

## Oldland Mill Trust Autumn Newsletter 2021

Patron: Richard Burrows

Registered charity: 1072911

*The oldest regularly working windmill in Sussex! Now 317 years old!*



Welcome to the Oldland Mill Autumn Newsletter. This is the first I've edited since taking over the Chair from Fred. I hope you enjoy reading about the Mill and the achievements of our hardworking and dedicated volunteers. *Stephen*

### VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Geoff Miller, our Honorary Treasurer has now been in this vital role for almost 15 years and is now aged 83! To provide continuity, we seek someone who would be willing to become Honorary Assistant Treasurer with a view to taking over from Geoff in 18/24 months' time. The role of Assistant will require a maximum of one hour's work per week; the full role will involve two hours per week with occasional additional work when the Annual Accounts and papers for the A.G.M. etc., have to be produced. A qualified accountant, although welcome, is not necessary to undertake the role, but knowledge of book-keeping and accounts would be very helpful.

**MINUTE TAKER:** We have a vacancy for a Minute taker at our Trustees meetings (4 per year) and the A.G.M. Meetings are held in the Parish Centre, or Adastra Hall, Hassocks at 7.30 pm and usually last for 90 minutes. Ability to use shorthand would be an advantage but is not essential.

Those interested, in either roles, Minute Taker or Assistant Treasurer, are invited to contact Geoff on 01273 846939 or [geoffreyrmiller@gmail.com](mailto:geoffreyrmiller@gmail.com)

**MILL CHRISTMAS CARDS:** Available again after record sales in 2020. We have three designs. Pack of 10 for £5; two or more packs £4 per pack.

**OLDLAND MILL GUIDE:** This new 40-page guide (with many coloured photographs) describes the restoration of the Mill over the last 40 years. Price £4 including postage. This makes an ideal Christmas present. We will deliver Cards & Guides to local addresses.

**OPEN DAYS AND EVENTS:** The pandemic has caused the cancellation of the Mill's Open and Special Event days. However, we did manage to accommodate two private visits. One in June for the 5th Lewes Guide group (the 12-15 age group), and another in September for a family of six from Wimbledon. The Guides were attending to qualify for a badge that required visiting a working Windmill to understand how flour is traditionally produced and to purchase flour to bake "campfire bread" .... away from the Mill Grounds! A "Covid Safe" small group tour of the Mill was provided, along with a questions and answers session in the Mill Grounds. The girls were attentive, enjoyed their visit and went away ready to complete their badge by baking bread with our flour.

The Wimbledon family were interested in the Mill from an artistic point of view and wanted to purchase genuine stone ground flour from a working windmill. They had previously visited Brixton Windmill, whose flour is produced by an electrically operated milling machine and did not meet their requirements. After a tour of the Mill, they purchased some flour and expressed their gratitude for the tour and admiration for the 'amazing' restoration.

**TOMMY GEE VISITS THE MILL:** Tommy was instrumental in establishing the Hassocks Amenity Association (HAA) which initially pushed for the restoration of Oldland Mill in the mid 1970s. Tommy moved away around the time of the formal commencement in 1980 and had no further contact with the HAA or Hassocks in general. Tommy is now 97 years old and has just moved back to Hurstpierpoint to live with his daughter. He had not visited the area for 35 years. Tommy visited and toured the mill in early

September with Fred and was "astonished" to see how the mill had been rebuilt. He added that he never actually believed that a "full restoration was possible", but can only admire the "extraordinary achievement".

**IT'S AN ILL WIND THAT BLOWS NO-ONE ANY GOOD.** The first time I met Fred writes Stuart Meier (Lead Miller) at the mill (and before we started grinding flour regularly) I asked Fred why the Mill hadn't ground flour recently. "Well," he told me, "the wind hasn't been right on Thursdays". So, says I, why not come and mill on the day the wind IS right!

The next time I met Fred at the mill the wind was blowing an absolute hooley, the trees shaking, the grass flattened and the rain horizontal. And it wasn't a Thursday!

But the wind, oh is it fickle! One Thursday, with only a lazy wind forecast, I got a call from a major customer, desperate for 70 or 80 kilos of our stone-ground flour. And we had exactly none available, the fickle wind having failed to offer enough power - week after week after week. But we were planning a small run, principally to "clear the stones" (even if we need to produce no flour, we aim to grind a small quantity to avoid a build-up of stale flour between the stones). So we set about starting up the mill, even if we could produce little flour.

There is a definite art to running a windmill - particularly with a lazy wind. You can only use the power the wind provides, so in a lazy wind it is painfully easy to overfeed the grist and stall the mill. Then, you unwind the settings and restart the start-up process again. Then in a lull the grain runs a little fast, and you stall the mill again. Passers-by mutter about "why does the mill keep stopping".

Contrast that with a fine windy day with a good wind blowing straight up the field south of the mill...with power aplenty, the mill grinds through the lulls and accelerates with the gusts. Flour pours from the spout as fast as the millers can change the sacks, weigh, label and tie them off.

So the millers try to choose the good wind days, planning ahead for a week or two. "How about

Wednesday week", one may say, to a reply of "a bit too much west in it, how about Friday afternoon..." But the wind is fickle, and on the Friday afternoon the wind may be too easterly! So the millers try to plan, frequently to be frustrated. AGAIN! It's a miller's life!

