

Pann Mill Times

MARCH 2002

No. 10



Pann Mill Times gives news of the restoration of corn milling 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.

Thoughts from the team leader

On June 21st and 22nd the Rye will play host to the Chilterns Water Festival, and we have accepted an invitation to open and run the mill on both days. Organised by the Chilterns Conservation Board, the Festival is a celebration of the natural history, features, and importance of the rivers in the Chilterns; it promises to be a good day out and an excellent opportunity for us to participate and display the mill and its history. The first day, Friday, has an educational theme for local schools, while Saturday is open to the general public.

Before this is the 12th of May, the Sunday of National Mills Week-end, and to be ready for milling is the none too small task of restoring the pit wheel. The pit wheel, for those with the good sense not to get involved, is the large cast-iron gear wheel that transfers the power of the waterwheel to the machinery inside the mill. It has 52 oak cogs fitted around its perimeter, and last July two cogs split, cutting short milling for the day. We now have 52 new cogs which are gradually being fitted for our May milling.

David Nicholls, one of the group's keen supporters has just retired. As a millwright who has restored more than thirty windmills and watermills, he has provided us with materials, parts, and invaluable advice needed to make the mill work. I'm sure you will join me in wishing David and his wife a long and enjoyable retirement.

Work on the pit wheel has demonstrated how short we are of volunteers for the Sunday morning working parties. If you are able to spare some time or know of anybody who might be interested, I will be most pleased to welcome new blood. We -work on the first and third Sundays of each month from about 10am until the jokes have run out (usually about 1pm).

Finally, spring flowers are such a wonderful sight, bringing the promise of long warm summer days to follow, and the flowers in the mill grounds are, as always such a grand and welcome spectacle. Thank you Margaret. It occurred to me recently, while enjoying a few moments of peace and quiet in the gardens, that we are extremely lucky to have this wonderful place with what must be one of the best water features for miles around - Alan Titchmarsh, eat your heart out!

Robert

WE NOW HAVE 52 COGS WHICH ARE GRADUALLY BEING FITTED

(Quote from *Thoughts From Team Leader* - overleaf)

Two descriptions of the work follow - which could only have been written by team members intimately involved in the job!

Robert writes: The task of fitting the new cogs is a slow one, but not as slow as removal of the old ones proved to be. In the time honoured tradition of these things, the old cogs rattled about freely in their sockets until it was time for them to come out; they hung on for dear life. Only after careful cajoling with a couple of 5 tonne hydraulic jacks, a big hammer, and some un-gentlemanly curses persuaded them otherwise. But come out they did! - and the pit has been dug out to reveal a tiled base. The wheel looks splendid in its new coat of black paint.

John writes: The decision to replace the 52 wooden cogs in the pit wheel was the easy part of the job. Ideally a sledge hammer applied to the back face of a cog would soon ease it out of the slot in the iron wheel. In Pann Mill this is simply not possible with the confined access behind and above the wheel.

The first method used involved a series of more gentle taps with a club hammer. This proved to be slow and physically exhausting. Thought was then given to dismantling and removing the wheel so that the preferred sledge hammer technique could be applied. That would require the use of large spanners and heavy lift machinery, and was set aside. Then the idea of the use of hydraulic power surfaced and that provided the solution! A bottle (car) jack was placed horizontally between the wall behind the wheel and the back face of a cog, and then combining application of hydraulic power with the club hammer technique, the frustrations were overcome.

So once again brawn (in limited supply) was beaten by restoration team brain, in a project where the phrases 'not quite' and 'only just' have often been used before.

Old cogs are available as souvenirs!

ROLLER MILLS

Pann Mill Times No. 6 of March 2000 contained a write-up of Stanley Cauvain's talk on 'Mills and Milling through the Ages'. David Lindsey of Lord End Mill has queried the description of roller mills in the article - 'Roller mills, using *vertical* cylinders'.

