

Oldland Mill Trust Spring Newsletter 2023

Patron: Richard Burrows

Registered charity: 1072911 *The oldest regularly working windmill in Sussex! Now 320 years old!*



Introduction

Welcome to the Spring Newsletter. The first record we have of Oldland Mill occurs on a 1703 map of the Turner Estate, where it is recorded as an open trestle windmill. The brick roundhouse, which now hides the trestle, was built at some point before 1839. Oldland Mill was built to replace an earlier mill which was blown down towards the end of the 17th Century. The site of the original mill is thought to have been just east of the present mill.

The loss of the original Ditchling Mill would have had a major impact on the local population. At a time when transport was both expensive and precarious, roads and tracks frequently impassable, grain would always be sent to the nearest mill. The difficulty of transport helps explain why there were so many mills dotted across the countryside. With the loss of the local mill, transportation costs would increase along with the costs of animal feed, flour and bread, the staple food of the poor and working population. With the advent of steam and the railways, wind and water mills could not compete. Cheap mass-produced flour from large steam-powered mills in towns became readily available nationally. Oldland Mill closed as a working mill in 1912.

The mill was in a derelict condition when interest in its restoration began 1976. A volunteer group was formed in 1980 and the process of dismantling prior to the restoration began. The restoration was completed in 2008, the mill producing flour again. The

successful restoration was the result of 1000s of hours of hard work by volunteers, who freely gave of their time. Some helped to raise money, others to rebuild and restore the mill. Today, this 320 year old mill stands as it did at the start of the 20th Century. Now owned by the Oldland Mill Trust, it is maintained and operated entirely by volunteers. Without volunteers we would not be able to maintain this iconic building as a working mill. More fascinating details of the history and restoration of the mill may be found in the Oldland Windmill Guide (£5) available at all open events.

Get involved in preserving this iconic building.

The trust is always looking for volunteers to join the Board of Trustees or to join our marketing, events, maintenance and milling teams. At the moment we are urgently seeking a Membership Secretary. The role involves maintaining our existing membership list, dealing with membership fees and issuing new membership cards when required. The Membership Secretary also administers the Club 200 prize draw. The role is not excessively time consuming. Training will be given and an honorarium is available for the right person.

If you are interested in volunteering in any capacity, please contact the Trust via our email address: info@oldlandwindmill.org.uk which can be found on our website www.oldlandwindmill.org.uk where you can make a donation, and find out more about the mill and the work of the Trust.

Milling report

We now have fourteen local businesses selling our flour, the latest being La Boulangerie Du Marche, a French trader who operates in both Burgess Hill and Brighton Marina markets. This is good news for the Trust but clearly a lot of work for the flour-packing teams and a greater dependence on favourable winds to run the mill. We managed twelve milling sessions in 2022, producing approximately 1400kg of flour. Of this, 45 x 16kg sacks were sold to a commercial bakery and 34 x 20kg sacks were used for our own sales.

During late winter and spring 2022, we continued grinding 2021 harvest Crusoe wheat, supplied by Church Farm in Coombes near Lancing the previous October. By the summer this stock was exhausted, however in April 2022 we had purchased and collected 1 tonne of 2021 harvest Crusoe wheat from Gibraltar Farm in Firle, near Lewes. This had been thoroughly cleaned, with the aid of our winnower, and is what we are grinding today.

The start of 2023 had poor wind forecasts and we achieved only one milling session, on 3rd January. The wind remained fickle and we did not achieve any further milling sessions in January or February. By then we had no loose flour and only a few packed 1kg bags left. Fortunately, March proved to be a good month for wind and after four milling sessions we had recovered our stock levels with around 80 x 1kg bags packed and a further 160kg of loose flour in stock. We are now down to less than one half-tonne of our April 2022 grain collection so will be purchasing new stock very soon. Chris Skingsley, Head Miller

Mill openings, dates for the diary

This year we look forward to holding a full calendar of events and Open Afternoons. As usual the mill will be open from 2pm – 5pm

on the first Sunday of each month from April to September.

To mark the Coronation we will be holding a special event day on Sunday 7 May, celebrating the King's Coronation with tours of the mill, musical acts, puppets and the usual BBQ, beer and tea tents. A complimentary minibus will run every twenty minutes between the mill and Grand Avenue, from opposite the Thatched Inn. This is for those who cannot walk to the mill, which does not have a car park. On Sunday 3 September there will be a Family Fun Day with stalls and activities for all.



Oldland Mill with Windboards removed for repair and restoration.

Open Afternoons will be held on 2 April, 4 June, 2 July, 6 August and 1 October. On these days the mill will be open for tours, with memorabilia, teas and homemade cakes also available. Event Days will run from 11am to 4pm and Open Afternoons from 2pm to 5pm. The mill will also be open on Mills Weekend which is on 13 and 14 May. We will also be welcoming visitors to the mill from our Twin Towns, Montmirail in France and Wald-Michelback in Germany, in the afternoon of Saturday 20 May. Volunteers work on the mill every Thursday, and most Tuesday mornings. You are welcome to visit then and the volunteers will be happy to talk to you about the mill if they can.

Over the winter the stock of memorabilia has been replenished with new pint glasses featuring a line-drawing of the mill by Hagop Kasparian. These will be on sale for £6 each. Mugs, pens and other mementos will also be available at all the Open Afternoons and Event Days. We look forward to seeing you all at the mill in the coming months.

