

# Pann Mill Times



MARCH 2000

No. 6

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

### WYCOMBE'S WORKING WATERMILL

Early in March the High Wycombe Society achieved a major goal in establishing Pann Mill as Wycombe's last working mill - out of more than 30 that operated in the 19th century in the valley. The restored 140 year-old waterwheel has been turning now for some years on Open Days, but it now transfers the energy created by the flow of the Wye, via six cog wheels and two pulley wheels, to the top (runner) millstone which turns at over 100 revolutions per minute.

On May 14th 2000 we will grind flour and thus re-establish a link with a thousand years of millers who worked on this site before us.

Pann Mill is a living site, and members of the High Wycombe Society - and surely many townsfolk of Wycombe - feel a duty to pass this on to the next generation, not as a completed "mill in a bottle", but as a dynamic project, the final shape of which has yet to be determined. There is, slumbering on the site today, mill machinery from the earlier building waiting to be restored, including an electrically-driven pair of millstones and an 'Archimedean screw' used for delivering the meal into sacks.

The project is not about Councils or Academics or Learned Societies, but is an important community asset, carried forward by an ever evolving team of enthusiasts. Those who have helped and moved on are too numerous to mention, but their efforts are recognised by present team members. In particular we remember Jack Scruton MBE, first Secretary of the High Wycombe Society, who had the foresight to recognise that this valuable site of industrial heritage could and should be saved. We are indebted to him.

Working to a tight schedule almost every Sunday since Christmas, the team has been fortunate in being augmented by new enthusiasts, some from abroad. It has been a costly period, with the knowledge that the high financial outlay by the Society will continue for some time to come.

A huge effort to fund-raise will be needed on May 14th. As on previous Open Days, there will be plants, pottery and polished wood pieces for sale and delicious home-made cakes to savour in the delightful garden. *Myra*

( 11 AM  
To  
5 PM )

## MILLS and MILLING THROUGH the AGES

Stanley Cauvain addressed the Quarterly meeting of the High Wycombe Society in January with an illustrated talk on Mills and Milling Through the Ages. As members of the Society, he and his wife Pauline are well known for their archaeological digs and especially for the 1993 and 1995 excavations at Pann Mill which were made with permission of Wycombe District Council, owners of the site. The digs revealed remains of an early 14th century mill building and the wheelpit of an 18th century mill. Finds from the site went to the County Museum at Aylesbury and High Wycombe's Local History and Chair Museum. A report on the excavations appeared in Records of Buckinghamshire, Volume 39, which was published in 1999 and is in the High Wycombe Reference Library. It is hoped to carry out another dig to extend the covered-in trench which still holds 14th century wooden posts.

Professionally, Stanley is a scientist specialising in wheat, flour and baking.

Starting his talk with the make-up of the pre-historic wheat ear, which originated in Turkey, comparison was made with present-day examples. Natural cross pollination in early days led to better quality wheat, worth grinding for food. Baking may have begun by accident when it was found that wetting and heating flour made it more easily digested and more palatable.

The historical sequence of wheat grinding was highlighted, e.g. hand querns, watermills and windmills, before roller mills appeared in the late 1800s. Archaeology has suggested that wheat was grown and ground locally at Micklefield some 2,000 years ago. Pann Mill's archaeological finds were used to illustrate the fluctuating fortunes of milling over the centuries in this country. A strong example of this was the heyday of milling, late 18th century, when it appears the war with France was good for millers! Milling then rose in status and many new buildings were constructed, including Pann Mill (demolished October 1971).

In the mid to late 1800s, the development of metal rollers for milling and the import of cheap but good quality wheat from North America, sounded the death-knell of many small traditional mills. Roller mills, using vertical steel cylinders, produced in one hour what millstones produced in one week.

The speaker ended on an optimistic note for the flour milling industry. Many members of the audience were surprised to hear that 95% of all wheat used in this country today grows here; also that this country is the 5th biggest exporter of wheat in the world.

During an interesting question time, one topic discussed was the different kinds of wheat flour. The speaker was in no doubt that because individuals, internally, are all slightly different, flour that suits one person may not suit another.

Appropriately enough given the topic, the leader of Pann Mill Restoration Group, Myra King, gave a vote of thanks on behalf of the appreciative audience.

## FRENCH BURRSTONES READY FOR ACTION

Pann Mill Times No. 2 (March 1998) described the lifting of the millstones to the stone floor and gave an account of their history. Because our pair will be in action inside the wooden tun, their working surfaces will not be seen by visitors for a long time. The photograph below is shown to highlight the construction of a burrstone. The Pann Mill bedstone is shown ready to receive the runner which hovers above it - on the left - hanging from the stone crane. In order to emphasise the millstone construction, flour has been dropped in the grooves between the 25 burrs that were fitted together by Dell & Son in their Thames wharf. The drawing shows the factory where the pair of millstones were made, the burrs having travelled from a quarry near Paris.

