

Mill Memories

The Newsletter of the Friends of the Mills Archive



Mills Archive Trust

Special features:

- A memorial to Ken Major
- Examples of our glass plates and lantern slides
- The work of Hallam Ashley
- Frank Gregory project update

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What we have gained

Ken Major's death in July is a great loss, but we consider what he gave us.

It was no accident that we are based in Reading. It was Ken who introduced us to Watlington House in 2002 when we desperately needed a proper address. Starting in an attic on a peppercorn rent, we have grown to take over most of the ground floor. During that time Ken worked hard to ensure we had the premises we needed for a rapidly-growing archive. He was very proud when we opened our Library and Research Centre in 2006 and never hesitated to explain the history of the House, which is run as a charity, letting rooms to other charities.



As one of the three Foundation Trustees (Alan Stoyel and Mildred Cookson are the others) he bequeathed his collection to the Archive and allowed us to raid it for our various cataloguing projects. This has meant that over the years we have assimilated some valuable material from one of the biggest collections in private hands. Donations to Ken's Memorial Fund at <http://www.millsarchivetrust.org/memorial.htm> are still arriving and will be used to underline his contribution to molinology.

Can you help us spread the word even further?

If every Friend could provide one good introduction, we would have enough to cover the rent for the extra room we have had to take on to store the Frank Gregory Collection (see p3, 10 & 11).

If you would like literature for an event or would like us to send a form and a sample copy to someone, please let us know.

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.

Boxes, boxes, boxes



Boxes are an essential part of any archive. They help to keep papers organised and are the first line of protection in most instances, but not all boxes are equal. We are all familiar with those whose bottoms can drop out without warning and none of us would use a dirty box to store our precious material.

There are, however, other unseen hazards that need to be taken into account. Deterioration of paper has many causes, stemming from the way paper is made. Many papers contain lignins and alum-rosin sizing which form damaging acids over time. Paper fibres break down under exposure to UV light and oxygen, causing the paper to become brittle and discoloured. Dust, dirt, mould, insects and vermin represent further hazards to safe storage.

As well as ensuring the storage conditions are not subject to excessive or fluctuating heat and humidity, documents and photographs are best stored in proper storage containers. There are boxes of many different shapes and sizes on the market and Friends are welcome to take advantage of our bulk purchasing. All storage boxes, folders etc should be acid-free (pH 8.5 where possible) with a 3% calcium carbonate buffer added. Ideally all material should also be free of groundwood and lignin.

The container must provide physical support as well as protection; boxes should be comfortably filled, never stuffed. Each item must be supported and metal paper clips and staples removed. Store like-sized papers together and only in archival-quality folders or Mylar or Melinex see-through enclosures. Archivists should avoid placing more than a dozen sheets together in one enclosure. These can then be stored flat in archival quality cartons.

None of this is cheap. Boxes can cost £5–£25; the main reason we keep looking for financial help!



News from the Archive

Seventh Trustee appointed

We are delighted to welcome Dr Peter King to our Board of Trustees. Peter has recently retired from his position as Head of Library Services at the University of Bristol. The Archive will undoubtedly benefit from his considerable experience.

A new home for family history information

With the help of the team at divinecreations.com, we have been upgrading our web server and Friends' website to prepare for the uploading of our new family history database. Starting with 50,000 names, this will be a major resource for genealogists and should generate a great deal of traffic through the website, as well as more Friends!

New shelving installed to meet growing demand

We have expanded the work room store with extra shelving (below) to house the glass slides and plan chests, and are now preparing to catalogue our collections of large mill drawings. One possible strategy will be to use an external agency to digitise the drawings, following the success of this method of handling the 35mm slides and glass negatives.



Digitising our lantern slides and glass plate negatives

Following on from the article on page 2 of the previous issue of *Mill Memories*, we have now digitised all of the glass negatives and slides in our possession, throughout the various collections we hold. The total number of items exceeds 3,000 and spans nineteen collections. Beginning with the Frank Gregory Collection, these superb images will progressively be made available via the website catalogue. A selection of them are reproduced below.



Left: A rare coloured lantern slide showing Wicklewood Mill, Norfolk, in working order, pre-1945 (W. H. Palmer Collection)

Below left: This glass plate negative records the senseless destruction of one of the last composite windmills in the UK at Thornham, Norfolk. (SPAB Collection)

Below right: Sacks of grain stored on the top floor of this watermill are illuminated by light streaming through a window (SPAB Coll.)



