

Issue 6

May 2010

Mill Memories

The Newsletter of the Friends of the Mills Archive



Special features:

This issue is largely devoted to Frank Gregory Online, as it nears completion. This, our most recent Lottery-funded project, has been particularly valuable and leads to the question "What next?"

See page 8 for a hint!

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Our debt to the Lottery

The support we get from the Friends of the Mills Archive is vital for us to grow and share even more of our hidden mill jewels. However, we have only achieved so much because of a succession of grants from the HLF:



- **2002 Mills Archive Online**

£49,900 for setting up our catalogue, working with the NMR and the Templeman Library to cover the mills of Dorset and Nottinghamshire.

- **2004 North-East Mills Online**

£2,300 in collaboration with the NE Mills Group to catalogue our holdings of mills in their region.

- **2005 Kent Millers' Tales**

£48,900 to catalogue material on the milling heritage of Kent held by us and by Kent County Council.

- **2008 Frank Gregory Online**

£49,900 to work with the Sussex Mills Group to catalogue tens of thousands of items in Frank's collection, belonging to the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum.

All rewarding projects, but they also underline how much more there is to be done. If you have any ideas for future projects, why not let us know?



Supported by
The National Lottery
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



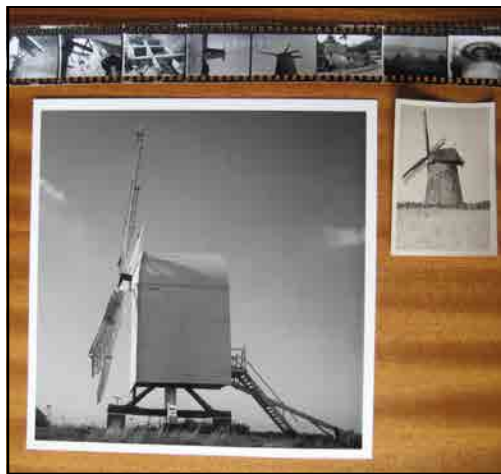
Quality from Quantity

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.

Scaling a mountain of photographic prints

At the Mills Archive, one of our main aims is to make available to users as many items from our collections as possible. Unidentified illustrations and documents stored away in boxes at the back of the store are of no use to anyone!

We rely heavily on the process of digitising images, by creating high-resolution scans, and displaying them on our website catalogue where they can be found by browsing and searching the collections. By far the easiest pictorial items to digitise are photographic prints. Compared with 35mm slides, film negatives and fragile glass plate negatives and lantern slides, prints have many advantages. They are easy and safe to handle; their content can be viewed instantly under normal lighting conditions, and they can be digitised using a regular flatbed scanner.



Most collections include large numbers of photographic prints. Frank Gregory's contains such a quantity that initially they had to be measured by volume! The best collections of prints are those generated by the most meticulous researchers, saving Mills Archive cataloguers a great deal of time and effort. These prints tend to be carefully labelled on the reverse with the name of the photographer, the location, date and subject - and even, in exceptional cases, the number of the negative to which the picture relates. The wisdom of doing this is demonstrated by overflowing boxes of photographs in certain collections that emerge in no particular sequence and have no identifying information on them. The value of these images, depicting murky mill interiors from a century or more ago, may be immense, and our experienced teams of molinologists work hard to identify them, but there is a chance that the locations of some photographs may never be known.

If you are considering leaving a set of mill images to the Mills Archive, please take a few minutes more to identify them. Future cataloguers will be immensely grateful to you!

News from the Archive

Visit by the Wessex Mills Group

As one of our long-time supporters, we were looking forward to the visit by the Wessex Mills Group in December. At the last minute the snow came and the South of England slid to a halt. So we had to postpone the event until April.

Mildred, one of our Archive trustees and a volunteer, attracted a small crowd as she explained how she handles postcard albums and the like. Some of these albums were very elegant and nicely produced a hundred years ago, but now many look the worse for wear and may even damage their contents. The first task is to remove the cards or photographs carefully and then, having sorted them, store them in suitable archive boxes (see the previous issue of *"Mill Memories"*) ready for volunteers to scan and catalogue them, after which they are stored in archival binders.