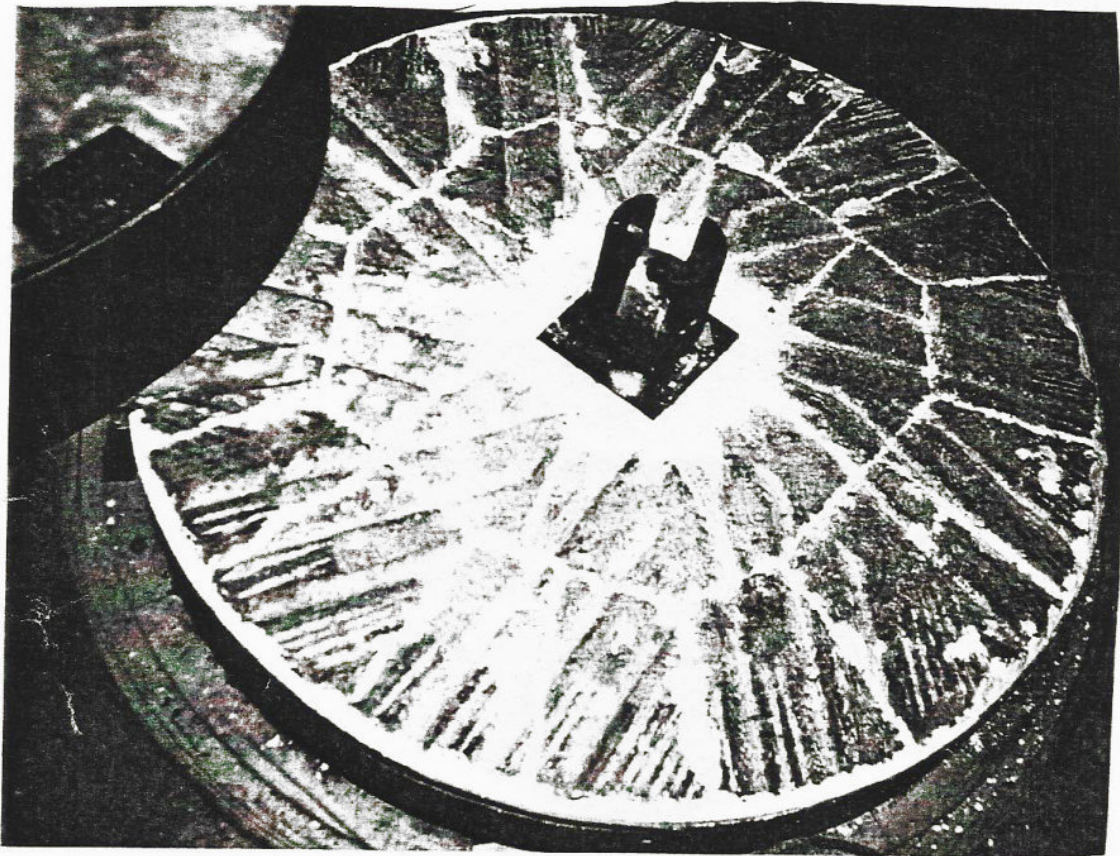
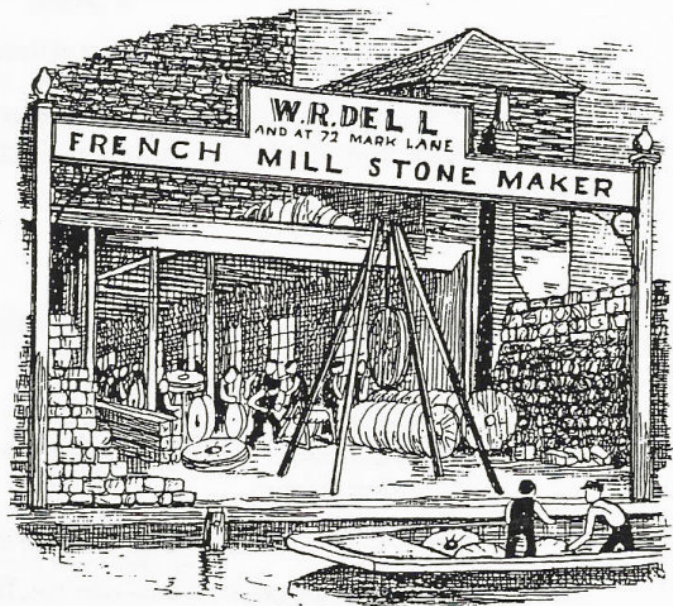


Illustration from *Oxfordshire Mills*  
by Wilfred Foreman 1983  
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Dell's Wharf, 1850



## PANN MILL : ON THE (TOURIST) MAP

The first Ordnance Survey map was published in 1801 and its scale was 1 inch to 1 mile. Then in 1974 came 1¼ inches to 1 mile (1:50 000).

A brand new Ordnance Survey Map named Explorer was published last year. The description on its cover reads as follows:

A local leisure map with public rights of way and tourist information  
with a scale of 2½ inches to 1 mile, which is 4 cm to 1 km.  
Also known as a 1:25 000 map.

Having such a convenient large scale, the new map is able to contain more useful information for the tourist, and High Wycombe has benefited from this.

Selected tourist and leisure information for the centre of High Wycombe  
in Explorer Map 172 - Chiltern Hills East, is shown to be:

The Information Centre  
Local History and Chair Museum  
Pann Mill



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What a good start this gratis publicity has given Pann Mill at the start of the new millennium; but its future as an industrial heritage tourist attraction has to be guaranteed.

*Peter*

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Pann Mill Times appears in March and September  
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