

Oldland Mill Trust Spring Newsletter 2022

Patron: Richard Burrows

Registered charity: 1072911 *The oldest regularly working windmill in Sussex! Now 319 years old!*



Welcome to the Spring Newsletter

After the challenging two years we have experienced with no Open Days or Special Event days since 2019 we have decided that we would hold both Open Afternoons and Event Days again this year. The first of these will be an Open Afternoon on Sunday April 3rd. On this day we will be selling teas, coffees and memorabilia. If safe to do so, we also hope to offer mill tours. On Sunday 1st May we will be holding our first Special Event Day of the year and it will, not surprisingly, be called 'Welcome back to the Mill'. We have already got an exciting line up confirmed for the day including Punch and Judy, Kevin Russell – Musician, Jenny Goodacre – Wooden toys, Ice creams and The Ditchling Singers. We hope also to be having other musical acts and a local pole-lathe wood turner and green woodworker. Both Hammersmith and Ditchling Morris are also hopeful of dancing at the event.

We now have a new permanent poster up at the mill which is designed to encourage donations from the public passing by. It has a QR code on it that gives people easy access to donate online. Thanks to both Chris and Juliet for their help in getting this over the line.

Flour sales and Production

Flour sales: We are pleased to report that the sales of our flour are expanding. We have increased the number of our outlets to 16. These include the Brighton One Garden at Stanmer Park, Brighton, which is run by Plumpton College and is well worth a visit. The

amount of flour that we sold last year was a record, being in excess of 1400 kgs. These figures reflect the hard work of our four packing teams and our Millers plus the backup of the Mill volunteers.

Milling: As the list of local businesses selling our flour gets longer, which is good news, the demands placed on the Mill and the Milling and Packing teams increases. We are, of course, very dependent on the wind to operate the Mill but to make the Miller's life more difficult it needs to blow from roughly between South-South-West and South-South-East at around 10 miles per hour or more to get the best milling performance. Unfortunately, this is not as common as we would like; the predominant wind in Keymer is from the South-West in line with a very large tree that blocks our wind. However, over the Winter we did have limited success operating with wind from the West-North-West and North-North-West due to the lack of foliage on surrounding trees. Having said that we managed seventeen milling sessions during 2021, despite the Covid lockdowns, and produced around 1540kg of flour. We started the year grinding Zyatt wheat but by the Autumn our stock was exhausted. In October 2021 we stocked up again, collecting 1.5 tonnes of Crusoe wheat from Coombe Farm in Lancing and this is what we are currently grinding. It is the Trust's policy to purchase locally grown Sussex wheat. Our flour is collected in sacks weighing around 21kg, for subsequent packing in 1kg bags, but we also pack in 16kg sacks for one of the local bakers. So our grand total for 2021 was 59 sacks of

21kg and 19 sacks of 16kg, a good result for a difficult year. We typically limit the milling sessions to grind a maximum of 6 x 21kg sacks due to limited secure storage within the Mill and to ensure our flour stock remains fresh. An exception to this is when we need to meet orders from commercial customers.

The start of 2022 was unsuitable for operating the Mill due to poor wind forecasts, in fact we did not achieve any milling sessions in January so our bulk flour stocks ran very low. The start of February saw some improvement and by the 12th our stock levels were back to normal. Today, while writing this report, the storm force wind is far too strong to even consider running the Mill, so let's hope for good milling winds during the rest of 2022.

Maintenance: Routine maintenance of the mill is carried out once a week throughout the year, and this is essential to keep a machine that is in parts nearly four hundred years old, safe and in good order. Two of the existing oak mill steps were showing rot and had become dangerous, and these have been replaced using seasoned oak generously donated by a local wood-yard.



Repaired steps

Immediately before the recent storms the weatherboards were removed to reduce

possible danger to the sweeps. The boards are normally left in place all year to help milling in lighter wind speeds, but with high winds forecast it was felt wise to remove them.



Weatherboards

Storm anchors were also put in place at the end of the rear steps to prevent the mill turning on its post in the high winds. The sweeps were also held against rotation by the large wooden brake and a back-up strop. You will be glad to hear that Oldland survived Eunice and the other storms without damage.

We are pleased to report that the weather proofing work carried out last summer was successful. Despite the recent storms and heavy rainfall there has been virtually no dampness inside on the boards cladding the mill.

The Mill's cherry picker is an invaluable aid to the maintenance of the mill. The "old girl" is now 33 years old! After extensive use over the summer and autumn, the cherry picker has



"The old girl"

been given a new lease of life with a dozen new hydraulic hoses, replacement of the battery charger electronics, and a new control box.

