

Pann Mill Times



SEPTEMBER 2001

No. 9

Pann Mill Times gives news of the restoration of cornmilling on this site, a project of the High Wycombe Society. It is situated only three minutes walk from the High Street and is owned by Wycombe District Council.

FROM THE PROJECT LEADER

NOISES

One of the more interesting things I have learned about milling grain at Pann Mill is just how important noise must be to the miller. Unlike his counterpart in today's high technology mill, he did not have instruments or gauges to tell him what was happening. Instead he listened to the noises generated in the mill, and with some practice he knew whether or not each part of the operation was working satisfactorily.

The swish of the waterwheel, combined with the chatter of the damsel gives a very accurate indication of the speed of the machinery and therefore the speed of the runner stone. The rumble made by the stones is dependent on both the distance apart and the amount of grain being fed into them, both of which define the quality of flour being produced. Finally, the creak, rumble and clatter of the machinery is a very good guide to its condition, adjustment, and lubrication.

TASKS

Considering more mundane matters, there is a growing list of maintenance jobs to be completed over the winter months. The most important task is the renewal of the cogs on the pit wheel. I am told that an experienced millwright would take 50 to 60 man-hours to do this work, so we can probably double this number if we do it ourselves! In addition there are some improvements and alterations recommended by Executive Committee member Tony Fooks, following his recent health and safety inspection, all of which must be done before National Mills Sunday, 12th May 2002.

I'm pleased to say that Wycombe District Council support our plans to replace the old workshed with a mainly wooden, barn-like building.

All we need now is the money to build it!

Any suggestions?

Robert

Robert Turner was elected a member of the Executive Committee of the High Wycombe Society at the last AGM and has since agreed to become Project Leader in place of Myra King. Already he has made a valuable practical contribution to the project in the three years he has been a team member.

MORE MUSINGS

Late in the afternoon of our July Open Day, I was standing by the pit wheel, feeling content that we had a steady stream of visitors on the stone floor and flour from the spout, when that contentment was suddenly shattered. Simultaneously with an ominous sharp cracking sound, the pit wheel shaft bearing next to my feet moved sideways the best part of an inch! The sluice operator responded immediately to my urgent signal, and as the pit wheel slowed it became apparent that three of the 52 teeth/cogs had broken off!

Since then I have calmed down and done some more musings. Since then also, the team have made and fitted replacement cherry wood teeth/cogs to enable milling to take place on September 2nd.

In Tony Yoward's "Consolidated Glossary of British Mill Terms", the PIT WHEEL is described as the primary gear wheel mounted on the inner end of the waterwheel shaft, often in a pit in the mill floor. Pann Mill's pit wheel is in a pit but not on the waterwheel shaft. Unusually we have a pair of secondary gear wheels (with a 64:42 ratio) coupling the wheel to the pit wheel. With this arrangement, the pit wheel shaft is four feet below the waterwheel shaft - I wonder why? Probably this is to do with the necessary relative levels of the river course and the original mill building.

Again, conventionally, our pit wheel does drive a WALLOWER, which is often a horizontal bevel gear turning an upright wooden shaft. Not so in Pann Mill where it is mounted on a horizontal iron shaft containing three pulley wheels of various sizes. I wonder what was driven from those pulleys?

As I muse, I wonder if we can get new pit wheel teeth/cogs on the National Health?

John

VISITORS FROM CHILTERN CHALK STREAMS FORUM

On 23rd May, Pann Mill was visited by about fifty delegates including representatives of Chiltern community, amenity and conservation groups, and members of Local Councils who were attending the Chilterns Chalk Streams Forum. The Chilterns Chalk Stream Project was set up in April 2000 and already improvements have been made to the River Ver which runs through St Albans, and the River Chess. The Forum is an annual event designed to disseminate news of current issues and activities of the Project. As project work is about to start on the River Wye, the Forum this year was held in the newly-built cricket pavilion of High Wycombe Cricket Club, whose pitch almost reaches down to the river.

A great deal of interest was generated and many delegates were genuinely amazed at the marvellous conservation work done by the High Wycombe Society over twenty years. The Society is grateful to Sarah Bentley, Chilterns Chalk Streams Officer, for this opportunity of bringing Pann Mill to the attention of a wide range of interested parties.

Peter

VISITORS FROM GERMANY

Whilst on a two-week course at Godstowe School on Amersham Hill, to improve their English, twenty one German students aged between 11 and 15 were shown over Pann Mill. The High Wycombe Society had been asked to assist them in any suitable way, and a conducted tour of the town's Heritage Trail, which takes in the mill, was the result. Three German staff and two Society members brought them to the mill where seven students at a time were shown how flour was made. Staff acted as interpreters when necessary.

