



Minutes of the Autumn Meeting of the Traditional Cornmillers Guild held via Zoom., on Saturday 31st October 2020.

	<i>Action by</i>
<p>1. Roll Call & Welcome</p> <p>Jenny Hartland, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>Present: Jenny Hartland – Holgate Windmill - Chair Lesley Jones– Holgate Windmill Dave Pearce – Wicken Village Windmill - Hon Treasurer Dave Harris-Jones – Heatherslaw Watermill – Vice-Chair Simon Dodd – Worsbrough Mill – Hon Secretary Emma Hall – Y Felin Watermill John Bedington – Associate Karl Grevatt – Charlecote Watermill Mandy James – Redbournbury Watermill Jonathan Cook – Swaffham Prior Windmill Patricia Naismith – Lurgashall Watermill Mildred Cookson – Associate Anne and Andy Parry – Felin Ganol Watermill Michael Skoda – Avoncroft Windmill Phil and Cheryl Harrison – Little Salkeld Watermill Nick Jones – Associate David – Pakenham Watermill Lionel Green – Crakehall Watermill</p>	
<p>2. Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Received from: James Waterfield and Richard Pennington – Maud Foster Mill Chris Wright – Otterton Mill Alan Eccleston – Heage Windmill Alan Gifford – Heage Windmill Nigel Moon – Whissendine Windmill Ian Ansell – Sibsey Trader Windmill Mike Lovatt – Stanway Watermill Linda Dobbs – Mill Green Watermill</p> <p>For the record, the Secretary didn't receive replies from the following Members and Associates:</p>	

Offley Watermill, Golspie Watermill, Cann Mills, Claybrooke Watermill, Tuxford Windmill, Alderholt Watermill, Letheringsett Watermill, Burcott Mill, Barony Mill

3. Chair's report

It's rather a long time since our last AGM. That was at Heage in the spring of 2019, and Simon and I were recruited to the roles of Chair and Secretary. Since then, we've had one 'real-life' meeting, at Avoncroft, and then it's been Zoom. It hasn't been all Zoom and Gloom – we have temporarily solved one problem: which day to meet? Our researches led us to the conclusion that you can only please a very few members of the Guild even for some of the time, but without the travel, we've had good Zoom attendances, and from some members who have previously struggled to be with us in person. It isn't a complete solution – there are some traditional millers who haven't got to grips with this bit of modernity. And, of course, we've all missed the chance to be with each other and to explore each other's mills.

Well, you don't need me to tell you that this has been about the weirdest period of our lives. But to employ a few tired sayings, there have been silver linings to the clouds; or, more appropriately to some of us, it's an ill wind that blows no-one any good. Two examples spring to mind: The Folic Acid issue, which Jonathan will report on, appears to have gone to sleep again. However, I do want to acknowledge the enormous amount of work and energy by many Guild members that went into this campaign. I think we felt that we had done all we could possibly do by last February, and the ball was, and still is, in 'their' court.

The other silver lining was the extraordinary boost to our trade as traditional millers. I know that a few Guild members decided to shut up shop, particularly to protect elderly volunteers. My guess is that most of us experienced a huge rise in demand for flour, as panic buyers emptied supermarket shelves and the big mills couldn't supply enough bagged flour for domestic and smaller business use. In May we submitted a very upbeat account on behalf of Guild members to Historic England's Heritage Online Debate on the Impact of Covid 19 on the Sector. We were able to report that many of our mills were stretched to capacity, supplying a whole new customer base, which was discovering the joys of traditional stone-ground flours. This new loyalty can only help to promote the products and preserve the mills that produce them. Later in this meeting, we are looking forward to hearing from all of you about your particular experiences during the Pandemic.

Since the last AGM we have welcomed one new member: Crakehall watermill. I have also expended some emotional energy into trying to sort out the 'Bacheldre problem', which I am hoping is now put to rest.

Dave Pearce, our Treasurer for 'long enough' made it known that he wished to step down from that role at the next AGM. You had to wait Dave, but now's the time. And we thank you hugely for carrying this vital work. Unexpectedly, we didn't need to look for a new treasurer, since Simon Dodd piped up and said he'd rather be treasurer than secretary – it takes all sorts! So, the quest was on to replace Simon, not Dave. After a long and deafening silence from the Guild, I put out feelers amongst the large group of volunteers at Holgate. I am delighted to say that Lesley Jones, one of our milling team, our publicity officer and a dab hand at the use of social media, has volunteered, and has already been shadowing Simon for several months. And, we have the advantage that Simon will still be with us on the committee and continue to support her into the job. There are still many issues that exercise us, and I fear that a combination of the Folic Acid campaign and then the shock of the Pandemic have driven many of them down the priority list. I am sure we are all concerned about the latest harvest, as well as many long-term challenges. I have a list of 'Things We Could Be Doing' in my TCMG file box and it looks accusingly at me whenever I spot it. Perhaps, when the world is looking a little more sane, we shall return to it.

