

NORTH WEST MILLS GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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MAY 2010

The North West Mills Group is a voluntary organisation, which seeks to promote the study and conservation of traditional water and wind powered mills in the North West of England.

www.nwmg.org.uk

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A new watermill in Cheshire – see page 9

The NWMG. Newsletter is published four times a year in February, May, August and November. Contributions for the next issue should be sent to the editor by the last week in July.

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Membership subscriptions: Ordinary member £8.00 – Family £10.50 – Junior £3.00 - Corporate £15.00
Cheques made payable to ‘North West Mills Group’ and sent to the Membership Secretary (address above).

<u>CONTENTS</u>			
Editorial & Diary	page 3	Cheshire/Wirral Mills News	page 8
2010 AGM report	page 3	Walk Mill, Cheshire	page 9
Lytham Windmill accident, 1894	page 6	Letter to the Editor	page 11

EDITORIAL

We open with good news, in that the group's AGM was well-attended and we now have several more Committee members, two who have been with us before, and others completely new. For the first time we also have a non-UK national in the guise of Dutchman, Egbert Peereboom. Please be patient while everyone settles into their new posts and we will have a considerably invigorated group. We also have news of the first water mill to be built in Cheshire since the 1860s – see the report on Walk Mill on page 9.

Stuart Mousdale.

2010 DIARY

June 19th Visit to Lytham & Little Marton windmills, Fylde
(* cost around £10 per person, including transport between the mills - contact Margaret Croker for details)

It is hoped to organise one or two other NWMG events later this year

AGM REPORT

1. Registration

The meeting started at 1.15 pm with 17 members attending, plus John Ingham of Melrose Investments, the owners of Marsh Mill.

Charles Rowntree (Committee Member); Russell Jackson; Angela Denby; Steve Williams; Egbert Peereboom; Mildred Cookson (Committee Member); Janet Edmunds; Jim Woodward-Nott; Shirley McCauley; Margaret Croker; G. Ibbetson; Wendy Venables; Alan Campbell; Sylvia Campbell; David Hutton (Treasurer); Shirley Matthews; Steve Whiteley (Acting Chairman).

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from: Duncan Hutt; Peter Ellis; Stuart & Judith Mousdale.

3. Minutes of Previous AGM

The minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting held on 28th March 2009 were summarised by the Chairman and accepted as a true record.

4. Chairman's Report

Steve pointed out that at the last AGM he had resigned the Chairmanship but agreed to stay on the Committee. He had expected Stuart to Chair this meeting but in his absence he was prepared to Chair it himself.

Stuart has successfully edited and distributed four newsletters (No. 89 in May 2009; 90 in August; 91 in November; and 92 in February 2010).

A visit to Rossett Mill near Wrexham in September was organised, again by Stuart, and enjoyed by seven members. We had lunch together in a local pub then spent the afternoon being entertained by the mill owner Michael Kilgannon who gave us a comprehensive tour of both the mill and the living quarters attached.

Finally, an appeal was made for volunteers to join the Committee and Steve thanked Stuart and the other Committee members for their work during the last year..

5. Treasurer's Report & Accounts

David Hutton noted that the group's finances remained healthy. A copy of the balance sheet and breakdown of income and expenditure, audited by Stuart, for the previous 12 months was distributed to the meeting. David drew the attention of the meeting to the need to renew subscriptions for 2010 membership.

The balance brought forward from 2008 into 2009 was £1643.78

Balance carried forward into 2010 is £1513,76

Total Income was £754.48

Membership for 2009 was 62

6. Election of Officers & Committee

Steve suggested that those Committee members prepared to serve again should be elected en bloc:

These were:

Mike Brereton (in his absence)

Mildred Cookson

David Hutton

Stuart Mousdale (in his absence)

Charles Rowntree

Steve Whiteley

The various roles within the Committee that required filling were:

Chairman

General Secretary

Treasurer

Membership Secretary

Editor

Archivist

Jim Woodward-Nutt volunteered to become Treasurer

Margaret Croker offered to take on the role of Membership Secretary

David Hutton said that he would stay on the Committee as Archivist

Steve Williams offered to help with the web site.

