

Pann Mill Times



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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.

PROJECT LEADER'S JOTTINGS

It is a very exciting time in the history of Pann Mill as we prepare for Sunday 5th September, our last Open Day before milling resumes after 33 years. Corn has been milled on this site for over 900 years. We believe that this delightful historical site, in a prominent location on the A40, close to the town, has a great future as an important part of the town's heritage.

National Mills Sunday, May 9th 1999

Wycombe District Council contributed two exhibitions in the form of Energy Efficiency and Composting, both under a marquee. Wood turning by Don Murray (a mill volunteer), ceramics by Gill Thornton and the sale of cottage garden plants by an Ibstone firm, added interest for the large numbers who attended.

Safety issues have been reviewed after discussions with Wycombe District Council. We have erected heavy duty mesh screening in front of the waterwheel, with more mesh inside to guard visitors from moving parts. Wooden rails have been set in front of the lucam which overlooks the Rye.

Open Day, Sunday, September 5th 1999

At 2.00pm Catherine Kraft will be dedicating a new **tun** to the memory of her late father Walter, who gave many hours of legal advice to the High Wycombe Society. The tun, a massive wooden cover for the stones, completes the stone 'furniture' at the sharp end of the milling process.

Our present main activity is the shaping of 49 cogs and mounting them on to the spur wheel; **on Open Day we shall be asking visitors to sponsor a cog.** Further sponsorship will be sought to cover the few costly items needed to complete the restoration, for example the drive belt.

The next six months will be crucial for the restoration project, as we link up the mechanism from the pit wheel to the millstones. Our aim is to sell stone ground flour on National Mills Sunday, in May 2000. Pann Mill will then be only the second working water-powered flour mill in Buckinghamshire.

Myra

COGS AND TEETH

I agreed to be umpire. Three experienced woodworkers in our restoration team who were busy shaping and mounting wooden COGS (or TEETH) on to the spur wheel, could not agree on which term to use. Not experienced in anything technical, I was the ideal person to umpire as I had no previous knowledge which might favour COGS or TEETH.

Even before I could reach for back numbers of SPAB Mills Section Newsletters for guidance, my work was done. It came about like this. As a means of raising much needed cash to complete our plan to mill flour next May, the team agreed to associate a person's name with a numbered COG (or TOOTH) in return for a donation. Once the alternative names were mentioned in relation to this funding, **there was no contest.** Imagine the notice as you entered the mill on Open Day

SPONSOR A TOOTH

Clearly too clinical!

SPONSOR A COG

Won the day.

I was not to know at the time that we had made a fortunate choice, for my later research supported COGS. SPAB Mills Section Newsletter for April 1998 revealed this illuminating extract from a letter by Alan Stoyel

I must admit that, for a long time, I had been unclear about the difference between cogs and teeth. Ironically, it was none other than Rex Wailes who was my mentor on these matters. He took me aside and explained how important it is for researchers and recorders to be accurate and consistent in their terminology. He insisted that a tooth is so called only when it is an integral part of a wheel, as in a completely cast iron gear, whereas a cog is always an insertion. I thought of it as particularly relevant, and something of a privilege, therefore to be able to pass on this information in a Rex Wailes lecture.

Rex Wailes wrote the classic book *The English Windmill*, first published in 1954, and was awarded the O.B.E. for his services to Industrial Archaeology. He, more than any other, was responsible for bringing mill conservation to the attention of the public.

It is not surprising that SPAB's Consolidated Glossary of British Mill Terms (1996) confirms the preferred use of the terms by including the following definitions:

COGS When 'teeth' of a gear wheel are separated and replaceable they are called
COGS

TEETH The integral parts of a gear wheel which engage with similar projections
on another gear wheel

Certainly, COG is the favoured term amongst millwrights, and so our three Pann Mill woodworkers know now that they work on cogs. Did someone say he was fitting pegs? Please, please, **please**, they are **COGS** and there's an end to it!

