scenes and examine the materials we use (see page 2). Sales from our bookshop and a jumble sale helped to defray the costs of the event and we were very pleased with the day.

Afterwards, a number of Friends wrote to say how much they enjoyed the event, echoing our thoughts that a pleasant few hours in an informal and attractive place enabled us to make and renew acquaintances, all with a common interest.

*"I loved the informal atmosphere and, for some reason, felt far more relaxed than I do at other meetings; consequently, I managed to speak to lots of wonderful people"*

James Butson



## People Pages

Most of the visitors to the Mills Archive website are interested in tracing ancestors who may have had some connection with traditional mills and milling. As the Mills Archive holds more than 1 million records, we have much to interest the family historian.

Millers, millwrights and mill owners played an important part in our history and we aim to make information about them more accessible. These pages keep you up to date with progress and highlight some interesting discoveries.



*Peter Dolman, left, and fellow miller Chris Wilson, photographed at Thelnetham Windmill, Suffolk, in 1997*

### Peter C J Dolman (1955-2002)

The eminent East Anglian mill restorer and author, Peter Dolman, passed away in 2002. His large collection of research material was donated to the Mills Archive by Peter's wife, Melanie, following his death. Born in 1955, Peter grew up in Bedfordshire, close to the little post mill at Stevington. Interest in this windmill encouraged Peter to seek out other local examples, resulting in his first published article in the Bedfordshire Magazine in 1972.

It was in Suffolk, during the 1970s, that the depth of Peter's knowledge of mills and his attention to detail started to become apparent. He and other like-minded local enthusiasts teamed up to form the Suffolk Mills Group which, using volunteer labour, undertook carefully-planned holding operations to derelict mills in order to safeguard them ready for future restorers. Between 1979 and 1985, Peter planned and implemented the restoration of Thelnetham tower mill to working order, spearheading the volunteer labour team. He later took up the tenancy of Thorington Street watermill at Stoke-by-Nayland, which he got running again – with a little help from his friends! In 1994, supported by his wife and young children, Peter set up home at Stanton windmill and began an equally ambitious restoration scheme to that of Thelnetham.

Peter also became very interested in the windmills of Lincolnshire, visiting every site in the county with existing remains between 1977 and 1985. The results of his efforts, which included a careful sift through the archives held by Lincolnshire County Council, were published in 1986 as the latest addition to the County Windmills Series of contemporary surveys devised by Arthur C. Smith (see page 12).

## Biographies of mill people with thanks to Tony Yoward

We are anxious to add to our collection of 36 biographies of mill-related people, so if you know of any or can add information or anecdotes, please get in touch. We inherited a number of individual collections when we took over the SPAB collection (see page 5) and we will feature the owners and their interests in future issues of *Mill Memories*. Prominent among them are:

### **E M GARDNER**

Miss E. M. Gardner added watermills to the remit of the then SPAB Windmill Section. She served on the Committee of the Section from 1951 to 1959 and chaired the Watermills Publication Committee for the first six issues of the Watermill Booklets, writing the fourth one: "The Three Mills, Bromley by Bow". After her death, Paul N. Wilson completed the work he had planned to write with Miss Gardner: "Horizontal Watermills". This appeared in 1960.



*Miss EM Gardner OBE, who persuaded Rex Wailes that watermills were as worthy of protection as windmills*

### **E MITFORD ABRAHAM (1882 – 1959)**

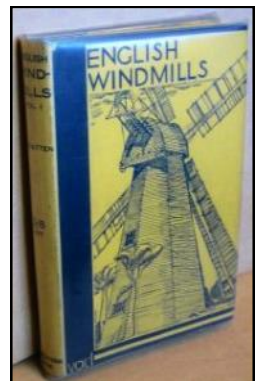
Peter Ellis has written an excellent profile of Mitford Abraham in the newly-published North West Mills Group Review no 11 (£5 + p&p from our bookshop). Although his collection of notes, cuttings, illustrations, books and negatives went to the John Rylands Library in Manchester, he gave 224 transparencies to the Mills Section.

