

Oldland Mill Trust
Spring Newsletter 2024

Patron: Richard Burrows
Registered charity: 1203609

The oldest regularly working windmill in Sussex! Now 320 years old!



NEWS FROM THE MILL

Despite the succession of named storms, with their high winds and gales, Oldland Mill has escaped damage during this year's storm season. Before each storm, the Mill is rotated to ensure that it is facing into the wind (known as winding) and storm anchors are deployed. A careful watch is kept on the weather forecast, particularly wind direction, as any change will require the Mill to be rotated. In strong winds, an un-winded mill can easily be blown over. While Oldland Mill was not damaged, Jack Mill was not so lucky. Jack Mill is an example of a tower mill, where the sweeps are attached to a wooden cap that sits on top of the brick mill tower. The cap rotates, so the sweeps can be kept facing the wind during milling. Jack Mill lost its sweeps some years ago although the fantail wheel remains. Because the cap no longer rotates the fantail cannot be winded. During Storm Henk at the start of the year, the fantail wheel structure sustained extensive damage, demonstrating the strength of Storm Henk and the importance of being able to wind a mill.



The long process of becoming an incorporated charitable organisation (CIO), with the additional protection this status confers, is finally coming to an end. The newly incorporated charity, Oldland Mill CIO, was established and registered with the Charity Commission early last year. The transfer of assets from the old charity to the new body took effect from the start of January. Although our bank details have changed and

we have a new Charity Number, we will still be known as Oldland Mill Trust, which is the trading and operating name of Oldland Mill CIO. The last step in this process is the registration of Oldland Mill with the Land Registry, which is underway. Members and supporters should not notice any substantial change. In response to a review of our membership scheme, which has not changed for many years, we are introducing a new scheme, details are given below.

Volunteers and support. Oldland Mill was in a derelict state in 1980. Over the next 25 plus years it was restored by the efforts of a dedicated team of volunteers. After repair and renovation, the Mill was winded for the first time in 2005, the new sweeps were turned by wind in February 2008 and the first OMT flour was produced in October of that year. Nearly 20 years on, Oldland Mill remains a working mill. However, like any complex working machinery, it is subject to wear and tear and the process of maintenance and repair does not

stop. As you will see from Fred's article below, we are about to embark on major repairs and necessary realignment of the Mill. As always, we are looking for new supporters and volunteers, as well as people willing to become trustees. Volunteering provides an excellent opportunity to meet and enjoy the company of new people, as well as the opportunity to acquire new skills.

We are particularly interested in appointing a Volunteer Recruitment Officer. This is a new voluntary post. We need someone to drive the recruitment of new volunteers and to help with the administration needed to run our induction and training programmes and maintain our different teams.

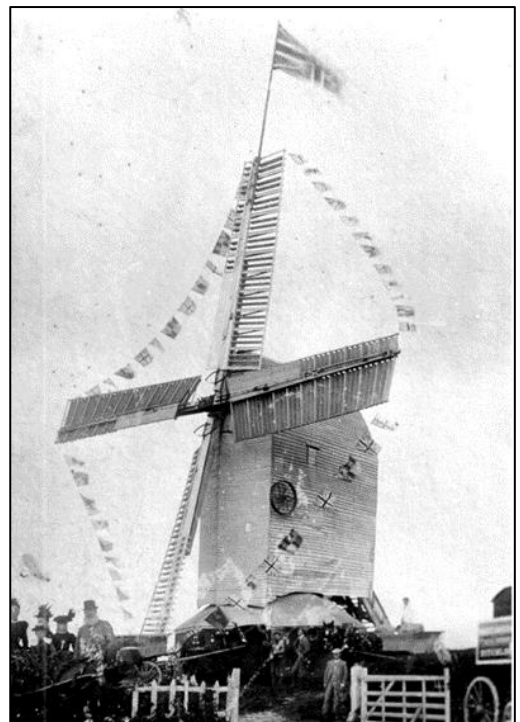
External storage needed. The Trust is looking for additional dry off-site storage. If you have unused garage or barn space we could use, please contact the Trust. If you are interested in Oldland Mill, or becoming involved, or helping in any capacity please contact the Trust through our website, www.oldlandwindmill.org.uk. Mill volunteers are usually at the site on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, so if you are passing and we are not milling, they would be very happy to talk to you.

I am sure that many visitors to the Mill have enjoyed cake and a cup of tea. Marylyn Rankin, who has been running the Tea Team since 2011, has said she would like to step down now that she has moved out of the area. I would like to thank Marylyn for her sterling service and for helping to make our open events special. Thank you, Marylyn. On a personal note, having been involved with the Mill as a trustee for some 6 years, the last 3 as Chair, I have decided to step down at the next AGM on 9 July 2024. It has been an enjoyable and rewarding experience which I will miss.

MILL REPAIRS AND DEVELOPMENTS

During its working life, Oldland Mill has been subject to modification and repair. At some point, the mill floor was substantially extended, an external drive pulley, allowing the mill to be powered by a steam traction engine was installed around 1870, and a cast-iron windshaft was installed in 1873. The long and heavy windshaft is marked B Medhurst, Lewes 1873 and was cast at the Phoenix Iron Works, Lewes. Medhurst & Sons, Millwrights are also thought to have installed the auxiliary drive pulley.