Visitors were shown round the work rooms and library and spent some time looking at a small exhibition before visiting the pub across the road for lunch. In the afternoon, Ron kept everyone awake with a PowerPoint presentation about the Archive and its work, emphasising the importance of the support we receive from the Friends.

Any Friend, or group of which you are a member, is very welcome to visit the Archive for a behind-the-scenes tour. Such visits are very informal and enjoyable. We feel both the Archive and the visitors benefit, so why not email us to set up a visit?



Gems from the Frank Gregory Collection Luke Bonwick

The Frank Gregory Online Project (FGOL) is a collaborative initiative that has enabled thousands of records of mills to be accessed by the public. The project has been led by the Mills Archive, working in partnership with expert members of the Sussex Mills Group (see page 11). Looking back over the contents of his collection, it is remarkable to discover how many mills Frank Gregory was actively involved with and how far across the world his records of mills extend.

Frank was a remarkable and well-liked individual with an encyclopaedic technical and historical knowledge of traditional windmills and watermills. Born in Brighton in 1917, Frank's love of the Sussex countryside and its landmarks was nurtured by his parents who used the motor car they owned to good effect. Frank had natural practical and artistic abilities and became a woodwork teacher, allowing him to pass on his skills and enthusiasm to younger generations.

Frank's infectious passion for his hobby translated into strong support for a number of pioneering projects to repair selected examples of windmills and watermills in Sussex and

Smartly dressed in his usual attire of jacket and tie, Frank climbs one of the common sweeps of Nutley mill, which he had helped to restore



On an overseas expedition, Frank gets as close as possible to the working parts of this tiny watermill with a horizontal wheel in order to inspect them

Gems from the Frank Gregory Collection (continued)



On a visit to Suffolk in the 1960s, Frank photographs his wife Betty and young daughter Joy with Jesse Wightman, one of the last traditional millwrights of his generation who, at the time, was working as a miller at Wickham Market watermill

the surrounding area. Projects to save more than fifteen mills, including the ancient post mill at Nutley, directly benefited from Frank's input and knowledge. Frank acted as a mentor to the current generation of volunteers who keep these mills in good order.

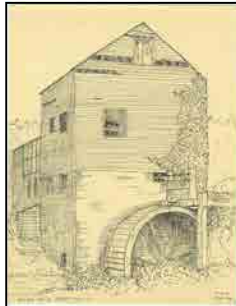
Frank's enthusiasm for mills combined with his teaching experience to make him an engaging speaker. The pictorial records of mills he created were put to good use, illustrating his regular slideshows to local groups. This was a good means of fund-raising for current mill restoration projects. He also enjoyed showing school groups around various mills, in particular with groups visiting the Outward Bound Centre at Burwash. Frank often appeared at mills on Open Days dressed in his famous miller's smock, whose previous owner had reputedly been a rather well-dressed scarecrow!

Frank took an estimated 10,000 photographs and converted a Kodak 620 Bellows Camera into a copying frame, looking straight down onto a wooden baseboard. Many of his photographs are the last records of mills before their collapse or demolition. On his death in 1998, Frank left his entire collection to the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum at Singleton near Chichester.

Gems from the Frank Gregory Collection (continued)



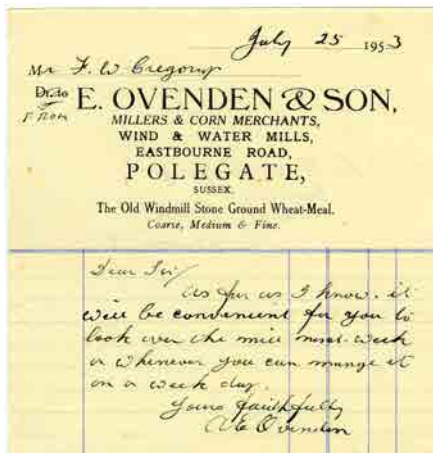
The project to organise and catalogue the collection began in Spring 2008 with the transportation of 130 boxes of material from the Museum to the Mills Archive's premises in central Reading. Derek Stidder and Luke Bonwick were assisted in the removal by Colin Smith, whose firm kindly loaned a large van which provided much-needed extra transport capacity.