Shirley Matthews volunteered to act as Publicity Manager

Janet Edmunds said she would join the Committee

Egbert Peereboom also volunteered to join the Committee

Steve Whiteley agreed to act as Chairman until another volunteer could be found for the post..

It was hoped that Stuart Mousdale would agree to stay on as Editor or take on another post.

Steve thanked everyone concerned and expressed his delight at the influx of new blood into the Committee.

7. The Future of the Group.

At last year's AGM there had been discussion about the failure of the group to grow and doubt was expressed that it was sustainable. This year looks so much better with new members on the Committee and new Officers. Discussion was much more positive. It was agreed that we would attempt to organise at least three events, continue to publish the quarterly Newsletter, freshen up the web site and look again at the Information Leaflet.. In the context of the latter, Mildred said that she understood that the efforts of SPAB to publish leaflets on behalf of Groups did not look as they would materialise. It would appear that Geraldine Mathieson will publish the Lincolnshire leaflet but not those she had planned for the other regional groups.

8. Any Other Business

Charles reminded the meeting that Mike Davies-Shiel had successfully guided a walk round the Ambleside watermills in 2008 but has since died. His widow has been sent condolences on behalf of us all at NWMG. His extensive library containing items on both mills and local industrial history is to be preserved and Charles Rowntree and Mike Brereton are actively involved in digitising much of it for publication on a web site. The Cumbria Industrial History Society is expected to hold many of the archives.

David said that he was concerned that the council may ask us to remove our archive filing cabinets of which there are four. It was suggested and approved that Steve Williams would remove them and take them to Lytham for future use. He would, of course, need to get approval from his committee to do this but he thought they would be happy to help.

John Ingham addressed the meeting regarding the condition of Marsh Mill and his contact with Wyre Borough Council (WBC) on this matter. Melrose Investments had acquired the site five years ago, but the mill was run by WBC, who show little apparent interest in conserving and promoting the windmill. WBC have a duty to maintain the mill, a grade 2* listed building, but have undertaken little work recently. John asked for support from the NWMG to pressure WBC. into action.

9. Date of Next Meeting

It was suggested that the 2011 AGM be planned for Saturday March 26th at Lytham Mill, the speaker to be Shirley Matthews on Little Marton Mill. Steve Williams will discuss this possibility with his Committee at Lytham and we will confirm arrangements at a later date.

After the conclusion of the formal business Mildred Cookson gave an illustrated talk on the windmills of Liverpool. Our thanks to her are recorded herewith. It was a most interesting talk with slides showing an age of Liverpool that is little known.

The meeting closed at 4.00 pm.

Steve Whiteley, 30 March 2010.

DEATH AT LYTHAM WINDMILL, 1894

This article was discovered by Richard Smith of Staining whilst researching into his family's history (he has connections with the Nottingham family mentioned in the article) and passed to the Editor by Dave Hutton.

A transcription of a report in *The Lytham Times*,
Saturday April 7th, 1894,
Concerning the death of Joseph NOTTINGHAM.

KILLED BY THE WINDMILL

SHOCKING DEATH OF A SCHOOLBOY

On Wednesday morning at four o'clock a schoolboy named Joseph Nottingham, aged 8 years, son of Mr. Thomas Nottingham, coachman, of Westby Street, Lytham, died from injuries sustained through being knocked down by the sails of the windmill on the beach. It seems that at five o'clock on Tuesday afternoon, Nottingham went to the windmill in company with another schoolboy named Wilder, of Clifton Street, who was taking Mr. W. Swann, the miller, his tea. Swann was working on the third floor of the mill, and Wilder left Nottingham on the bottom floor while he took up the tea. The miller told the lad to put his tea on the window, and when Wilder returned he found that Nottingham had gone. It is supposed that while Wilder was upstairs the deceased climbed up on to the second floor and ventured out on the mill bank and was struck by the sails of the mill. Some repairs were taking place at the mill and in order to see that they were done Swann had to go outside to stop the mill sails from running. He then found Nottingham lying on his back on the mill bank unconscious with blood flowing from his head and face.