### **HALLAM ASHLEY (1900 – 1987)**

Hallam Ashley came from a family of professional photographers. He was commissioned to provide photographs of buildings in East Anglia, particularly in Norfolk, for the National Buildings Record, and later for the National Monuments Record. Windmills and watermills feature strongly in his photographs, and he worked closely with Rex Wailes. Most of his work was donated to the NMR, but some pre-war material was given to the SPAB.

### **MARJORIE I BATTEN**

The first Windmill Secretary of the SPAB Windmill Section wrote "English Windmills" Vol.1 for the Society. This was published in 1930 by the Architectural Press, London. The book dealt with the counties of Surrey, Kent and Sussex and was based on the windmill survey that launched the Section (see page 5). Although a second volume in the series written by Donald Smith appeared in 1932, no further books were published.



## Bookshelf



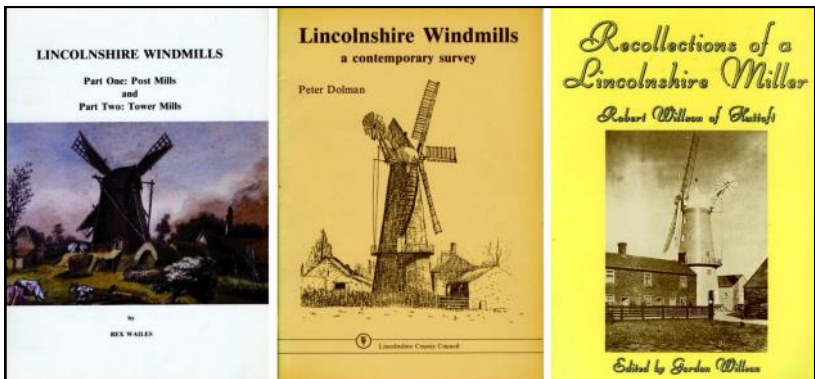
This section is devoted to books in the Mills Archive. It looks at recent additions and interesting mill books in our collection of more than 1700 volumes. The library catalogue is on the Friends' website at [www.millsarchivetrust.org](http://www.millsarchivetrust.org).

We also feature examples of the books we have for sale. These are all surplus to our needs; as we keep at least two copies for the library. The bookshop is also on the Friends' website.

### Books on Lincolnshire Windmills

Our Library Catalogue at <http://library.millsarchivetrust.org/> shows we have 24 books and booklets on Lincolnshire in our collection of 1348 volumes. These range from the recent book written by David Jager to the much earlier survey work of Rex Wailes. All are available for consultation free of charge at Watlington House and sometimes they appear in our bookshop.

The Wailes work, originally published by the Newcomen Society between 1951 and 1955, was reprinted in 1991 by the Friends of Heckington Windmill. They brought together the papers on post mills and tower mills into a single A4 volume. This and Peter Dolman's later and much-sought-after volume (see page 10) are available from the Friends' bookshop along with Gordon Willson's profusely illustrated "Recollections of a Lincolnshire Miller; Robert Willson of Huttoft". Friends qualify for a 10% discount on book purchases of £30 and over and all proceeds go towards our work.



## Visiting the Mills Archive

Friends and members of the general public are welcome to visit us in Reading. The address is on the back page and our website includes an interactive map.

Our office and research centre are on the ground floor of Watlington House, and we are convenient for the town centre with a large free car park.

As we are open only when volunteers are working, it is important that you make an appointment before travelling. We can arrange to be open most working days between 10 and 4. Saturday mornings are sometimes possible as well.

It will save you time if you can let us know beforehand of any specific research you are undertaking, so that we can retrieve the files from our store before you arrive.

Email [info@millsarchive.com](mailto:info@millsarchive.com) 1–2 weeks before your planned trip and offer us alternative dates if possible. We will do our best to be there when you need us.

