

Oldland Mill Trust
Summer Newsletter 2026

Patron: Richard Burrows
Registered charity: 1203609

The oldest regularly working windmill in Sussex! Now 322 years old!

To all our loyal supporters and volunteers – welcome – and thank you once again for your continuing support and interest in everything that happens at Oldland Mill. This Summer Newsletter brings you latest news of the activities that go on year-round to keep the mill running and thriving.

CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG

Oldland Mill volunteers were delighted to welcome Chitty Chitty Bang Bang to the mill for a very successful photo shoot on Saturday 16th May. The highly respected Brighton Theatre Group is giving ten performances at the Theatre Royal in Brighton from 12th to 16th August. Caractacus Potts, the main protagonist, lived in a windmill, so Oldland Mill was particularly suitable for the shoot.



Readers may be aware that in 1968 Rowland Emett – a Ditchling resident, cartoonist and designer of 'Marvellous Machines' designed the elaborate

inventions of Caractacus Potts (played by Dick Van Dyke) for the film version. Chitty Chitty Bang Bang was originally written by Ian Fleming.

The visit will provide very good publicity for the mill in the form of a full-page advertisement (free!) in the souvenir programme. Hopefully full houses for the show will mean that around 10,000 people will learn about Oldland Mill. And – the Theatre Royal's publicity group may provide wider coverage for us.

The star of the shoot was of course the car itself, which is an exact replica of the model used in the original film. At the theatre a lighter replica will fly, but - perhaps fortunately - Chitty did not rise in the air at the mill, in spite of having propellors and wings! We feel sure the show will be a great success.

MILL MAINTENANCE

One of the main winter activities was the replacement of the handrails and balusters (vertical supports) on the main steps. The handrails are large pieces of timber, and the balusters have been jointed in the traditional way with mortice and tenon joints and dowels. The picture below shows the steps with the new handrails.



The tailpole is used to turn the mill into the wind, and dates from 1892. It is showing signs of rot in several places and will require the replacement of some of the previous major restoration, carried out in 1998, with new wood inserts. In the meantime, the rotten wood is being removed and temporarily replaced with filler.

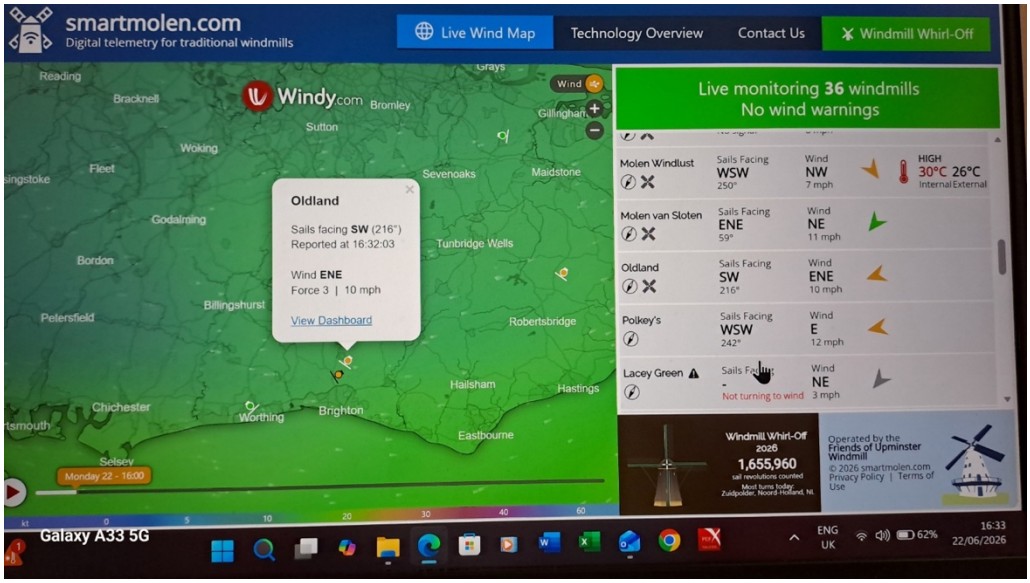
Work has continued on the tailpole restoration and on the painting of parts of the roundhouse roof and the completion of painting of the sides of the mill. The repairs to the roundhouse roof are being carried out using linseed oil mixed with turpentine as a primer followed by the use of a traditional linseed oil-based paint, in an attempt to obtain a longer life in the onerous conditions of sun, rain and wind that the mill experiences.