The miller immediately fetched Dr. Barlow and the little fellow was conveyed to the hospital in a dying state. It was then found that deceased had sustained a fracture of the skull and a compound fractured right jaw. He never regained consciousness and only lived ten hours after his admission to the hospital.

THE INQUEST was held at the Cottage Hospital yesterday, before Mr. Holden of Lancaster (Deputy Coroner) and a jury, of who Mr. W. Boothroyd was foreman.

Mrs. Elizabeth Nottingham, mother of the deceased, identified the body as that of her son. She saw him at one o'clock on Tuesday afternoon when he

left to go to school. She did not see him again until after the accident had happened. She did not think her son was in the habit of going to the mill, which was about a quarter of a mile from her house. She went to the hospital and found deceased lying unconscious.

Christopher Wilder, aged 9 years, living in Clifton Street, said on Tuesday he met Joseph Nottingham at school and asked him to go to the mill afterwards. Witness started(sic) at five o'clock.(sic). He was taking tea to William Swann, the miller. When he got to the mill he left Nottingham on the bottom floor and witness went upstairs and gave Swann his tea. He then came down again to the floor level with the bank. He did not go out on the bank but put the tea down and then went to look for Joe, but he couldn't find him. When he could not find him Swann came down and went out and stopped the mill and found deceased lying on the bank. Witness then went for Mrs. Nottingham.

William Swann said he was in charge of the windmill on Lytham beach.

Wilder brought his tea to the mill on Tuesday when he was just going to start the new machine. Immediately after he saw another boy come upstairs after him and he told the last witness to take him downstairs to the bottom. Witness followed them half of the way downstairs and told Wilder to leave his tea in the window and that he would be down shortly after. He turned back when he got halfway up the ladder and put some new stones in to start the new machinery. He came down again after getting the machinery ready for starting and went out to stop the mill in order to put the machine in gear.

When he went out on the bank he saw a boy lying down beside the sails apparently unconscious. The other boy was in the mill bottom and while he was busy with his work he thought the other boy had also gone down. He went to Wilder who told him he did not see Nottingham go out on the bank.

Witness fetched the millwright down from upstairs and then ran for the doctor. The place where deceased was lying was just close to sails. Witness could not drag him away with safety without first stopping the mill. It would be about two minutes from the time he went down the ladder to the time he stopped the mill. He was lying on his back just out of reach of the sails, just as if he had been struck down by them. Deceased was bleeding from jaw and head. Witness did not move him but called for the millwright and then ran for doctor. The lad was lying cross ways on the bank facing the sails. Witness fancied that Nottingham walked out intending to get off the bank and that the sails struck him. The sails were not running over the door and he would have to walk six or seven yards before he was struck by them. The sails were running very quick at the time - about a mile a minute. - By the foreman(sic); He had always told Wilder to keep the lads he brought downstairs, but it appeared this boy followed him up afterwards. When the doors were open they could not always stop them from coming in and he was not always supposed to be working on the bottom floor.

Isabella Firth, matron of the hospital, said deceased was admitted to the hospital on Tuesday evening suffering from concussion of the brain and compound fracture of the jaw bone. He was bleeding very profusely from the head and from the jaw. He was attended by Dr. Barlow and Dr. Fisher. The

case was considered quite hopeless from the start; he was dying when brought in. He died the following morning at 4o'clock.

The boy Wilder was recalled and said when he went upstairs with Swann's tea he left deceased on ground floor and told him not to follow him upstairs.

He did not say anything to him when witness said that. He did not see Nottingham when he came down. He never heard Swann tell him to take the boy downstairs or saw him on the way down. Mrs. Swann had told him not to take boys with him to the mill.

The Coroner did not think the difference in the evidence on this point mattered very much. Probably this boy was very upset by the accident and he might have forgotten about seeing Nottingham again. In summing up he said that he had heard sufficient evidence to arrive at a satisfactory verdict in this unfortunate case. The cause of death seemed very obvious and according to the evidence of Swann, deceased must have been caught by one of the sails of the mill. The only other question was whether anyone was to blame for the accident, but he did not think so and suggested that a verdict of accidental death be returned.