Digitising our lantern slides and glass plate negatives (continued)



Left: Mildred Cookson's collection includes a valuable set of lantern slides showing the watermills of the River Thames during their working days. Most of the mills can be identified, but the location of this shot is as yet unknown. It shows a miller in his working whites standing in front of two very fine breast-shot waterwheels

Right: A lantern slide from Miss E. M Gardner's collection, part of a set of shots of mills taken in continental Europe. It is marked "Franche Molen - oil stone" and shows a smartly-dressed bespectacled gentleman standing beside a millstone of large diameter



Preserving an archive made of glass

Luke Bonwick



Evidence of a lost age: a flour sack rests above a dusty meal spout at Old Bolingbroke Mill, Lincolnshire, 1930s (Hallam Ashley Collection)

Certain types of archival media are easier to handle than others. Over the past seven years our skilled volunteers have worked through thousands upon thousands of photographic images, illustrations and documents of all kinds.

The results appear on our website catalogue at millsarchive.com, which now holds more than 20,000 individual items. This type of material can be digitised quickly and easily using a regular flatbed scanner - technology which is readily available and reasonably priced.

Many of our collections contain sets of transparencies, most of which are common 35mm colour slides. Although numerous, colour slides can be handled and scanned in batches with relative ease.

Our older collections contain several superb images taken using fragile glass media. Although it is possible to scan these using a regular flatbed, the process is difficult and time consuming, risking damage to both the archival media and the scanner. The handling, digitisation and safe storage of these items has demanded careful consideration.

Prioritising old and fragile items

Glass plate negatives vary in size from the dimensions of a Post-It note to a sheet of A4-size paper. The quality of these photographic images is invariably excellent and, coupled with the fact that most of them were taken in the 1930s or earlier, their value as historical records is high. The Mills Archive has therefore made the digitisation of these items a top priority, and website users are beginning to see the results of our efforts.

We have entrusted the scanning of our glass plates to an external agency, TownsWeb Archiving, a company with a great deal of experience of handling fragile materials. When working with glass media, the risk of damage to the originals is ever-present. After digitisation there should no longer be a need for the original items to be handled, and several backups of the high-resolution images are always made to ensure the

Preserving an archive made of glass (continued)

information is not lost. The digitised 'tiff' images can run to several megabytes in size, so the storage implication for thousands of such images is significant. We spend hundreds of pounds every year on web hosting, storing and backing up our images. However, the quality of the results more than justifies the outlay.



Setting standards with glass

One of the most skilled photographers represented by our collections is Hallam Ashley FRPS (1900-1987), an East Anglian since his twenties, who became infected by the enthusiasm for mills of Rex Wailes and his contemporaries. The mills of Norfolk were favoured subjects for Ashley, resulting in some invaluable records of the Broadland drainage windmills and the watermills beside the county's navigable rivers. Hallam Ashley's collection includes 650 glass plate negatives, 60% or more of which are views of internal machinery. When one considers the cramped and murky interiors usually met with by mill explorers, the skill with which Ashley has composed and illuminated his pictures is made plain. Sadly, the majority of mills photographed by Ashley are no longer in existence, or have been altered beyond recognition.

In addition to Hallam Ashley's work, the collections of the Mills Archive contain more than 3,000 glass plates and lantern slides, all of which have been digitised. The images are currently being added to our web catalogue - a unique and nationally- unrivalled set of images recording the condition of mills a century ago.

A characteristic Ashley composition - looking into the cap of Wellingore Mill, Lincolnshire, 1930s

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.

Our Legacy Campaign

"The RSPCA gets half of its £100 million each year from legacies"

Daily Telegraph
September 2009

By now you and all the other Friends will have received a copy of our new legacy package. Increasingly charities have to rely on generous bequests to fund their activities. As a new charity we have not yet built up any momentum in this area; indeed it is only through the generosity of one of the Friends that we have been able to produce the package we sent you. A lot of time and effort went into writing both publications and we hope we have achieved the right balance between making our case and providing objective information for those thinking about writing or revising a Will.

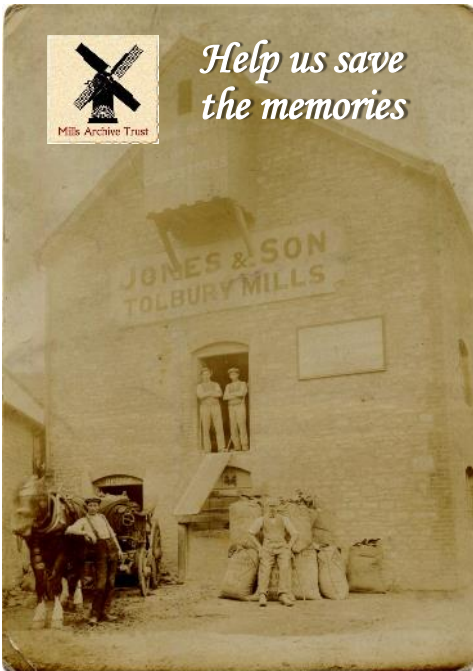
We decided to take the opportunity of rewriting our information booklet on the Archive. Amazingly, the last one was published in 2003, but such

a lot has happened in the last six years.