From Jenny Hartland; proposed by Dave Harris-Jones, seconded by Emma Williams

4. Treasurer's report – Provisional Report Finalised accounts to follow

TRADITIONAL CORN MILLERS GUILD

Treasurer Statement 7th March 2019 - 6th March 2020

PROVISIONAL

MEMBERSHIP

Subscriptions 2019 to 2020	Members	New		Paid up	Not Paid
		Member	Officers		
Member Mills	29	1	4	20	4
				Paid late	1
Associate Member Mills	0				
Retired Associate Members	7			2	
		Otterton joined during year			2 intend to pay

FINANCIAL

Balance in Nationwide Building Society as at 7 March 2019 £8,240.20

Correction for late expend previous year £252.00

Receipts

Subscriptions, year 2019-2020 £505.00

Subscriptions, previous years £0.00

TOTAL SUBSCRIPTIONS £505.00

Sales

TCMG Hessian Bags @ £2.20 £484.00

Transport etc £25.00

Recipe Books £0.00

Building Society Interest 30/6/19 £4.10

Building Society Interest 31/12/19 £4.23

TOTAL SALES £492.33

TOTAL RECEIPTS £997.33

EXPENDITURES

TCMG Purchases

All Party Food & Health Forum, 2020
subscription, 6/3/20 £385.00

Meetings

Hosting Meeting: Heage May 2019 £50.00

Hosting Meeting: Avoncroft November
2019: to be paid £0.00

Visit Expenses

Nick Jones: Web site etc £351.04

Jon Cook: European Mills Conference,
France October 2019 £189.89

TOTAL EXPENDITURES £1,252.93

Calculated

Balance in Nationwide Building Society as at 6 March 2020 £7,984.60

From Dave Pearce; proposed by Phil Harrison, seconded by Jon Cook	
<p>5. Secretary's report</p> <p>Since the meeting of the Guild at Avoncroft in November 2019 there have been no new members.</p> <p>We have enquiries about membership from a number of mills at different stages of their development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warwick Bridge Watermill near Carlisle in Cumbria is in production but we are waiting for further details of their product range and the history of the mill, as well as some photos before we can consider a visit, Covid permitting. • Jonathan Wheeler at Bardwell (who had previously been in contact about membership in 2018) was looking at getting production going during Covid and wanted advice initially. • Acorn Bank Watermill near Penrith in Cumbria is part of a National Trust property but the volunteers are looking into leasing the mill from NT as NT have informed them that they will no longer be providing the management oversight. • Windmill Hill Windmill in East Sussex is being restored with a view to producing flour and are looking for input on H&S and food hygiene. Lester Handley from the mill asked about how they could access the guild's knowledge as they could not currently meet our membership criteria. <p>Communications since Avoncroft have included emails from the media during lockdown (New York Times, Guardian, Channel 5) and from a number of people looking for flour or a mill to visit.</p> <p>Sadly, we heard that Norman Day, once of Upwey Mill in Dorset had passed away and I passed on news of this to the guild as I was asked.</p> <p>Presented by Simon Dodd; proposed by Jenny Hartland, seconded by Dave Harris-Jones</p>	
<p>6. Appointment of Officers</p> <p>Chair – Jenny Hartland; proposed by Simon Dodd, seconded by Phil Harrison</p> <p>Vice-Chair – Dave Harris-Jones; proposed by Jenny Hartland, seconded by Dave Pearce</p> <p>Secretary – Lesley Jones; proposed by Jenny Hartland, seconded by Dave Pearce</p> <p>Treasurer – Simon Dodd; proposed by Dave Harris-Jones, seconded by John Bedington</p> <p>All unanimously appointed.</p>	
<p>7. A.O.B.</p> <p>Life Membership Simon Dodd</p> <p>Simon received a request from James Waterfield to have the issue of life membership discussed at this meeting. Simon outlined the current membership options and then talked about how life membership might operate, in line with organisations like NT and RHS where members can pay for life membership. He suggested that life membership might only be possible for associate members and proposed that a working party could be formed to look at membership as a whole, taking into consideration the communications from Acorn Bank and Windmill Hill listed above in item 5.</p> <p>John Bedington said that he thought any life membership could only be considered for retired members.</p> <p>Jenny stated that she thought that any paid life membership could give associate members two ways of paying.</p> <p>Jon Cook thought that, unlike with SPAB where magazines are produced for distribution, there would be limited financial risk to the guild. In terms of who might benefit from life membership he thought that, rather than being a paid option, the guild could consider an honorary life membership recognising a lifelong contribution to traditional milling.</p> <p>Simon acknowledged that this was not something that he had considered but that it</p>	