The jury returned a verdict in accordance with the Coroner's suggestion. Several of the jury pointed out that the mill bank could easily be climbed upon by children and to stop this they suggested that the bank should be protected in some way.

The Coroner said that the bank was private property and anyone who went on it was a trespasser and must take the consequences. He was afraid he could not take any recommendation but perhaps the reporters would take notice of the matter.

CHESHIRE/WIRRAL MILL NEWS

Bunbury Mill – a group of local residents are attempting to establish a trust to take over the mill. Further information can be obtained from Ernest Croley on 01829 260334, email ernest.croley@homecall.co.uk

Dunham Massey sawmill – another leak has developed at the mill, but seems to be minor and is not affecting the mill's working.

Nether Alderley Mill – this is only open to pre-booked groups this year, details being available from Quarry Bank Mill, Styal.

Bidston Windmill – this will be open, as last year, on the first Saturday of the month, May to September, 10am to 12 noon.

For anyone interested in buying a mill, **Upton Windmill, Chester**, is for sale with Wright Manley for £425,000 and an apartment is available, again with Wright Manley, for £279,950 at the converted **Crowton watermill**.

WALK MILL, CHESTER

How many times in your life do you have the opportunity to visit a new watermill? That chance is now available at Walk Mill, Waverton, to the south east of Chester. This new building is constructed on the footprint of an earlier mill, which was demolished only about 1965, having been latterly used as a house. A mill was recorded in the area at Domesday, although this could refer to the neighbouring corn mill downstream on the River Gowy at Stapleford (differentiating this site from Walk Mill in the documentary record presents many problems for researchers). Certainly there was a mill here in medieval times, evidently employed for fulling for a period, judging by the site's name, but by the 1790s the mill was certainly being used to grind corn.



The landowners, the Jones family, only found out that a mill had stood on this site when remains started to become exposed during farm work in the area a few years ago. Their application to rebuild the mill as part of a farm diversification scheme was passed in 2006 and the new mill now has two pairs of stones driven from an all-metal undershot wheel, the gearing being acquired second hand from various sites. A damsel, retrieved during building work, is now at work again on the stone floor. Some original bricks and floor tiles have been reused in the building, along with a datestone over the tearoom fireplace, engraved "RW 1688" (this probably refers to the Winnington family, the owners at that time). The tearoom also has an album of photographs taken during the building work, showing the exposed foundations of the original mill and the subsequent development of the site. The Jones family grind their own wheat, grown in the surrounding fields, the first time this has happened since the original mill ceased to work, probably before WW 2 – flour, along with snacks made from their produce, are available from the excellent tearoom.

This is the first watermill to be built in Cheshire since Bollington Mill (Dunham Massey New Mill) was completely rebuilt in 1860, unless anyone knows of any later examples. The mill is open 10am to 5pm, Tuesday to Sunday (also Bank Holiday Mondays), with further details on www.walkmillflour.co.uk. A photograph of the original mill is on display and another can be found in [Images of Hargrave & Huxley: A Pictorial History of Two West Cheshire Villages](#) (Hargrave & Huxley Historical Group, 1999).



Close-up of the waterwheel



Mill gearing



Millstone furniture, complete with the rescued damsel

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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19th April 2010

Dear Mr Mousdale

We were dismayed at the inaccuracies and general negative impression given in your article on the National Trust's Acorn Bank Mill in the February newsletter

We are the three volunteers responsible for the ongoing maintenance, restoration and, along with several other helpers, operation of the Acorn Bank watermill. Last year we put in over 1000 hours of voluntary labour between us, working tirelessly and enthusiastically to ensure the mill continues to delight visitors, as surveys show it does.

