



Minutes of the Spring Meeting and AGM of the Traditional Cornmillers Guild held at Heage Windmill, Derbyshire, on Saturday 18th May 2019.



Prior to the Meeting members looked around Heage Windmill where they were welcomed by Alan Eccleston, Meg Tarlton, Alan Gifford, John Boucher, and other volunteers.

1. Roll Call & Welcome

David Howell, Chairman, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Heage Windmill Trust for hosting the meeting and arranging a delicious lunch and refreshments in Heage Village Hall.

Present:

Jenny Hartland – Holgate Windmill
Ros Hay – Holgate Windmill
Nick Jones – Hon Secretary
Dave Pearce – Wicken Village Windmill - Hon Treasurer
Elwyn Davies - Wicken Village Windmill
David Howell – Offley Watermill – Chairman
Charles Howell – Offley watermill
Dave Harris-Jones – Heatherslaw Watermill – Vice-Chairman
Alan Eccleston – Heage Windmill
Alan Gifford – Heage Windmill
John Bedington – Associate

Mike Lovatt – Stanway Watermill
Nigel Moon – Whissendine Windmill
Simon Dodd – Worsbrough Mill
Richard Deacon – Mill Green Watermill
Volunteers – Heage Windmill
Jon Cook – Prior's Windmill
Michael Skoda – Avoncroft Windmill

2. Apologies for Absence

Received from:

Karl Grevatt – Charlecote Watermill
Michael Shaw – Golspie Watermill
Peter Stobbart – Pakenham Watermill
Andy and Anne Parry – Felin Ganol
James Waterfield and Richard Pennington – Maud Foster Mill
Mandy James – Redbournbury
Emma Hall – Y Felin Watermill
Lucy Hockley – Lurgashall Watermill
Michael Stoate – Cann Mills
Phil and Cheryl Harrison – Little Salkeld Watermill
Peter Ellis – Associate
Sandra and Richard Harte – Alderholt Watermill
Ian Ansell – Sibsey Trader Windmill
Michelle Thurlow - Letheringsett Watermill
Barry and Patti Partridge – Associates
Geoff Dees – Associate
Carol Rigby – Associate
Steve French – Burcott Mill
Issy Grieve – Barony Mill
Paul Wyman – Tuxford Mill
Chris Wright – Otterton Mill

For the record, the Secretary didn't receive replies from the following Members and Associates:

Calbourne Mill, Claybrooke Mill, Paul Marriott, Desna Greenhow, Derek Hosken, Five Sailed Mill.,

NB Follow-up Actions = A

3. Matters Arising and Signing of the Minutes

Bacheldre Mill.

It was reported that Bacheldre and the brand name had been bought by FWP Matthews of Chipping Norton.

Talgarth Watermill.

No further communication, so the Secretary has written to inform them that they are no longer members.

Training

Alan Eccleston confirmed that Heage could offer training if required.

The Chairman signed the Minutes of the Autumn 2018 meeting as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. Secretary's Report

The Secretary reported that he was pleased that the Guild had three new members – Otterton Watermill (Chris Wright), Devon; Stanway Watermill, Gloucestershire; and Avoncroft Windmill, Stourbridge. He expected Jonathan Wheeler, from Bardwell Windmill near Bury St Edmunds, to join in the near future.

He received a number of email enquiries every month seeking advice and information of a wide range of topics relating to milling, millwrighting and baking. It was good to see that people were turning to the TCMG for all sorts of help. One example was the recent request for advice on finding original flour sacks for a display at Fountains Abbey mill in Yorkshire. Associate Geoff Dees was able to provide these at short notice for a delighted exhibition organiser! A long-standing friend of the Guild, Alisa Crawford, from De Zwaan Windmill Island in Michigan, USA, is hoping to attend the next meeting, providing that it is on 2nd November, as she is then heading to Holland for a Dutch Millers Guild meeting on 4th November. In that connection it was very sad to have had to report the sudden unexpected loss of Ingeborg, Wouter Pfeiffer's partner, just before Christmas. The secretary had sent a card of condolence on behalf of the Guild. Jon Cook is in regular touch with Wouter. It was good to see Guild members in the media from time to time, most recently Nigel Moon was the subject of a delightful article in the Guardian.