*The Mills Archive Library  
and Research Room  
Ground floor access  
Appointment necessary*



*Watlington House*

*Free car park*

*10 minutes' walk from*

*Reading station*

## Please join the Friends of the Mills Archive



Opening the Library 2006

As the Archive plans for the long term, monthly standing orders are vital to ensure that regular costs are covered by regular income. So to qualify for full membership, we ask you to complete and return the standing order form opposite. Single donations are also very welcome, and in return for a donation of £25 we will send you three free copies of *Mill Memories*.

Regular public support is a major influence on grant-giving bodies. The Heritage Lottery Fund, a generous supporter of our cataloguing, likes to feel its grants echo public interest. Regular donations by many people are the best way of signalling that interest and guaranteeing the long-term success of the Mills Archive.

### Key Benefits of Membership

*“We all  
need  
Friends!”*

*Mill Memories*, every 6 months.

Two free invitations to exclusive Friends' events.

Internet privileges, all free of charge including:

- Discounts on purchases from our Internet shop
- Early warnings of additions to our bookshop
- Posting notices on the Friends' Notice Board
- Offering items for sale on the Friends' Trading Post

10 high-resolution images each year from the Mills Archive, emailed on request.

Additional benefits will be announced in *Mill Memories*.



The Friends' Website

### Check the Friends' Website [www.millsarchivetrust.org](http://www.millsarchivetrust.org)

Internet shop	Friends' Notice Board
Mills Archive Library Catalogue	Friends' Trading Post
News of Mills	Family History Searches
Mystery Mills and Oddities	Useful Links

I wish to join the Friends of the Mills Archive and I have completed the standing order form for at least £5 per month

**Or** I wish only to receive *Mill Memories* and enclose a cheque for £25 payable to The Mills Archive Trust

**And** I am a UK taxpayer so you may reclaim Gift Aid on my contribution (*please delete if not appropriate*)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_ Tel \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

*Note we will not divulge your information to any other organization or individual.*

<b>Standing Order Form</b>	To	Bank	Branch
Address		Postcode	
Please Pay GIROBANK plc, BOOTLE Sort code 72-00-03 Account No 21695488			
Credit THE MILLS ARCHIVE TRUST			
The Sum of £_____ (amount in words: _____)			
Commencing _____ and then every _____ (due date & frequency)			
Until further notice or until _____ and debit my/our account accordingly			
Name of account _____		Account No _____	
This replaces my/our previous standing order for the transfer of £_____ to the same account			
Name _____		Signature _____	
Name _____		Signature _____ (if second required)	
Address _____			
_____ Postcode _____			



## The Friends of the Mills Archive

part of The Mills Archive Trust

Registered Charity no 1091534

Watlington House  
44 Watlington Street  
Reading RG1 4RJ  
United Kingdom

The Friends of the Mills Archive are dedicated to supporting the work of the Mills Archive Trust and we value new members. We extend a warm welcome to family, local and national historians as well as to those who simply want to find out more about our milling heritage.

The Mills Archive is one of the world's great mill collections. It is an Aladdin's cave filled with memories, free to users and run by volunteers. The collections show the rich and diverse crafts, people, buildings, machinery and equipment involved with mills in the UK and around the world.

Friends enjoy a number of benefits (see page 14) as well as knowing they are helping to protect an unrivalled world-class resource.

**Please help us to save the memories!**

*For more information write to the address above or email us  
[friends@millsarchivetrust.org](mailto:friends@millsarchivetrust.org)*

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## In the Next Issue of Mill Memories

### **Rex Wailes Collection**

The life and work of the best-known mill preservation pioneer

### **Troublesome media**

Types of archival item and how we slow down their deterioration

### **Watermills in Sussex**

Changes to the mills reflected by the material in our many collections

*Rex Wailes photographed in Holland in 1973*

*(SPAB Collection)*