We hope the booklet in the pocket at the back of the package gives you a flavour of the activities you are supporting and underlines how much more we still need to do. The best way to see what we are doing is, of course, to come and see us at work. We would always be happy to welcome you to Reading.

The financial support we currently get from the Friends is vital to help us in our day-to-day activities. The reason we hope that in your long-term planning you consider leaving us a bequest is to ensure that future generations can build on the good start we have made with your help.

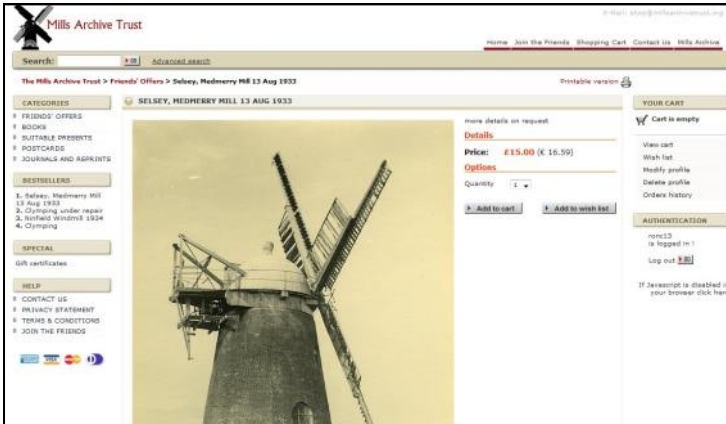
If you know of someone who may be interested in one of the brochures, please let us know. They look very nice, but they do not achieve anything in boxes on our shelves!



Friends' Privileges: Copyright and Postcards

Mills Archive Online will soon hold details of some 30,000 mill pictures. Not surprisingly, the availability of high quality, sometimes rare images results in many requests to use them in publications and on websites. Such use requires our copyright permission, for which we charge a fee. **We now waive the copyright fees for Friends.** This waiver applies to 10 images per year and does not apply to commercial publications unless they are self-published. As Friends can get 10 high-definition images at no charge each year, we hope this will encourage wider use of our images and persuade others to join our band of Friends.

Preferential Postcards



We have many old postcards to auction on eBay to provide a welcome contribution towards our ever-increasing costs. As we find more and more duplicate mill cards **we have decided to promote our Friends-first service** for these collectable items. Many were produced by Sid Simmons 70 years ago and are exquisite. Some can also fetch sums well in excess of £50.

Each month, before we put the better cards on eBay, we will upload them to the Friends-only portion of our shop, where they will be offered at a fixed price, post-free on a first-come, first-served basis. To see them, login to the shop and click on the category Friends' Offers (see above). If you would like to receive an email alert when new cards are added, please email us at friends@millsarchive.com .

"Having such items readily available online through the Archive is, it seems to me, about the best encouragement any Mill Researcher can get"
Mike Beacham

People Pages: Frank Gregory Online

Luke Bonwick



Frank at Shipley Mill, dressed in his miller's smock

Our latest cataloguing project, grant-aided by the Heritage Lottery Fund, is our most ambitious to date: the digitisation and cataloguing of Frank Gregory's collection of mill material.

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, resulting in a collection of more than 35,000 items. Frank left his collection to the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum in 1998, since when the public has not had access to this important archive.

The Frank Gregory Online (FGOL) project ensures the protection of these important regional heritage records and encourages their public use. The collection includes 11,500 35mm slides, nearly 10,000 postcards and many thousands of photographic prints and negatives.

Itchy feet

Frank was a born traveller and was particularly keen on exploring the countryside, a fact demonstrated by his commitment to the Sussex Pathfinders for whom he acted as secretary and treasurer for over thirty years. More than half of the collection comprises unlabelled images, taken on Frank's numerous trips around the UK and abroad. These cover a wide variety of mill themes and several other subjects besides, including the Sussex landscape, vernacular buildings and industrial archaeology.