The major preoccupation since the last meeting was in connection with the Government's announcement in Parliament on October 2018 that it intended to consult (yet again) on whether or not to make the fortification of flours with folic acid mandatory. As there is potential for any legislation to have a serious impact on traditional mills and milling practices the Guild members have all contributed to a detailed survey which was completed in January 2019. This has given invaluable insight and information into the quantities and types of flours being milled and to the listed building status of member mills, along with other data.

In February the Secretary and Jon Cook represented the Guild at the All Party Parliamentary Food and Health Forum on the issue, held in the House of Lords. This proved a very useful opportunity to promote and publicise the Guild and its aims, as well as to network and liaise with other interested parties eg NABIM. The Secretary registered his thanks to Jon Cook for all that he had done towards a written report stating our case – this was made available to all attending and via the minutes of the meeting. It was clear that many were not aware of the Guild, and that the issue of promotion and publicity is one which needs to be addressed as a priority, using social media including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The current surge in interest in speciality, local, organic, vegan and low carbon foods represents a great opportunity for Guild members, but we need to be more visible!

He reported that there appeared to be no further movement on consultation, possibly a reflection of the current Government having other matters on its mind!

The Secretary confirmed that he was stepping down later in the meeting to allow someone else to take on the role of Guild Secretary.

5. Chairman's Report

David Howell likewise announced that he was stepping down as he and his wife were expecting a third child later in the year. He was proud of the Guild and of all that had been achieved during his time as Chairman, and pleased to see new members joining every year.

6. Treasurer's Report

Dave Pearce circulated the current state of TCMG accounts. These show a balance of over £8,000. There remain a considerable stock of Hessian Carrier Bags.

He reported that chasing late payers of membership subs remained a challenge. At the time of the meeting these included :

Burcott Mill, near Wells – owing for 2 years
Calbourne Mill, Isle of Wight – owing for 3 years
Claybrooke Mill - owing for 3 years
Little Salkeld Mill - owing for 2 years
Lurgashall Mill - owing for 2 years
Worsbrough Mill - owing for 3 years

Actions :

- **The Vice-Chairman agreed to arrange an informal visit to Burcott Mill.**
- **The new Secretary would contact Calbourne Mill, recently sold (?) to see if the new owners wished to be Guild members.**
- **The Treasurer would chase up the others.**

Former Treasurer John Bedington recommended a phone call as he had found this usually did the trick!

7. Mill Reports.

Members attending the Meeting reported as follows:

Whissendine Windmill. Nigel Moon reported the rebuilding of the old office, with help from John bedington. Sales were steady but no texciting, perhaps because a number of his customers were concerned about possible gluten intolerance. Nigel is in touch with a couple, Adam and Vicky Marriott, who are interested in producing podcasts about the mill, and he thinks they could be persuaded to do a regular podcast about the Guild.

There was more discussion about the need to raise the profile of the Guild using social media like facebook, Twitter and Instagram, especially now when there was a growing interest in local, specialist and organic food. It might be worth paying a PR person to feed TCMG "good news" stories to the media to raise profile. Michael Skoda mentioned George Watkin, at Avoncroft, might be able to advise and or help. It was felt that each member mill should have a poster as well as the existing 1/3 A4 leaflets.

Actions:

- **Nigel Moon to contact Marriotts and Michael Skoda to contact George Watkin re promoting the Guild on social media.**
- **All members to advise Secretary and Chairman if they have any contacts with PR or social media management skills.**
- **Committee to sort out an information poster (design, text, printing) to be available to all members.**

Avoncroft Mill, Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove – a new member. Michael Skoda, miller, reported mill repairs – millwright David Empringham replaced three sails in 2016. Funded by Arts Council of England (as they also manage the English Heritage budget).