It was an enjoyable, stimulating experience, hearing the questions raised and some of the answers given by the visitors. For instance, knowing the answer to be about 660 kg (13cwt), I asked them to guess the weight of the runner stone which, because the tun had been removed, they were able to see in its operating position. I could not believe it when one youngster suggest one ton. Quickly I realised there is a metric tonne which I guessed to be very similar to the imperial ton. I was not far out because a reference book later disclosed that at 1016 kg, the imperial ton is just 16 kg more than the metric tonne.

When describing the milling operation, I thought I would impress the visitors by saying that the runner stone turns about 120 times a minute. The staff member present rephrased it, in English, by telling his students that the stone **turns twice every second** - a much more impressive way of stating the speed of the runner stone!

The experience of showing visitors how flour is made varies according to whether or not milling is actually taking place. Whilst milling, it is interesting to see flour actually emerge from the spout, but little can be seen on the stone floor apart from grain being fed into the hopper - because the tun covers the stones. A description of what goes on under the tun, as the damsel clicks at over 400 times a minute, requires quite a strong voice! When the mill is at rest there does seem some virtue in having the stones uncovered so that visitors are able to see the working parts of the operation, and having them described in a quiet, relaxing manner.

Asked whether anyone had ever seen a German millstone, one student replied that she had seen one. I recounted that such a stone stood against the wall of Esk Watermill at Danby in North Yorkshire. German millstones, once seen, are never to be forgotten because of their dark grey, almost black colour.

Surprise was expressed at the short distance between mills on the Wye - for instance less than 500 metres separates Pann Mill and Rye Mill, as well as Rye Mill and Bassetsbury Mill. Discussion of this fact highlighted the marvellous nature of waterwheel power; waterwheels do not waste or destroy water, nor harm the quality of water. I was reminded of the waterwheels to be seen in the city of Avignon on a tributary of the Rhone. There one sees six wooden waterwheels in various stages of decay, **50 metres apart!** The mills played some part in the making of a cotton cloth called calico.

Peter

MILLING AROUND

Mildred Cookson is Chairman of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) Mills Section, and Editor of its quarterly Newsletter Mill News. She chose Pann Mill as the second mill to feature in a series of articles entitled News from the Friends Groups. Headed Progress at Pann Mill, High Wycombe, the article consists of extracts from Issue No. 8 of the Pann Mill Times, March 2001, and mentioned our 2nd September Open Day. The publicity is much appreciated.

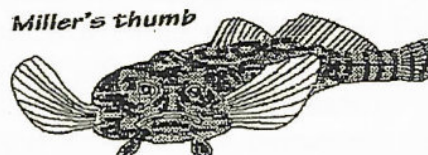
Tony Hyde is a local photographer and feature writer who regularly contributes to the two-monthly glossy magazine Buckinghamshire Countryside. His article on Chiltern Windmills (March/April 2001) was followed in the May/June issue by Chiltern Watermills which features in particular the Ford End Mill at Ivinghoe and our own Pann Mill. This article also mentions our September 2nd Open Day. We are grateful to Tony for this publicity.

Mike Chambers, visitor on Open Day, has benefited from borrowing a Pann Mill copy of SPAB Mill News. He found a source of millstones by contacting the editor.

Lew Bristow of Wycombe District Council looks after the river, a job formerly carried out by Myra King. The Pann Mill team look forward to liaising with him on water matters and in particular the control of water flow.

George Henry Heather lived and worked at Pann Mill in 1891 carting grain for grinding and flour to the mill's customers. We thank his granddaughter **Mary Reading** of Flackwell Heath for this information which appeared in the 1891 census. She has also provided a copy of George Henry's 1890 Marriage Certificate which shows him living at Pann Mill as a Miller. This is a welcome addition to the archives which are being used to compile a definitive history of the mill.

Eric Britnell is Swan Lifeline's local representative with extensive experience in handling, and in particularly rescuing, injured swans. Whilst collecting river water-crowfoot, also called water buttercup - favourite swan food - from the bed of the river just below Pann Mill, a **Miller's Thumb** fish popped out from the mass of greenery. Within a week, another one appeared in a waterwheel bucket after we had slowly turned the wheel by hand to position the pit wheel for cog fitting. A description of this fish was contained in Pann Mill Times No. 7 of September 2000. Seeing it for real was fascinating; it looked like a flying fish rather than one living on the river bed. This drawing is by permission of Wycombe Wildlife Group who reported finding the fish in waters around the Rye in 1999.



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