The limited space on the stone floor has long been a challenge when it comes to raising and moving the rotating stone. Recently much thinking has gone into developing the equipment, methodology and risk assessment to enable us to safely lift the stone without damaging the windshaft. As a result of our efforts the stone has recently been successfully raised and cleaned.

SMARTMOLEM

The Smartmolen (Smart Mill) App provides live digital monitoring of historic mills in the UK and Europe via the Internet. It has recently been installed at Oldland and communicates via Jill Mill, who have very kindly allowed us to use their Smartmolen link. The app displays the direction the mill is pointing, the wind direction and speed, live sweep rotation, the total number of rotations, and the local weather forecast, including warnings of tail winds, which are particularly dangerous for windmills.

Smartmolen Screenshots showing Oldland Mill



The data from the sensors is available for free on the Smartmolen website: www.smartmolen.com/oldland and the mill is also on the main map at www.smartmolen.com

SUMMER EVENTS

Our summer programme of Open Afternoons and Events have been well attended so far and are raising much-needed funds for the upkeep of the mill. Dates for the rest of the summer are as follows:

- 5 July, Open Afternoon, 2 – 5pm
- 2 August, Open Afternoon, 2 – 5pm

- 6 September, Event Day, 11am – 4pm
- 4 October, Open Afternoon, 2 – 5pm.

The Event Day in September will feature music, children's entertainment, food and beer as well as the usual Mill tours and refreshments. We look forward to seeing you there.



Entertainment at the May Open Day

PETER SHEPPARD

We were saddened to hear of the death of one of our early and long-standing volunteers, Peter Sheppard.

Peter joined the mill in 2011 and soon proved his worth. He saw the potential when we were offered an original 1851 winnower – it was in a shocking state, but Peter encouraged us to devote time to it. The restoration was so successful that it is still in regular use today.

Peter also took on the role of inaugural Mill Archivist, drawing together the multitude of records covering the history of the Mill from the 1700's through to its abandonment in about 1912 and digitising the early documents relating to the mill restoration.

Some mill volunteers will remember Peter best for his generous portions of homemade fruit cake, usually laced with a little alcohol, and for bursting into

song – usually Sea Shanties - whenever he felt the need to encourage a 'heavy lift' of equipment or to respond to a working situation in a humorous way.
Peter will be remembered with great affection as one of the key players in the continuing evolution of Oldland Mill.

OLDLAND WINDMILL ACHIEVES FULL MEMBERSHIP OF THE TRADITIONAL CORNMILLERS GUILD

Following a rigorous application process, Oldland Windmill is proud to announce that it has become a full member of the Traditional Cornmillers Guild (TCMG). The TCMG is a body that promotes the craft of traditional milling and provides a forum for the discussion of matters of mutual interest. TCMG membership recognises the high standard and hard work of the team. The successful application means that Oldland Mill is now a full member of the Guild and can proudly use the TCMG logo on its products and publicity material.

Oldland Windmill has been an Associated Member of the Guild since 2014 - at that time flour production was in its infancy and full membership was not possible. The Milling Team undertook significant work to improve performance of the milling process. This involved extensive engineering upgrades and refurbishment to the mill itself, carried out during 2018 and 2019, to broaden the range of wind speeds in which the mill could operate effectively. By 2022, as a direct result of these improvements, the mill was producing flour in saleable quantities, which motivated the Milling Team to apply for full TCMG membership during the spring of 2025. The Milling Team's hard work was formally recognised when Oldland Mill's application was approved by the full members of the TCMG at their AGM on 15th November 2025.

STORAGE SPACE NEEDED

Do you know of any storage space (an unused garage or large shed for instance) in the Hassocks, Keymer, Ditchling area that could be made available for use by the Mill?
We have an ever-growing collection of large items (gazebos, historical artefacts, flour packing equipment) that are not used on a weekly basis but

that need storing fairly close to the mill so that we can get to them when required.
If you know of any such space or have any good ideas that may solve our problem, please contact our Mill Quartermaster – Steve McFarlane – at stevemcFarlane195@btinternet.com.



We very much look forward to seeing those of you who are able to come and visit us on the remaining Open Events during the year, and to hearing from you with any comments or queries via info@oldlandwindmill.org.uk.