Medhurst Millwrights was established by brothers William and Samuel Medhurst in 1825, at the work-yard of Jesse Pumphrey, to whom Samuel had been apprenticed. Medhurst Millwrights became very successful, responsible for the building and repair of many Sussex wind and water mills. The work-yard was in Western Road, Lewes near St Anne's Church, and when the company ceased trading in 1920 the site was acquired by Lewes Works Ltd and converted into a motor vehicle showroom and workshop. Samuel Medhurst retired from



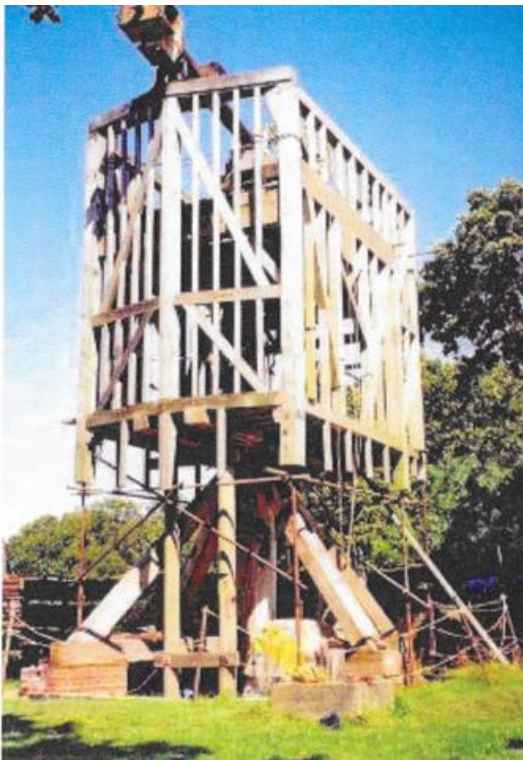
The mill 'dressed' for Queen Victoria's jubilee 1887 showing the external drive wheel.

running the business in 1870 and it was taken over by his son, Boaz. He ran the business for only a short time, dying aged 35 in 1878.

Samuel died in 1887, aged 88, outliving his wife, Philadelphia, and all but one of his 11 children. Samuel and his family are commemorated in the churchyard of St Anne's by a series of cast-iron memorials or 'leaping boards' that can still be seen today. These were provided by John Every, a lifelong friend of Samuel and owner of the Phoenix Iron Works.

THE MILL POST 'TILT'

The Mill Skirt – the lowest weatherboarding on the body above the Roundhouse Roof – is deliberately set close to the roof to avoid wind passing underneath, creating turbulence and lifting the body of the Mill. We have monitored this gap regularly since 2010 and know that it has steadily reduced from 63 to 38mm. But why? What has changed? We have referred to



Picture of the Mill, during restoration showing the central post and supporting trestle

this change as the Main Post 'tilt' and have corrected it twice since restoration using the original built-in adjustment, which enables the bottom of the post to be moved sideways a modest amount. However, we have now run out of the adjustment provided! So what to do? But is it only the post tilting? Other possible contributory factors are:

1. One or more of the Trestle Foundation Pillars have sunk into the ground.
2. The Trestle supporting the Main Post has itself deflected.
3. The Main Post is slowly bending under the constant forward load of the Sweeps.
4. The Mill Body is 'drooping' forwards as the internal oak structure ages.

We are currently taking detailed measurements to ascertain which factors are in play and to what extent, so that we can design an appropriate remedy, not only as an immediate solution but also to re-establish the original built-in adjustment so that future generations may continue to operate the mill. A further factor to recognise is

that we believe that the Main Post is original. Dendrochronology tests were unable to find a growth-ring match locally for the post which may mean that it was not sourced locally. However, we have recently been alerted to the risk of finding that aged Mill Posts can well contain internal 'voids' due to an original hidden defect or even developing rot. We thus need to be very careful how we attempt to change the loading on the Main Post. Our first step is likely to be a thorough analysis (including X-rays) to ensure that the post remains structurally sound before we attempt any major change in loading. *Fred Maillardet*

MILL MAINTENANCE

What a lot of rain we've had! The Lozenge, the oval area opposite the east gate of the Mill, has been completely under water at times. The volunteers' car park had some puddles, but as a result of the resurfacing last summer there were no problems with parking.

In spite of the weather we have had a good turnout at nearly all our regular Tuesday and Thursday work-days. And there has been plenty of work to occupy everyone, particularly in the project to revise the shutter crank fastening system. The angle of each of the shutters on the sweeps is controlled by the position of a crank, which is moved by a wooden bar called the "working uplong". In line with the conventional method of installation, each of the cranks was previously fastened to its uplong by a coach screw. However, one or two these screws



occasionally worked their way out and presented a potential hazard if the sweeps were rotating. Each of the screws on the 204 shutters has therefore been replaced by a bolt with a bearing, the work involving the drilling out of the hole of each cast iron crank to accommodate the bearing. This work has been completed and will allow the sweeps to be run at Open Afternoons, provide there are moderate winds. The opportunity was taken to wash the shutters and the sweeps at the same time.