The new workshop

Despite the extreme weather, the new on-site Workshop was virtually completed by the end of January. The only outstanding work remaining is to resin in the drainpipe attachment and the end-stop on the gutter at the south-east corner. This will be completed when dry weather allows. Work is now well advanced on the tool storage cupboards on the north wall and the heavy-duty workbench on the west wall is nearing completion. Some floor-standing machinery has already been installed and are in use.



It was agreed with Mark Shenton that our temporary use of the garage just inside his front gates ('Garage no 2' as we called it) would cease once our new Workshop was complete. We have of course complied with this agreement and removed all OMT equipment, mainly relocating it to one of our two off-site garage storage areas in Keymer. Our existing materials and components storage racks (as used in the old Portacabin) were found to be perfectly sound and

reusable and have now been relocated and used.

Groundwork

When the Old Granary building was separated from the Windmill by a hedge prior to 1980, the hedge was placed so close to the mill that Winding through 360 degrees was extremely difficult as the Tail Pole needed to pass across the top of the hedge. The hedge had also become difficult to maintain in recent years, so that when Mark Shenton suggested replacing it, we were very amenable. However, Mark Shenton went further and proposed that the area between our properties would be greatly enhanced if the hedge line moved to the west, thus freeing up more space on the mill side.

We were naturally delighted with this suggestion and readily agreed. The new boundary fence has now been re-constructed approx. 1.5m to the west and a new yew hedge planted.

We have already raised the ground level up where necessary on the west side of the site to avoid any excessive ground slopes and will have laid turf on the bare ground by the time you read this Newsletter.



This additional space, coupled with the new smaller low hedge, gives that side of the site a very different feel and will be most welcome

in terms of reducing visitor congestion on Open Days.

Maintenance

Despite cold weather, snow, and a wet and windy March, work by volunteers continued throughout the winter. With the completion of the New Workshop, a major spring clean and clear out was undertaken. Special thanks go to Peter Camp, who won the coveted Bee's Knees award(!) for his considerable efforts, frequent five-day working, helping and supervising contractors, and fitting out the completed workshop.

Routine maintenance and the necessary health and safety checks related to fire protection, harnesses and the cherry-picker has continued. New ladders, which meet modern safety standards have been purchased. The cherry-picker was successfully repaired, Charles Slack saving the Trust considerable expense with his expert dismantling and repair of the cherry-picker motor, hydraulic pump and hydraulic controls.

The large windboards have been repaired and repainted using our conventional oil-based painting system and by the time of this Newsletter, will, weather permitting have been refitted to the sweeps. This will allow milling in lighter winds. Meanwhile the small windboards are being painted with a new water-based and solvent-based breathable systems, and will be returned to the sweeps in the next few weeks. It will be interesting to see which paint weathers best.

With the aid of the cherry-picker we have started washing the mill and sweeps, removing the dirt and algae that built up over the Covid lockdown. The picture below shows the left side of the mill with the top two thirds having been cleaned by hand with water and brushes.

Fortunately the water pressure is high enough to more than reach to the top, albeit to also soak volunteers! We plan to clean the whole of the mill, returning the mill to its normal gleaming glory.

Restoration and painting will include the front of the mill and stained portions of the roundhouse roof, and the black brickwork of the Roundhouse walls. Completion of the refurbishment of the steps is also planned.



Membership

We currently have a total of 323 Members, divided into 224 Life Members, 99 Annual Members and 32 Volunteers. This a decrease of 64 since last year's total membership of 387.

Since the start of the year, a number of Annual Members have upgraded to Life Members which means they no longer have to pay an annual subscription. If any other Annual Members wish to upgrade, please contact me.

200 Club

The 200 Club is open to everyone and you can apply for Draw Tickets by completing the Membership Application Form, which is being circulated with this Newsletter. There is no limit on the number of Draw Tickets you can apply for. There are three Cash Prizes drawn out of the bag on the third Thursday of every month. The amount of the monthly Cash Prizes depends on the number of Draw Tickets purchased. Currently the 1st Prize is £44.25, 2nd Prize is £26.55 and the 3rd Prize £17.70. Half the money received is paid out in prizes and the other half goes to support the windmill.

The Winning Draw Ticket Numbers since 1 October 2022 are as follows:

	1 st Prize	2 nd Prize	3 rd Prize
October	63	76	96
November	37	30	88
December	142	59	14
January	23	154	70
February	140	25	27
March	162	37	165

The 200 Club Year commences on 1 July and runs until 30 June. We currently have 177 Draw Tickets sold to 92 members. Last year we sold 226 Draw Tickets (delete sold) to 92 members. It seems the same number of members are buying the Draw Tickets, but they are not buying as many as last year! Please let me know if you wish to buy any more tickets. Indeed, some of you may wish to make a gift of Draw Tickets to a friend or relative. If so, please complete an Annual

Membership Application Form which includes a section to purchase Draw Tickets and also includes a Gift Aid Certificate.

Most members pay for their Draw Tickets by bank transfer and in turn they receive their prizes by bank transfer. That makes life much easier for me and the Hon Treasurer and reduces our bank charges. In future those members who pay by cheque will automatically have their prizes paid by bank transfer direct into their bank accounts.

John Tarling (Membership Secretary)
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Oldland Mill Trust

Annual General Meeting Announcement

This year we will be holding our AGM on Monday 3rd July at 7.30pm at Adastra Hall, Hassocks. A date for your diary – all welcome.

Stephen Waite

Chair, Oldland Mill Trust

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