<p>sounded like something well worth considering. There was general agreement from the meeting.</p> <p>Jenny linked this discussion to the constitution. Any changes to membership would mean updating the constitution (which is still to be fully accepted). Consequently, if the meeting was in agreement, Jenny proposed that the committee should produce for the next meeting a final draft of the constitution incorporating new memberships – an honorary life membership and a “introductory” one (final wording to be decided).</p> <p>Risk in Mills conference – report from Jon Cook</p> <p>Small number of attendees but people online too.</p> <p>Useful day, highlighting a number of issues, including training.</p> <p>Series of presentations, including from international partners. Then an open forum discussing application of H&S law, which we are obliged to abide by. We may not always be aware of what we need to do. Information is available from others in the heritage sector. Jon looking into consultant helping us navigate changes and produce template checklists. Help also from within TCMG, some templates available on guild website.</p> <p>Jenny mentioned that all mills are different and the people involved need to be aware and apply the risk assessments within their own mill.</p> <p>Jon asked for a show of hands of members interested in taking this forward – a large proportion of the meeting expressed a wish to do so.</p> <p>Nick Jones mentioned “Craft of the Miller” – conference on November 5th hosted in The Netherlands, Jon Cook is to speak at it</p>	<p>A</p> <p>Com m</p>
<p>Folic Acid & Creta Plus update – Jonathan Cook</p> <p>Low down on the DHSC priority list. More information provided by Jon to DHSC in July – table detailing tonnage of organic and non-organic grain and different flours.</p> <p>Not sure how this will pan out due to Covid-19.</p> <p>Creta Plus – again no further information about this following consultation.</p>	
<p>Members reports</p> <p>Charlecote –Exceptionally busy. Flooded last winter and so did lots of maintenance. Peak of lockdown 10 tonnes per fortnight, 7 week waiting list and 400 customers! Kept one volunteer who became just about full-time and has been a huge help. Lots of media coverage which usually means lots of visitors but this time seeing it as good advertising. Hoping the second lockdown does not mean quite the same demand for flour. Maintenance of windows and roof ongoing; sluice gate repaired.</p> <p>Crakehall Very busy at start of lockdown chose to focus on regular customers. Some new business too. There has previously been an issue with grain supply but currently ok. Mill not open as usual (first Sunday in the month) due to Covid.</p> <p>Felin Ganol The year began strangely, we had the wettest winter recorded through to February, (the river was frequently so high that we were unable to mill because of the force of the water), news of the pandemic rumbled in the background and there were shortages of toilet paper and pasta. Then, in March, the phone began to ring...customers were doubling their orders, new customers called, the village shops that we supply with a few bags of flour every month were suddenly asking for 30 bags a week, our regular outlets quadrupled their requirements and we had enquiries from all over the UK. We had plenty of water, we began milling every hour that we could and drafted in the family to help with the packing. We watched as the crisis unfolded and restrictions kicked in and our friends in the hospitality and food sector reinvented their businesses several times in a week and struggled to carry on providing food for people. We are fortunate to live in reasonable rural isolation, it wasn't too difficult to adapt our practices...we closed the mill site to customers a week before the national lockdown and arranged contactless collection and delivery for flour orders. Working small and locally meant that the neighbour who grows some of our grain could deliver readily. It was exciting to really feel we were making a difference to our community together. In</p>	

those first few weeks we milled as much each week as we had been doing in a month. Our vintage machinery creaked and groaned under the sudden increase in workload. Andy and Will dismantled one of our two pairs of millstones and repaired the bearings in double quick time...we milled on, seven days a week. The glorious weather, now turning into the hottest, driest April recorded, favoured the outdoor collections but it wasn't favouring the water levels. As the river level inexorably fell our power for milling was reduced. After the intensity of the previous weeks there was almost a sense of relief as the weather imposed a restriction on the amount of flour we could mill and by mid-May we were unable to fill the pond sufficiently to mill at all.

As I wrote the first part of this article in June, we had just had enough rain to begin to mill again, stocks of flour were appearing in the supermarkets and orders had slowed a little. We have continued milling steadily through the year with a broader, more engaged customer base. Our output is definitely up on previous years. We are trying to pace ourselves better and reflect on the best way we can run the mill to serve our community and maintain it for the future. Planning anything confidently is a challenge for everyone at the moment though!