Without doubt the individual cylinders or rolls were, from the outset of roller milling, positioned *horizontally* to the floor. However pairs of rolls may be positioned vertically, as illustrated opposite, horizontally or diagonally. Clearly, to describe rolls as vertical is not helpful in the understanding of the process, so David has a valid point.

Thank you David, you have doubtless triggered a discussion of roller mills, and perhaps roller milling versus millstone milling. Relevant contributions will be included in future editions.

Regarding the illustration on the opposite page, Henry Simon (1835-1899) was a leading engineer involved in developing roller mills in England in the late 19th century. In 1878 he installed his first small but complete roller mill plant for McDougall Brothers at Manchester.

WHAT'S IT FOR?

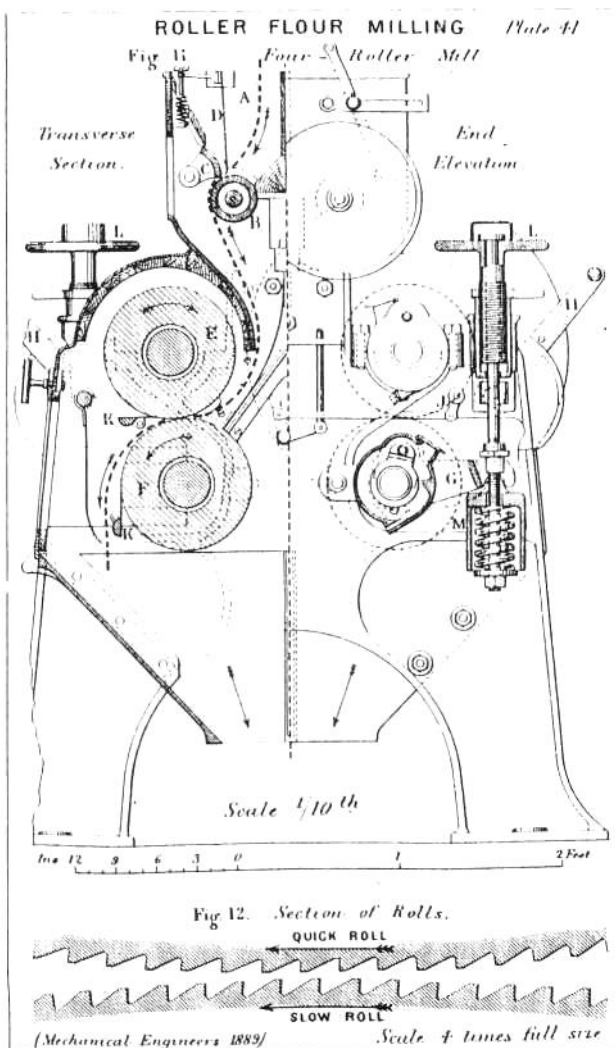
There has been little time for musing over the last few months, having spent a good part of the winter in warmer places. I returned to find much of the mill machinery had been taken apart for a good spring-clean, and extraction of the pit wheel cogs was underway. However I did settle down for a bit of musing, and came across a list of types of mill which might be turned into a quizz. So here goes.

Pry to match each type of mill (numbered 1 to 10) with one of the descriptions (lettered A to K). There is one red herring in the descriptions!

The answers, with a more complete set of descriptions will appear in the September edition and will be available in the mill on National Mills Sunday, 12 May 2002.