To complete the cataloguing requirement, the work has been divided between two teams of volunteers - those based at the Mills Archive, and a group of local experts from the Sussex Mills Group, many of whom worked alongside Frank on various mill projects. The skill and knowledge of our volunteers has been invaluable when undertaking such a complex project as this. Identification of individual images has required a great deal of patience and teamwork!

An external agency has now completed the scanning of every 35mm slide, glass plate negative and lantern slide in the collection, and the catalogued images are beginning to appear on the website catalogue.

Frank Gregory Online (continued)

Documentary material in the collection includes a fascinating set of technical notes made on site visits - some drawn up accurately to scale and others scrawled indecipherably on any piece of paper that came to hand, including envelopes and bus timetables!

During the 1960s and 70s, Frank corresponded with Raymond Duthy, an artist he had met through the Pathfinders. Together, Frank and Raymond enjoyed several mill excursions. Spurred on by Frank, Raymond produced a series of finely-executed watercolours of windmills and watermills, which now form a valuable element of the collection.

Frank's model-making skills are reflected by photographs and annotated drawings of the various models he made of different mills: Nutley post mill was his favourite subject but other windmills and watermills also feature. Many of these are on display at the mills he helped to repair. Others, such as an excellent teaching aid with working parts featuring the three main types of waterwheel, remain part of the main collection.

Different categories of ephemera were prone to catch Frank's eye, provided there was a common milling theme. He amassed impressive collections of flour bags, stamps featuring mills, millstone-dressing tools, and even millers' clothing. At special events he could often be found showing parties of visitors around a mill, dressed in his miller's smock.

Our recent workshop day, held at the Weald & Downland Museum, was a great success, and was attended by several Friends who had heard of the project's aims and were keen to see the results so far. A second Sussex-based workshop, to be held at West

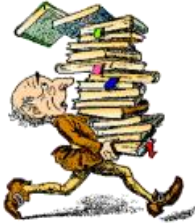
Blatchington Mill in Hove, is planned for 12th April 2010. Places are free, but limited - if you would like to attend, please send an email to luke@millsarchive.demon.co.uk.

(below)

At the recent Frank Gregory Workshop, Peter Casebow displays a case of models Frank made for display at High Salvington Mill



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 2,000 volumes. The library catalogue is on the Friends' website at 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.

Friends' Bookshop works both ways!

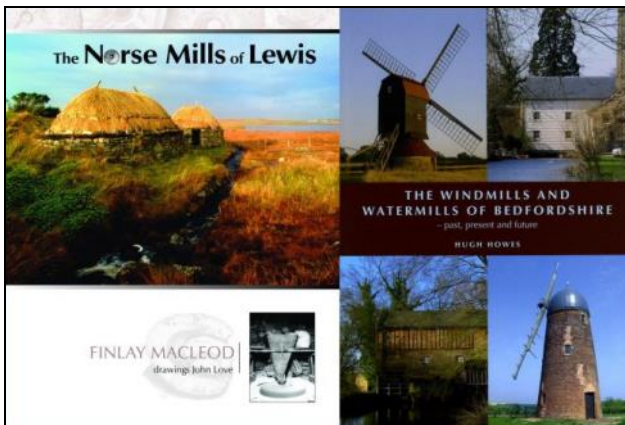
We do not usually buy new books for resale. However, you may not be aware that we make an exception for books published by Friends of the Mills Archive. As a service to Friends who may want to sell a book they have just written, we make a special feature of the publication, provided their publishers give us their normal "sale or return" discount. This allows us to cover our costs on each transaction and supports Friends' publishing activities. If you go to our shop at <http://shop.millsarchivetrust.org/> you can see what is new on the front page and also take advantage of the usual 10% discount* available only to Friends.

Two recent additions worth highlighting are Hugh Howes's *The Windmills and Watermills of Bedfordshire* (£9) and *The Norse Mills of Lewis* by Finlay MacLeod (£15). Postage and packing is

extra, and you should note that the Norse mills book is heavy!

Postage of all orders is based on the total weight of the package and is calculated automatically when you order online.

***The Friends' 10% discount applies to all orders for more than £30, but does not include post & packing charges.**



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 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 including:

- Discounts on purchases from our Internet shop
- Early warnings of additions to our shop
- Waiving of copyright fees
- Much-reduced research fees

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

Internet shop

Friends' Notice Board

Mills Archive Library Catalogue

Mill Writing blog

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 organisation or individual.

Standing Order Form	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

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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*

In the Next Issue of Mill Memories

Quality from quantity

Meeting the challenge of handling several thousand photographic prints and negatives from our collections.

The collections include photographic prints in a variety of sizes. Many are duplicated between collections. Locating an original print from which copies have been made is not always straightforward.