Which brings us to the subject of washing.... Over the autumn and winter algae turns parts of the Mill a greenish colour, particularly in times as wet as these. The photo shows two volunteers cleaning the top of the Mill with brushes before progressing to the right-hand side. Not only does this greatly enhance the appearance of the Mill, particularly in advance of the season of Open Afternoons and Event Days, but it is a necessary precursor to the planned restoration and painting of the right-hand side of the Mill through the spring and summer months.

The left-hand side has also been cleaned and will be painted as necessary where there is any paint damage, as will the roundhouse roof. Summer painting volunteers are always welcome to help the regular volunteers in this work. Other work through the autumn and winter has involved the completion of Sweep 4 tip repairs, organising the new workshop and garage, and maintenance of the lawns, trees and hedges. *Andy Pearce*

MILLING REPORT

The winter storms have brought some benefits. Wind strengths were so light and fickle last summer that we were rarely able to mill and our stocks of flour became depleted. This year, winds have been much stronger. In just two days at the end of January our intrepid Milling Team was able to replenish our stocks. The wind strength was sufficient to run the sweeps at 8 - 10 revolutions per minute - excellent for milling. The team milled 298 kg in some 4 ½ hours. These sessions also provided excellent experience for our trainee volunteer millers. Thanks must also go to our ever-hard-working packing team, who have risen to the occasion to bag our flour ready for sale. Wind strengths and direction have continued to be favourable, enabling us to produce 668kg of flour so far this year. Approximately half of this has been sold to a wholesale baker, which is a measure of the quality of our flour.

MEMBERSHIP AND 200 CLUB UPDATE

Subscriptions from our members/supporters provides a vital source of income every year to help us keep the Mill turning. Over the past few months, we have been reviewing the structure of our membership scheme to make sure that it is the best way to attract and retain as many supporters as possible and to maximise our income. In the light of our discussions we have decided to make some changes. If you are a current 'annual subscription' member you will learn about these in detail when we send out our renewal letters shortly. In brief, the changes are –

- The opportunity to pay subscriptions monthly or annually by Bank Standing Order
- The opportunity to decide how much you pay over our suggested minimum payment of £1/month or £12/year
- An increase in the minimum cost of Individual Life Membership to £120
- An increase in the minimum cost of Individual Joint Membership to £180

We are planning a big drive to increase our supporters this year and will be dropping information letters through every letterbox in our area over the next few months. We will try to avoid bombarding you, our loyal existing members, with junk mail but, if our system falters and you receive an information letter, please accept our apologies!

200 Club. We have re-named the 200 Club as – the 50/50 Club – so as not to restrict membership to a maximum of 200 and, more importantly, to explain in the name how the prize allocation works. As a reminder – the total prize amount each month equals 50% of the value of tickets sold for that month. For example, if we sell 200 tickets (at £1/ticket/month) we issue prizes totalling £100 (1st £50, 2nd £30, 3rd £20). We are also enabling people to join the Club at any point during the year. *Alison White, Membership Secretary* membership@oldlandwindmill.org.uk

	50/50 Club Winning Numbers		
	1st	2nd	3rd
Nov-23	25	54	71
Dec-23	79	116	41
Jan-24	5	38	15
Feb-24	31	102	93

PROMOTION AND FUND-RAISING

We have begun our season of Open Afternoons and Special Event Days. The first of these was our first monthly Open Afternoon held on 7 April. The Open Afternoons are held on the first Sunday of every month from April until October and run from 2pm – 5pm. There will be tours of the Mill, teas and memorabilia but no transport.

Our special Event Days are longer and run from 11am – 4pm. After their absence last year, we will once again welcome two Morris Dancing sides to the Mill on our first Event Day on 5 May. In addition, there will be music, stalls and refreshments, including a beer tent and BBQ. Children's entertainment will include our ever-popular puppeteer, Chris. We run a complimentary minibus from the top of Grand Avenue, near The Thatched Inn, every 20 minutes on our Special Event Days as there is no parking at the Mill. Our second Special Event Day is on Sunday 1 September, which will have a family theme.

Look out for our stall at other events in the coming months: Ditchling Newcomers Party on 13 April, Hassocks Village Market on 27 April and Ditchling Fair on 15 June. We look forward to welcoming you to the Mill again and thank you for your continued support in maintaining this wonderful building.
Juliet Strange

NEW BENCHES

When you do visit the Mill, we hope you will enjoy our three fine new benches, which have in part been funded through the Hassocks Parish Council Community Grants Scheme. We thank the Council for its support. Each bench carries a dedication in memory of a person who was key to the establishment of Oldland Mill Trust and the restoration of the Mill. The benches are in memory of Geoff Miller, inaugural combined Secretary and Treasurer of Oldland Mill Trust from 2007 to 2021, Roger Broadbent, Ditchling Parish Council Trustee Representative to Oldland Mill Trust from 2007 to 2020 and David Friend, a key volunteer in the early reconstruction of Oldland Mill from 2000 to 2020.

Stephen Waite

Chair, Oldland Mill Trust

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