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| 1. BARK MILL | A. where flax and hemp are dressed |
| 2. BUCKET MILL | B. for rasping logwood to produce dye |
| 3. CUSTOM MILL | C. for wire production |
| 4. HECKLING MILL | D. for grinding chalk for whitewash |
| 5. HULLING MILL | E. where corn is crushed |
| 6. LOGWOOD MILL | F. where wooden buckets are made |
| 7. PLUMPING MILL | G. for mixing and homogenising clay |
| 8. PUG MILL | H. for grinding bark to extract tannin |
| 9. SCUTCHING MILL | I. for husk cereal grains |
| 10. WHITING MILL | J. for beating linseed to make fibres |
| | K. where corn is ground for a toll |

John



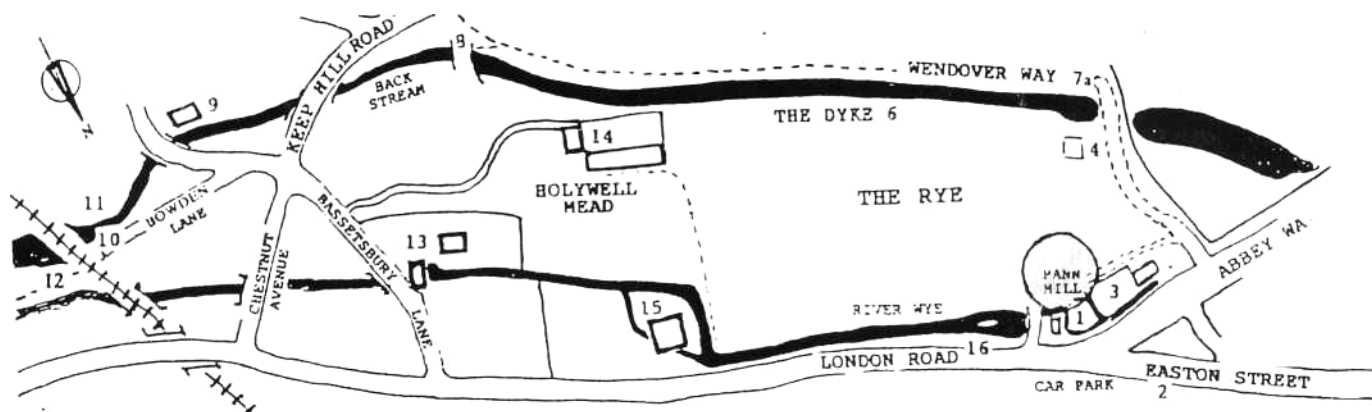
End elevation of Simon system four-roller mill. (Proc.I.Mech.II.J889)

This illustration of an 1889 Roller Flour Mill is by kind permission of Glyn Jones, author of a well researched new book *The Millers - A story of technological endeavour and industrial success, 1870-2001.*

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WATER TRAIL AROUND THE RYE

Circular walk from Pann Mill



If you live in Wycombe or drive along its long London Road, you will recognise the green expanse of open space that forms the Rye. Approaching the town from the east, it ends near the traffic lights at Pann Mill, backed by a wooded hillside.

You may know of the Rye, but to really know it you need to walk round it. Some 25 years ago High Wycombe Society members, led by Jack Scruton, planned a water trail around the Rye and produced a leaflet which has now been brought up to date. The walk starts and ends at Pann Mill and covers 2 miles. This trail leaflet, available on Pann Mill Open Days and at the Tourist Information Centre, has been designed to guide individuals around the trail, without the need of a leader. However, for some years Pru Meek, who lives on the trail, has led parties on Open Days and will do so this year on **Sunday May 12th**, **Saturday June 22nd** and **Sunday September 1st**, all starting from the Mill at 2.30pm.

The following sixteen points of interest are highlighted on the walk. For fun, see if you really know the Rye by matching numbers on the map with points of interest. Not sure of one or two? Get hold of a leaflet; but better still do the walk!

Pann Mill (1), Bassetsbury Manor and Mill(), The Waterfall(), Thames Water Pumping Station(), Wycombe Abbey School(), Rye Mill(), Funges Meadow Nature Reserve(), The Boathouse(), Marsh Green Mill(), The Springs(), The Hayward's Cottage site(), Swimming Pool and Environment Centre(), Wendover Way(), Where the Waters almost Meet(), The Dyke(), Ruins of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist(). *Peter*

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Pann Mill Times appears in March and September
THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY