

Oldland Mill Trust

Spring Newsletter 2021



Patron: Richard Burrows

Registered charity: 1072911 *The oldest regularly working windmill in Sussex! Now 318 years old!*

A year to remember!

John & Iris Annett

Most members will be aware of the key role that John Annett played in the early days of the restoration. Iris Annett's role was not always so visible but was equally critical as Iris's recent letter below makes clear:

For those who do not know who I am, I would explain that I have been involved with Oldland Windmill for more than 40 years. I sorted out the legal position before the physical restoration of the mill could begin and I then became Mill Secretary.

My reason for wanting to put a note in the Newsletter is because the celebrations which were due to take place in 2020 had to be cancelled. What I would liked to have said at a celebration is a big THANK YOU to the Trustees, Committee and all other volunteers who have steered the restoration to the success it is today, and particularly thank you to the folk who are currently working at the mill in these difficult times.

Finally, to all currently involved with the Mill, my hope and wish is that it will not be too long before the situation generally returns to normal and folk can be welcomed again at the Mill, particularly on Open Days.

Iris Annett.

Payment for Membership Renewals, Donations and 200 Club Entries

The Trust's Bank - CAF (Charities Aid Foundation) is not acting much like a charity as they have increased their basic monthly charges by 60% to £8, plus 50p for every cheque we issue and 60p to pay in every member's cheque! Allowing for the printing of two Newsletters each year and the postage costs means that over half of a member's subscription will be incurred if you pay us by cheque.

If you can pay by BACS please do so - this is still free of charge (to you and the Trust)

Thank you.

Milling and Flour Packing

We managed to maintain milling following our own Covid-19 Rules throughout the autumn and winter. However, the pandemic 'social distancing' restrictions prevented us from completing the refurbishment of our Historic Winnower,



Winnowing grain by hand

so we resorted to hand cleaning grain. We even built a 'mini-winnower' which we fitted into the



The mini winnower on the bin floor

the tight space on the bin floor at the very top of the mill!

Flour packing by hand is inevitably a much slower process than milling. Stuart Meier and Mick Fitter produced an excellent training video to support this critical activity which has been very successfully conducted using four 'family social groups' of husbands and wives. They packed a total of 1,150 x 1kg bags during 2020, doubling the production in 2019!

We currently use 12 retail outlets:

Adastra Deli Hassocks, Budgens Hassocks, South Downs Heritage Centre Hassocks, Ditchling Museum, Ditchling Post Office, Oaks Poultry Farm Shop Ditchling, Falmer Farm Shop, Rushfields Farm Shop Poynings, Townings Farm Shop Chailey, Cloughs Deli Lindfield, Hampers Hurstpierpoint and Middle Farm Shop Firle.

Maintenance

Essential maintenance has been continuing at the mill in the latest lockdown, in operation since mid-December. This has included work in the mill checking things such as the Brake Wheel and Main Post wedges, rotating the sweeps when there has not been recent milling activity, and replacing the Defibrillator batteries and pads (surprisingly expensive). The Cherry Picker has also been maintained – essential if the sweeps or upper parts of the mill urgently need attention. This has included work on the hydraulic controls and their protection in very wet weather, and regular battery charging. There has also been a recent damp survey of the inside of the roof and sides of the mill body, where heavy rain particularly in

January led to water ingress where the side boards meet the front boards. The boards dry out in better weather, but rectifying this problem in an effective manner and in keeping with the traditional construction of this Grade II listed building has been the subject of much discussion and development work, including expert advice from Joe Thompson of the Weald and Downland Museum. It is anticipated that this will be a major maintenance project over the current summer, once Lockdown restrictions are sufficiently eased.

During the preceding period between Lockdowns, five more of the Operations Team completed their one-day theoretical and practical Cherry Picker Training Courses at AFI-Uplift so that with the three previously trained, the Mill now has eight formally qualified operators.

Other work included Trailer Maintenance, a virtually invisible Tail Pole repair, and the relocation of the Defibrillator from the Mill Body to the Roundhouse to make it more readily accessible in an emergency. Regular test and inspection of the Cherry Picker (6 monthly), portable electrical equipment and fire protection equipment (both annual) have also been carried out.

Lightning Protection Update

"Where is the lightning protection?" continues to be a frequent question, the installation having been designed to be as unobtrusive as possible.



Sweep tip showing lightning conductor

One obvious point where it can be observed is at the tip of the sweeps, where a short length of the conductor protrudes in parallel with the shutter control handle. From each sweep tip the white sheathed copper conductor is run

unobtrusively up the inside of the main timbers to the black iron canister at the heart of the sweeps,



Lightning conductor groundwork

from where the lightning route runs down the iron main shaft.

New Building

Work is progressing on the new permanent replacement for our old Portacabin.



Removal of the old Portacabin

This was purchased second-hand 20 years ago and has served us very well! It will now be refurbished and start another life elsewhere! As I write, the brick and flint wall is nearing completion and the



New building east wall taking shape

floor slab will soon be laid. Mark and Clare Shenton are financing the new build and we owe them an immense debt of gratitude for this generosity.

I would also like to thank the companies who are supporting the work in many ways:

Morris Lesley Plant Hire, Parker Builders Merchants, Darren Dendy Carpentry, NEO Electrical Services, The Flint Wall Company, and Freshfield Lane Brickworks.

We are currently planning fitting-out the new building and are taking the opportunity to review some of the contents of the Roundhouse which has become rather crowded. For example, the two large wooden Tool Cupboards which migrated from the Spout Flour inside the Mill down into the Round House many years ago will probably move again into the New Building, freeing up valuable space particularly on Open Days.

Off-Site Storage Space Needed

Those who visit the Mill regularly will be well aware of the growing amount of specialist equipment we have designed and built to maintain the Mill. For example, trolleys to transport the sweeps when they are being moved around the site during refurbishment, heavy duty trestles to support the sweeps, and jigs to support the shutters when they are being repainted. Note that most of these items, although critical, are only used occasionally.

We currently make use of two of Mark Shenton's garages but need to vacate the second one (just inside his main gates) when our new on-site workshop building is complete. This permanent building, although approximately twice the plan area of the old Portacabin, will nowhere near meet our storage requirements.

We should not abuse Mark's continuing generosity so I am seeking additional independent storage space. If you live within five miles of the Mill and have any vacant space - say a disused garage or large garden shed - I would be interested to explore making use of it. Alternatively, if you are

aware of any friends who might have storage space, I would like to make contact with them. Thank you.

Publicity

As we all know we sadly were unable to open to the public in 2020. At the time of writing we are still unable to do so. However we are very hopeful (and are planning as such) to be able to hold Open Afternoons on the first Sunday of August and October and a Special Event Day on Sunday 5th September. We expect the Special Event Day will incorporate both Music and Heritage themes. Keep an eye on our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram feeds for more up to date information as the year progresses.

Sadly our website was damaged last year by malware but we are very pleased that due to some hard work by volunteers the site is now up and running again. A working group is now set up and looking at ways of improving the site. It is intended that along with the Mill Visitor Guide Book (copies still available) the website will become our main 'brochure' with news, info and pictures constantly added to our social media platforms.

Membership

Since October 2020 there have been Three New Members, one death and one Annual Subscription Member who has moved away, making a net gain of One New Member. This gives a Total Membership of 387.

The 200 Club Winners since October 2020 were as follows:

November	213	214	151
December	130	56	120
January	142	210	219
February	42	25	46

There are now a total of 246 Numbers in each monthly draw owned by 92 Members. This is a rise of 22 new Draw Numbers purchased over the last 4 months. Derek Kenward has been an extremely efficient Draw Master for some years and is now

standing down. Paul Goodacre has kindly agreed to take over the role. Thank you both for supporting this key contribution to the Trust's income.

OMT AGM

Members will recall that we were unable to hold an AGM in June 2020. We have booked Adastra Hall (main hall) for the 2021 AGM on Monday 7th June commencing at 7.30 pm. This room can accommodate 250 people so if social distancing is still in operation, we will be able to safely seat the 25 or so members who normally attend our AGM. It could be, of course, that the pandemic situation is worse next June than it is now and we are unable to hold the meeting. It is expensive and time-consuming to write to 250 members and email 140 to advise cancellation of the meeting, so the following has been agreed for June.

If you plan to attend please phone our Secretary, Geoff Miller on 01273 846939 or email him at

geoffreyrmiller@gmail.com

(ensure you include the r between geoffrey and miller) in the first few days of June to check if the meeting will take place and for him to record your planned attendance if the meeting goes ahead.

At this stage please put the date in your diary and refer back to this Newsletter for details in the first few days of June.

Epilogue

As I sign off, we are still constrained to use the Government's 'Road Map' in the battle with Covid-19. However, there are clear signs that mass vaccination is bringing the pandemic under control within the UK. But please continue to follow the national guidelines together with our own Covid-19 Rules and don't let your 'guard slip' now that you've been vaccinated.

Fred Maillardet

Chairman, Oldland Mill Trust.

f.j.maillardet@brighton.ac.uk

Tel: 01273 842342.