The Lozenge is a flat grassy area ringed by trees immediately to the east of the mill and where a large marquee is erected during Open Days and for major work such as sweep restoration. The fence around the Lozenge had become dilapidated, and was replaced and repaired over the summer and autumn.



The lozenge fence

It now matches the overall smart appearance of the mill and its grounds.

New workshop build update: Progress on the new workshop is beginning to pick up. The concrete floor was raised in the late Autumn of 2021 as planned and is now at the final level. This revised level will avoid the need for steps or retaining walls to be constructed.



New concrete floor

The opportunity was taken to re-profile the north side of the site to minimise excessively steep ground slopes. The underground electrical supply to the new building was laid at the same time as was a substantial rainwater

soak away to take runoff from the roof. The north-east ground anchor, use of which is essential when removing the sweeps, was also replaced. A cubic metre hole was dug and filled with concrete. Turf was subsequently laid in January 2022 and has transformed the feel of the north aspect of the mill!



North aspect

The final details of the steel internal support frame are currently being agreed to enable the semi-Mansard roof structure to be finalised. Although the building will not be completed when we commence open days in the Spring, we will be able to use the majority of the site, separating off the east side containing the embryonic building and remaining construction materials.

Post-mills and posts: As the name suggests, at the core of a post mill is the large central wooden post. The whole structure of the mill, some 20 tons, is balanced on top of the post and can be rotated to ensure the sails face the prevailing wind. As in other early post mills, the post at Oldland Mill is formed from a single baulk of oak approximately 1m (3' 3 1/4") in diameter and 6.5m (21' 4") in height. From the diameter we can calculate the likely minimum age of the Oak tree used to form the post to have been around 165 years. This means that the mill post at Oldland mill is now some 480 plus years old.

Oak would have been the material of choice for a number of reasons. At the time there would have been few if any available alternatives.

Oak trees of sufficient size could be sourced locally, and Oak combines durability, tensile strength and ability to withstand high compression loads. As a slow growing, long lived, deciduous tree, the annual growth rings are narrow, producing a dense timber. As they age, the outer walls of packing cells, conducting vessels and strengthening fibres that form the annual ring and run the length of the tree are progressively thickened and strengthened. With time these will form part of the dense 'heartwood' of the tree. The concentric rings of thickened tissues embedded in a dense matrix of packing cells, produces a timber able to support the combined mass of the tree and to flex and withstand the sideway forces of high winds. The oak post in the mill, kept upright by a trestle of oak beams, fulfils the same functions as the trunk of the original tree. It supports the weight of the mill and withstands the pressure of the wind and sideways movements.

The compounds which accumulate in the conducting tissues as they thicken and age to form the heartwood include inhibitory tannins, phenols and terpenes, these help to protect the timber from insect and pathogen attack. The result is extremely durable timber. Evidence of this can be seen at Wakehurst Place, where the original East facing door of the mansion, dates from 1590 and is still in use today, 432 years later.

200 Club: There are currently 226 Draw Tickets purchased by 98 people. Last year there were 243 Draw Tickets purchased by 92 people. The 200 Club year runs from 1st July to 30th June.

The 200 Club Winning Numbers since October 2021 were as follows:

	1st	2nd	3rd
November 2021	129	51	216
December 2021	135	224	47

January 2022	196	80	24
February 2022	74	145	209

Volunteers needed. Without the efforts of our willing volunteers, we would not be able to maintain and run the mill. At the last trustees meeting we discussed the need to recruit new volunteers. After many years of excellent service, Geoff Miller, who has been our Treasurer and Secretary, will be stepping down. We are seeking a new Secretary, as well as volunteers happy to engage in the full range of the OMT's activities, helping with administration, events, marketing, fundraising, as well mill maintenance and operation. As the best form of recruitment is often 'word of mouth', I urge members to encourage people they know to consider volunteering. Anyone interested in helping should in the first instance contact the Oldland Mill Trust through our website: www.oldlandwindmill.org.uk

Bank Charges: The Trust's Bank has again increased its charges. We now incur a charge for banking cheques. It would help the Trust if Individual or Family Members who pay by annual subscription could make payment by BACS bank transfer instead. Enclosed with this Newsletter is a Membership Application Form which gives details of the bank account. When making payment, please return the Form to John Tarling, the Membership Secretary. It can be sent either by post or by email to the address shown on the Form.

Stephen Waite

Chairman, Oldland Mill Trust.

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