Mill Green, Hatfield. Richard Deacon reported that he was doing more milling as a new cafe had opened nearby and was baking a lot more. He also noted more sales of bigger bags of flour, a sign that more home bakers were baking more often? He was shortly to retire and so there would be an opportunity for anyone who was interested in applying for his job.

Worsbrough Watermill, Barnsley. Simon Dodd reported that he had spent a considerable time liaising with the Environment Agency to rationalise the Abstraction Licensing arrangements, and three had now been successfully integrated into one! He was buying grain direct from farms via UK Grain Lab connections. He was forging stronger links between local farmers and bakers, partly because of growing interest in speciality flours.

NB Next UK Grain Lab gathering is 1st and 2nd November, possibly near Nottingham. 2nd November is currently date for next TCMG meeting, but shouldn't TCMG have a presence at Grain Lab gathering to raise awareness and attract new suppliers and customers? In which case perhaps the 2nd November meeting could be held nearby, maybe even be partly an "open" meeting as part of Grain Lab programme to promote the Guild?

Action : Committee to consider this suggestion and act upon it if they agree it's a good one!

Priors Mill, Swaffham. Jon Cook reported a positive year with sales (and sails?) buoyant.

Heatherslaw Mill, Ford & Etal. Dave Harris-Jones reported sales and visitors both up. He had established new links with two breweries. Baking with Hadrian's ale to make a beer loaf, with molasses but no need for extra yeast. Supplying coarse ground wheat and bere meal from local farms alongside the River Tweed to Cheviot Brewery, a new business set up on the Ford & Etal Estate. More family baking days proving very popular with visitors.

Stanway Mill, Gloucestershire. New member. Mike Lovatt told of the mill's varied past as a fulling mill, then a cornmill, then a sawmill, then an abandoned mill from the early 1950s until 2002 when the estate owner, Lord Wemyss, initiated restoration with help from millwright David Empringham, included repairs to the cast iron Victorian waterwheel. Currently milling around 9 tonnes p/a.

Heage Windmill. Alan Eccleston reported increased production, visitors, and events. The “Milling Experience” day (£60) proving very popular. New heating installed! Major and costly (£20K) repairs need to replace two new sails in Siberian larch.

Discussion about how to avoid “sticky flour”. Factors include humidity, infrequent use, moisture content of grain. Solution is regular cleaning out of master furrows.

Holgate Mill, York. An uneventful year, just run-of-the-mill maintenance. Wheat from Offley, spelt from Craggs of Durham. More wholesale customers eg **local primary school for pizzas for school dinners! Heage will be 250 years young in 2020 so watch out for a big party!**

The following members who were unable to be present sent in reports :

Peter Stobbart writes : Milling at **Pakenham** is doing well, flour sales are up on last year. We are doing wholemeal with local wheat and also spelt from Norfolk. *We are still looking for a suitable supplier of Rye grain if any one can help us there.* We had a very successful Mills weekend, lots of visitors, music, BBQ, milling, baking, model boats on the millpond, and lovely weather.

Karl Grevatt from **Charlecote** writes : Sales are good and demand is high. The bearing I had been struggling with seems to have settled, I rebalance the stones and kept cleaning the bearing out and it seems to have found a happy place again. I redressed the N/W stones early this year and I'm gradually running them in. I hope to address my leaking sluice gate on the west side this summer or at least improve its seal when closed. I also need to attack the east waterwheel and replace some paddles as I haven't found much down time over the winter.

Patricia Naismith from **Lurgashall** writes : Life at Lurgashall Mill has been relatively uneventful over the last year. Our main news is that a new exhibit building, a Victorian bakehouse is opening just opposite the mill. Bread, hot cross buns and biscuits have been baked in the wood fired oven on a few days each week during April. At the moment the bakers are experimenting with refining recipes.