Once at Reading, the material was reorganised by media type before being transferred to archival-quality storage boxes. Digitising of the fragile pictorial items such as the glass plate negatives and lantern slides, together with all 12,000 of Frank's 35mm transparencies, was carried out by an external agency, TownsWeb Archiving. Documents, photographic prints and ephemeral items such as Frank's collections of flour bags, postcards and stamps were digitised and catalogued by the Archive's expert team of volunteers.



The sheer numbers of pictorial items were brought home to us. These cover a wide variety of mill themes and several other subjects besides, including the Sussex landscape, tools and trades and world travel. Non-mill material has been separated out and returned to the Museum for cataloguing by its staff.



Top to bottom:

A teaching aid, made by Frank, demonstrating the differences between three types of vertical waterwheel

Moat Mill, Mayfield, Sussex, one of a series of sketches of Sussex watermills made by Frank in 1936

One of these chromatropes, projected on a screen using a magic lantern, features a windmill with turning sails

One of a collection of millers' billheads from different mills that remained in operation in the mid-20th century.

Ephraim Ovenden was the last miller at both the windmill and the watermill at Polegate, E Sussex

Gems from the Frank Gregory Collection (continued)

"I knew Frank personally over many years as a friend and fellow mill recorder, operator and conservator. His enthusiasm for the subject was unbounded."

Frank was one of those rare people who are both practical and studious and his collection reflected these many facets and disciplines."

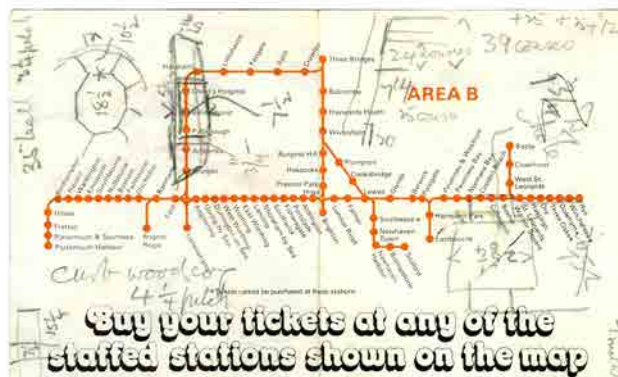
Jon Sass, restorer of Wrawby post mill, Lincolnshire

During the course of the project we hosted two 'workshop' sessions in Sussex to publicise the interim results of the project. These were well attended by Friends of the Mills Archive, volunteers from the Sussex Mills Group and others involved with the project behind the scenes.

The workshop sessions gave audience members a chance to look in detail at some of the original archival material, and featured illustrated presentations and discussion forums. Many of those who attended knew or had worked alongside Frank and contributed memorable anecdotes about various mill visits - some of which involved rivers, boats and strong currents and had nearly ended in disaster!



The collection features ephemeral items such as matchboxes with mill motifs and a large collection of paper and linen flour bags from individual mills



On one of Frank's expeditions to visit a mill he forgot to bring his notebook. This was merely a minor setback: Frank made use of the blank areas of a train timetable he had acquired en route, turning the paper around as he worked.



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.

The Mills of Berkshire and the Middle Thames

*"We are also
working to
capture the
memories of local
mill people before
they are lost."*
Sheila Viner
Collections
Manager

As the Archive gains wider national and international recognition, we thought it timely to consider the mills on our own doorstep. The region from Abingdon to Windsor and from Brill to Basingstoke contains a wide variety of mills and mill sites and will be the focus of our next application to the HLF for a "Your Heritage" grant.

We are able to apply for such grants because of the continuing and growing support we receive from the Friends of the Mills Archive. The HLF will only fund projects that help people to learn about their heritage and cannot provide support for the essentials of our operation such as rent and storage costs. Regular income from the Friends almost covers our rent and we can make up the deficit by sales of books and postcards. From the Lottery's viewpoint we can show they are backing a winner, not only because of previous successes, but also because of the increasing commitment from our supporters.