Peter

GARDENER'S NOTES

Margaret braves the floods

There has been no shortage of water in the river recently, in particular on one Sunday in August. It was good planting weather as I prepared the ground for some plants I had been offered - if I went and dug them up myself. This I did at mid-day. Needing only to pop them in the ground, I changed out of my gardening clothes and made my way to Pann Mill. Walking down Suffield Road the heavens opened and water was soon pouring down Loakes Road and over my ankles. Where the football ground used to be there was a waterfall which went down past the hospital. The roundabout at the bottom of Marlow Hill was more like a regatta. At Pann Mill I noticed the tail race channel under the wheel was full of water. Nevertheless I started planting in the flower bed by the Water Pumping Station. Shortly after that I saw Peter with his camera and wondered why he was there. I walked up the slope towards the mill only to be confronted by a lake; in fact I was surrounded by water! It was astonishing, for water poured over the bank from the leat into the flood relief channel, and spilled down the mill steps. How was I to get out? I called out to Peter, but he was engrossed in his David Bailey act, and he simply waved back. I hastily put my tools away and locked up, hoping Peter would help me out and do a Sir Walter Raleigh act. But where was he? Gone! I waded out almost waist deep. He had lost a good photo, but those he did take were very good. (Editor's note: I am assured that the film ran out immediately prior to Margaret's appearance. When eventually the camera was re-loaded, **she** had gone!)

Planting news

I was unable to visit Bassetsbury Mill with the team, but later I enjoyed an afternoon there and was very envious of the residents' peaceful garden. **I seldom sit** and enjoy mine at Pann Mill. I hope to go back later and return with some kingcups for the bog garden which took a hammering from the flood.

I want to thank whoever kindly left another bag of primroses by the mill door recently. Working at the mill and talking to all the friends I have met there is most enjoyable. I look forward to meeting you, and perhaps the primrose donor, on Show Day.

Margaret

EXCAVATION REPORT

A report on excavations at Pann Mill in 1993 and 1995 appeared in Records of Buckinghamshire Volume 39, which was published earlier this year and is in **High Wycombe Reference Library**. It covers 28 pages and includes 21 illustrations. Stanley and Pauline Cauvain, who spent an enormous amount of time carrying out the excavations and writing the report, have done the High Wycombe Society a great service in making known fascinating new information about this Domesday mill site. **The Finds**. The following is a list of finds which are detailed in the report: Animal bone, Mollusca, Seeds, Wooden objects, Metal objects, Glass, Clay pipes, Medieval and Post Medieval pottery. 50 different makes of **clay pipe bowls** were found, 111 bowls in all, dating from the early 17th century through to the later 19th century. There were a number of **intact glass vessels** including wine and apothecary bottles ranging from the late 17th to mid-18th centuries.

Former Mills. Of particular interest to the Restoration Team was the discovery of the remains of a 14th century mill building and the wheel pit of an 18th century mill.

Peter

VISIT TO BASSETSBURY MILL

Delightfully situated beside Bassetsbury Manor is the Late Georgian building of Bassetsbury Mill which was developed as private housing in 1965. So, it was with real pleasure that the project team accepted an invitation to visit Judy and Roger File, who live there in Eyot House.

We took an early break from our work at Pann Mill on Sunday, August 1st, brushed ourselves down and crossed the Rye. Our hosts greeted us on an immaculate lawn with cooling refreshments, and with great enthusiasm showed us round. Surrounded by water channels, we were ideally placed to enjoy the heatwave. Heathrow recorded 33C (91F) that day!

The undershot wheel, which is bigger than ours, has been refurbished and is in fair condition except that the axle is permanently set in concrete as part of the structure at the rear of the mill building. There is no other machinery remaining and, indeed, it is a mystery where it went when the building was converted for domestic use. The leat arrangement allows for a continuous flow of water under the wheel, but to prevent flooding of the building there is a nearby double sluice-operated bypass and further upstream a more modern storm water bypass. This leat also feeds into a tunnel under the main mill house where, it is believed, there used to be a turbine electricity generator.

The mill has been delightfully developed into cottages surrounded by well-tended gardens. The continuous sound of running water completely drowns out the noise of aircraft and road traffic, and as the town centre is handy on foot or bicycle, the mill forms an idyllic haven.

Our visit served to emphasize the importance of retaining Pann Mill as the last working mill of over 30 mills that used to operate on the Wye. So utterly different is Bassetsbury from our own mill, one would not expect there to be anything in common, except that both are on the Wye. However, being two of Wycombe's six mills recorded in William the First's Domesday Book, a watermill would have occupied each site over 900 years ago. An ancient link, yet one to cherish.

Project team members are most grateful to Judy and Roger for their hospitality and our private viewing of the mill.

John



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