Ian Ansell from **Sibsey Trader** writes : We are still producing our own flour etc. We are using Alford Windmill. The business run by Ian Shepherd has ceased trading as of 31/03/2019. We don't know how long this will continue as Lincoln County Council are making changes to their heritage investment.

Anne and Andy Parry from **Felin Ganol** write: Orders have been steady over the period, and seem to be increasing slightly, with more large bags going out to small bakers. (We bought a bag stitcher after the last meeting...thanks for helpful advice!) After worrying that buying grain in tonne lots might be difficult once Howard Roberts retired, we've been fortunate to obtain good, organic grain from a number of small farmers in both Wales and England and are hopeful of building good relationships with them over the coming years. It's also given us a greater opportunity to mill a range of different wheat varieties (which has always interested me) and that's something we highlight in our labelling and conversations with customers. Meanwhile our neighbouring farmer put in a crop of winter wheat 200yds from the mill (first time in 60 years I think) and the Welsh landrace (Hen Gymro) wheat planted at our nearby National Trust property is coming on nicely so that's all looking interesting! By working together with Emma (Y Felin) we're hoping to be able to make growing grain locally a viable proposition for farmers, and the mutual support is great. Mill maintenance is ongoing. Andy took time this spring to replace the wood block supporting the water wheel stone bearing. When he restored the mill 11 years ago this was a major job, but with careful planning and experience this time he had the mill back up and working in a day! Throughout the winter he's been steadily replacing leaking buckets and soleboards in the wheel and addressing the ongoing pond leaks. With this current dry spell our river has gone down rapidly and we fear we may be in for a repeat of last year when milling was impossible for a couple of months. The increase in this has been noticeable over the ten years we've been milling, climate change possibly

and also a change in river management upstream.

Michelle Thurlow writes from **Letheringsett**: A lot is happening at Letheringsett! We should hopefully have a flour separator and oat roller installed soon at the mill something we are very excited about and already have orders for white flour. I am now the sole manufacturer of Norwich porridge which involves mixing porridge mixes and we have just taken on Farmers Markets every third Saturday of the month which the planning is a lot of paperwork but will be an excellent money maker at the mill and will be great for bringing more people to the mill, flour sales are going well and we have a number of new trade customers since we have entered into the world of Instagram. I hope the meeting goes well Dave and Charles will be visiting us at some point for the installation of the machinery and I am sure they will pick up more bags to save people postage.

8. Election of Officers

Chair: Jenny Hartland, Holgate Mill,

proposed by David Howell, seconded by Dave Harris-Jones.

Secretary: Simon Dodd, Worsbrough Mill

proposed by Dave Harris-Jones, seconded by David Howell

Treasurer: Dave Pearce

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9. Tour of North East France and Belgium

John Bedington reported that he had been in touch with contacts in the Pas de Calais region of NorthEast France, and in Belgium. It was clear that there were several very interesting mills to visit. He was putting together a tour programme involving three nights staying in Valenciennes and visiting a number of mills in the vicinity. Proposing the tour to take place towards the end of April 2020. A show of hands showed at least 10 people present were interested. It was anticipated a further 10 might sign up. Nick Jones agreed to liaise with John on travel arrangements. A letter would be sent to all members with more information. One issue was whether to arrange minibus hire from this country or to get there and then hire. The intention is to keep the cost of the tour to £500 (excluding travel to/from France and Belgium).

Action : John B and Nick J to liaise and keep members informed of tour plans.

10. Any Other Business

Jenny Hartland raised the matter of how Sainsbury's could sell a 1Kilo bag of stoneground wholemeal flour for £1! The label did not say where milled?

Jon Cook wondered if anyone could obtain Buckwheat?

11. Date of Next Meeting

Provisionally agreed to be at Avoncroft Windmill, Stourbridge, on **Saturday 2nd November 2019**, (but see alternative possibility to link with Grain Lab event).