This latest project will have the advantage of raising our profile as a local resource and will attract more volunteers who can get involved in what we are doing. We are lucky in having a number of important collections with large local holdings, including those of Ken Major, Alan Stoyel and Mildred Cookson, our three Foundation Trustees. We will be investing the £2,000 we raised from the Ken Major Memorial Appeal as partnership funding in the project.



Strong expressions of support have come from many local organisations and individuals and if we get the grant, we expect to complete the project in the second half of 2012 with a series of exhibitions at the museums in Reading, Newbury, Wallingford and Slough.

We will be including in the project relevant items held by Reading Museum, West Berkshire Museum and the Museum of English Rural Life.

If you have any material you would like to donate to the project or information you can share, please let us know.

New look for the Friends' website www.millsarchivetrust.org



Feedback from Friends has enabled Peter King, our webmaster, to rearrange our site to make room for some new features and we have taken the opportunity to refresh the design.

Watch the site for a series of changes over the coming months!

Identification of an item in the last issue

Thank you very much for sending me the newest edition of Mill Memories. I was particularly glad to read that you are well under way digitising the most valuable lantern slides and glass plates negatives. The article is illustrated with a picture showing a gentleman standing next to an oil stone. Much to my surprise, this picture, from the Miss E.M. Gardner collection, was taken in The Netherlands, and shows the entrance of the "Fransche Molen", nowadays spelled as "Franse Molen" (= "French Mill") at Valkenburg, in Limburg province. The sign above the entrance says "Warehouse for Agricultural ...".

This watermill originally was a double mill, with an oil mill on one side of the stream and a corn mill on the opposite bank, each powered by an undershot wheel. The name of the mill was derived from the fact that the owner of the mill, Mr Loisel, who bought the oil mill in 1804 and had the corn mill built, had come from France.

The oil mill, to which the stone in the picture no doubt belonged, ceased work around 1920, after which the wheel was removed. The corn mill still exists, however, including the waterwheel and machinery, and can be found in the centre of the touristy little town. So much with respect to the mill. As to the gentleman in the picture, I do not have any clue!

Best regards, Leo van der Drift (Netherlands)



"The continued development of the Mills Archive is crucially important, not merely to local historians, but also to those of other regions and countries."

Joan A Dils
Berkshire Local
History
Association

People Pages: Sorting through a squirrel's stockpile



Collections occupy a great deal of space and archival-quality storage materials are costly

Michael Harverson asks:

Would Frank Gregory be surprised that his 'Collection' became the subject of a Heritage Lottery funded project that occupied the time and energy of the Mills Archive for three years?

Frank was a squirrel, acquiring and stockpiling items - multiple copies of postcards, mill leaflets, even flour sacks - with little thought about their possible long-term value. And what about all those photos of Mill X and Mill Y? He used the opportunity of visiting a mill to record his visual impressions, but he did not spend time afterwards adding captions and cataloguing the results.

Remorselessly, as the years passed, tens of thousands of slides and prints resulted! All such collections grow insidiously and so often, like Frank, we haven't the heart or the energy to prune ours! A collection on this scale represents the collector: it is in a sense me, the face I choose to present to the particular world that matters most to me.

The reasons for creating a collection

Why do people amass mill material?

- some to promote their private research;
- some to establish technical details in case of future repairs;
- some in the quest for iconic images of mills;
- some to use in talks to mill groups and other organisations;
- some in a utopian endeavour to make a complete record;
- some simply to help focus their attention during a mill visit.

Where did Frank and his collection fit into that list? What were his hopes for his 'Collection' after his death? 'Collection' here is a title for a disorderly houseful of mill books and photos and ephemera. Did it play an important part in making sense of his life as he looked back on it from his late 70s?

The greatest, most time-consuming problem we have had with Frank's collection has been to identify his uncaptioned photos and slides. We have pored over them, endeavouring to crack questions of location, especially of interior shots, and asked ourselves: "Was Frank just lazy about making his photos customer-friendly for the future?"