We cannot understand why you concluded that "volunteers are on duty some Sundays", or that "the sole surviving waterwheel is no longer operated". In fact, there are volunteers in attendance almost every Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holiday afternoon while the property is open, and (subject to the availability of water and the terms of our extraction licence) we always use the power of the wheel to operate as much of the internal machinery as possible. At present this extends to the drive to the first pair of (oat shelling) stones and two power take-offs for belt drives. We are continually working to extend the range of operable machinery; we next plan to lower the millstone you saw displayed on the hurst frame onto its rhynd so that it will be able to turn, and then to begin work on overhauling the drive to the second pair of stones.

It is a pity that you have given both inaccurate information and a falsely gloomy impression of our beloved mill, when you could so easily have clarified the situation. May we suggest that in future you should contact the Custodian, Sara Braithwaite at Sara.Braithwaite@nationaltrust.org.uk.

The National Trust has recently commissioned Martin Watts to carry out a major survey of the mill, from which a conservation action plan is to be produced, and we have great hopes of this leading to exciting future developments. Perhaps we could contribute a précis of his report for a future newsletter.

Yours sincerely



Robert Price

Richard Harland

Ray Gill

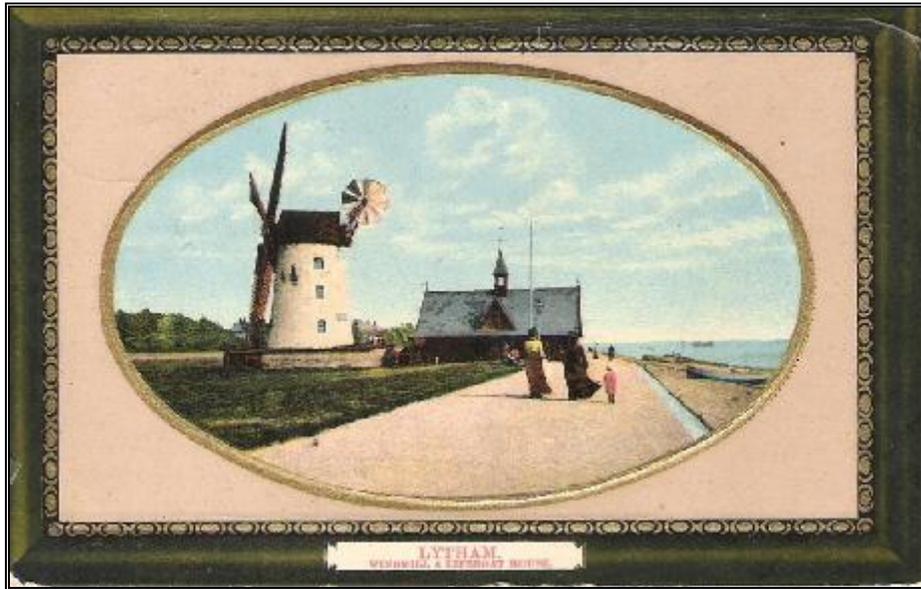
National Trust Volunteers

Acorn Bank Mill

Editor's response

I was equally dismayed to have received this letter, as I was certainly not aiming to give an inaccurate or "gloomy" impression of the mill and do not believe that is what I produced. On the contrary, the opening sentence of the last paragraph of my article commenced with "**definitely worth a visit (or revisit) if you are in the area**". I will admit that I was unaware of that the wheel could be worked (no indication on site that this was possible) and my impression of the volunteers only being around on some Sundays arose from my conversation with the staff on the ticket desk. Incidentally,

my visit WAS on a weekend (Saturday August 15th, 2009 to be precise) and there were certainly no volunteers around during the two hours that I spent photographing the site that afternoon. Sara Braithwaite has kindly kept in touch with the group for a number of years and Acorn Bank has hosted two NWMG meetings at the premises. What this does illustrate is how little contact that the NWMG currently has with several of the mills in the North West and, therefore, insufficient knowledge of any developments there. I would always welcome contributions to the *Newsletter* from regional mills, something that is generally not forthcoming – at least then I will not produce articles that offend local sensibilities!



Don't forget the Lytham/Little Marton trip! (postcard postmarked 1910)

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