*Footnote:-* It, Is an ill wind that blows no-one any good, and we DID succeed in grinding enough flour for our customers that Thursday, by a combination of skill, judgement and sheer good luck. Because sometimes even a lazy wind comes up trumps!

**THE PACKING TEAM** have been busy two or three times a month throughout the summer and have packed over a third of a tonne of flour. Because of Covid we have continued to use our husband and wife packing teams. So a big thank you to Peter and Ann, Brian and Jill, Paul and Jenny and John and Maggie for all their hard work in preparing Oldland Mill's flour for sale.

Packing is undertaken under stringent food safe conditions. The weight of each bag is accurately measured by our trade certified scales. We continue to evolve our packing process. In the Round House we have managed to reduce the six metal storage bins to just one, freeing up space. Our new process now involves storing flour directly into boxes ready for delivery in the Served cupboards. This has reduced the ergonomic strain of handling the packed flour, eliminated double handling, eased flour collection for delivery and made stock assessment much easier.

**FLOUR SALES.** We greatly appreciate the support from our various sales outlets. All are keen to support local food production. Sales are slightly down on last year when the public were panic buying at the start of lockdown. We are confident that the autumn and winter seasons will see a resumption in people wanting to bake their own bread and cakes.

Our wholemeal stone ground flour can be obtained from the Mill or our loyal outlets including Budgens, Adastra Deli, South Downs Heritage Centre, Ditchling Museum, Ditchling PO, Oaks Poultry Farm, Rushfields, Hampers of Hurst, Falmer Farm Shop, and Middle Farm Shop Firle.

**WEATHER PROOFING THE MILL** Throughout the year, but particularly during winter, periods of heavy rain and strong winds lead to water ingress at the junction of the upper front and roof/side boards of the Mill. The spread of damp along the boards has been clearly visible inside the mill. To overcome the problem a two-pronged intervention has been employed. The main effort has been the so-called “Flashings Project” led by Stuart, which started in the Spring, and was completed at the end of August. In addition, joints between the boards have been filled and covered by glass fibre matting and damaged paint removed on the roof and upper sides, followed by painting of the whole area using our standard six stage painting treatment (oil, primer, two under-coats, two top coats). Both interventions have needed the three week hire of a 20m cherry picker, in addition to the use of the Mill’s 12m cherry-picker.



*Water penetration was the problem, where the original flashings had failed at the junction of the front and side weatherboards.*



*Every single weatherboard needed its own wedge, to provide a level surface for the flashings. Every wedge needed to be individually measured and cut.*



*Special ‘carousels’ were needed to paint and transport the wedges, each individually numbered ready for installation*



*A special sliding jig was used to allow the wedges to be cut, each accurate to within just 1 mm.*



*Strakes high on the mill had to be laminated to match the beautiful (but complex) curve of the front of the mill, here measured with a 5-point gauge*



*Our volunteers working high on the mill, the flashings complete and painting of the roof underway.*

**NEW BUILDING:** After a rapid start progress slowed once it became clear that in order to conform to planning restrictions; avoid the need for steps or retaining walls and provide sufficient head room, the roof would need to be redesigned. The floor will be raised and a steel frame used instead of wooden roof trusses, thus creating more head room allowing the end of a sweep to be turned and painted undercover. Mark Shenton has generously agreed to pay for the more expensive metal frame and we await the detailed plans from the architect. There is no date set for completion at present. Once completed the building will be called the Annett-Bolton Building, Peter Bolton was Clare Shenton's Father and a key volunteer working closely with John Annett at the start of the restoration in 1980.

**We were sad to hear of the loss of Derek Kenward and George Rankin.**

Derek died in July 2021. He first attended the Mill as a Volunteer Painter when sweeps were being repainted, but quickly became an integral part of the Mill Team. He took responsibility for many important woodworking tasks including reconstructing the site main gates. He also led on the demanding task of erecting and dismantling our marquees on Open Days. Derek was very willing to take on administrative roles and organised the '200 Club' monthly draw for many years. Derek's contribution to Mill Life was best summed up as "the bloke you went to if you wanted something done", a phrase repeated by a

number of volunteers when informed of his death.

George died in August 2021. He joined the Mill Team of volunteers in 2012 and while his wife Marylyn ran the Tea Team serving teas, coffee and cake on Open days, George became Publicity Officer the same year, a role he filled effectively until 2016 when his failing health forced him to relinquish this key role. However, he continued to support Marylyn and the Tea Team and attend Open Days up until 2019 despite his increasingly painful arthritis. George was a quiet, unassuming man who will be sadly missed as a real friend by all who knew him.

200 Club: winning numbers			
	First	Second	Third
March	139	221	168
April	172	157	156
May	66	74	220
June	248	138	189
July	139	40	3
August	165	153	129
September	110	33	173

There are currently 225 Draw Tickets purchased by 98 people. Last year there were 248 Draw Tickets purchased by 92 people. The 200 Club year runs from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> June.

**TRUSTEE NEWS:** At our Trustee's meeting, on 1<sup>st</sup> September, our first face to face meeting, since the start of Covid, two key policies were approved. An Adult Safeguarding Policy and a Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. Legally, as a charitable trust we are required to have these in place. Importantly they will enable us to offer volunteering opportunities to young people who are 16 years or older, who will hopefully help to ensure the Mill will last another 317 years!

**Stephen Waite**

**Chairman, Oldland Mill Trust.**

Tel: 01273 843700