Sorting through a squirrel's stockpile (continued)

I suspect he had other ideas: with his camera he would pin down a mill to his own satisfaction, like a butterfly in a Victorian collection. His knowledge of mills was in his head, not on paper, so he did not spend time on labelling and adding captions. He once gave a talk on the mills of Sussex to a Mills Research Group conference; when I asked him later for a text of his contribution to publish with the conference proceedings, he eventually sent me just a list of the slides he had shown. Moreover, it was the practical, hands-on aspect of his involvement with mills – working on the repair of Nutley windmill, for example - that mattered most to Frank.

Has the job we set ourselves, especially sorting out all those photos, been worthwhile? I think the results of the project, and the large amount of fascinating items that have been made available, speak for themselves.

The Frank Gregory Online Expert Group

The Mills Archive is very grateful for the assistance of members from the Sussex Mills Group who have formed the FGOL Expert Group to work through Frank's unidentified photographic items. Over the course of the project, the Group have met regularly at West Blatchington Mill in Hove, spending many hours working through digitised prints and 35mm slides to identify the locations and dates at which the pictures were taken.

The photograph below shows members of the Expert Group and Mills Archive volunteers at the recent workshop day on 12th April.

(below)

*Members of the FGOL
Expert Group and
Mills Archive volunteers
at West Blatchington.*

*L to R: Joy Ford
[Frank's daughter];*

Philip Hicks;

David H Jones;

Tony Yoward;

Bob Bonnett;

Michael Harverson;

Dave Robbins;

Peter Casebon;

Elizabeth Trout;

Peter Hill;

Derek Stidder;

Luke Bonwick;

Bob Potts;

Jeff Best;

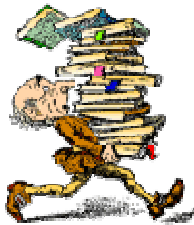
Simon Potter;

Peter King;

Chris Ford.



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.

Kent Mills Society Newsletter and Membership

The Mill Writing blog www.millsarchivetrust.org/index.php/blogs generated a lot of interest, resulting in the formation of the new Kent Mills Society.

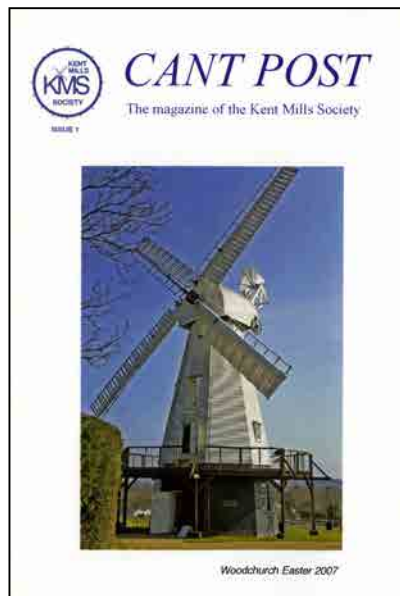
As part of our remit is to encourage groups who take an interest in mills, we are happy to publicise the launch of KMS and provide some initial administrative services. We are also offering their first newsletter *Cant Post* on our bookshop for £5.00. *Cant Post* is a

splendidly produced, 24-page, A5 publication packed with Kent mill material and is well worth the price. *Any Friend of the Archive who would like a copy can get one free from us in return for a second-class stamp.*

Details of the Society may be obtained by emailing kentmillssoc@aol.com. Alternatively you can join KMS by using the shop, where we offer memberships on their behalf for £12 pa, which includes free newsletters.

New Library Site

In the next issue we will be featuring the new website for our library catalogue. This will be one of a series of improvements to our services that we plan to launch in the autumn. Since the photographs opposite were taken, our stock has increased enormously; there is an enormous cataloguing job in prospect.



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

Mills Archive Library Catalogue

News of Mills

Mystery Mills and Oddities

Friends' Notice Board

Mill Writing blog

Family History Searches

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

**Watlington House
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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*

In the Next Issue of Mill Memories

Starting work on the J Kenneth Major Collection

Friends and others have contributed £2000 to Ken's Memorial Fund which gives us the opportunity to start cataloguing his collection.