Our colleagues in traditional mills across the UK (and world) have been having similar experiences. It has been exciting to witness the upsurge in home baking and the enthusiasm for local produce and simpler, traditional production methods. Small traditional mills, whose businesses rely on their personal relationships with growers, suppliers and customers, have been able to respond rapidly and flexibly to help provide for their local communities. Even though we've only been able to do this on a tiny scale, there is a real satisfaction in knowing that this has been possible and it confirms our belief that a slower, diverse food system is best for us all. Our challenge now will be to maintain the momentum for change towards such a system, and help to replicate it sustainably across the country....without burning ourselves out in the process!

Heage We have not been able to open Heage Windmill to the public during 2020 due to Covid restrictions. A team of volunteers have worked as our maintenance gang, carrying out minor repairs, protection and keeping grounds in order. Our millers have been busy as required and flour has been on sale from the mill door on regular Saturday openings. We are still financially sound as the end of year approaches.

Heatherslaw very busy, issues due to demand. Water issue due to prior removal of weir. Has just about met demand. Visitors since July closing tomorrow. Planned maintenance, including waterwheel bearings. Have kept customers.

Holgate – Having a large group of volunteers, we quickly decided that we could break ourselves up into milling groups of three and work safely together in the mill. To start with, I absented myself out of age and health considerations, but started to return, with confidence in May. For a short while we had 4 milling teams/sessions per week. Now we have two regular sessions with 4 in each. We have the shop open each Saturday morning, with purchases handed out over the stable door. In the early days we had to ration. We then instigated an on-line pre-order system for collecting on Saturday, which made life easier for all.

Like so many others, we were overwhelmed by increased demand: about 5 – 6 times normal, gradually reducing to about twice our old production rate. We used to mill 3 – 4 tonnes per annum. We are now on our 8th tonne since January, including well over a tonne of spelt. We have collected many new local 'private' customers and several wholesale outlets – we feel confident that many of those have become regular and loyal.

2020 was to have been our 250th Birthday year. We had a year's worth of events planned and the leaflets all printed. Of course, that has all been postponed. And, we have agreed that we won't reinstate it until we are confident that we have a clear year ahead. So, it won't be 2021, and it may not even be the year after that.

Meanwhile we have had no visitors to the mill – and given that we are in a big tourist city, that means a very big change. However, we applied for and got the £10k small business grant, which nicely compensated us for the loss of visitor income and leaves us to concentrate on being a proper flour mill.

We have had to admit that we are all quite enjoying the break from the relentless programme of open days – and the delightful, but incredibly demanding Santa at the Mill sessions in early December. Instead, we are putting out minds, energies, and not a little money to a thorough refurbishment of the mill, especially on the ground and bin floors. It's 8 years since we opened, and we are now seeing where we need a lot of improvements in storage, shop display and presentation of artefacts and information to visitors of all ages.

Little Salkeld similar experiences to others. Tearooms closed and not yet reopened, concentrating on wholesale and mail order. One member of staff initially in the work bubble. Problems getting rye; barley and wheat restricted. Tried opening to the public but this was far from ideal. Some reduction in demand. Now just Phil and Cheryl.

Lurgashall Stopped at first lockdown. Site staff were ok to mill for trade customers until June. Museum site opened for members only in June as test. From July open to public and mill producing again, 7 days a week but not at full capacity – milling slowly and have it running for as long as possible for visitors. Some new customers and increased production.

Otterton Covid hit us, like everyone, for 6 to start with. From a Milling perspective we became very popular as the supermarket shelves became empty of any flour. Our production, which only serves on site sales and our own bakery, went through the roof. We had to limit customers to a maximum of 6 of our 1.5kg bags. Milling was with one of our volunteers and family only and, until August, we did all milling behind closed doors only allowing the public back in from August. We continue to sell a lot of flour by our standards. Customers seem to like the flavour. In September we were seen by 2 million people on ITV This Morning talking in the Mill with celebrity chef John Torodes. He used our flour in a dish in the piece and was very taken with the Mill and its history so that was a bonus.

We rely on visitors. Based here in Devon we have to date escaped the worst. I hope this continues and we send our best wishes to all at the Guild in these testing times

Pakenham– mill staffed by volunteers, mostly senior and so had to stop milling at first. Then restarted milling and received £10K from local authority business recovery fund. Low water level, unusually, and this was finally tracked down to two leaks in the stream on land not owned by the mill. Currently investigating getting these repaired.

Priors Mill – Priors Mill – similar story, mail order very buoyant, introduced a new EPOS system to keep tally for sales and organic certification - iZettle - can recommend it. Grain from 2020 harvest is not looking good, had to reject a number of samples - dough breaking down in test bakes. Have however found a good sample from Worcestershire which have purchased for the forthcoming year. Drive changed on our electric stones, which has been essential to get through these testing times. New customer base as a result of Covid has been good for business!

Redbournbury What a year! Who thought we will have milled so much, 50 tonnes wheat, 3 tonnes rye, 6 tonnes spelt. Grain suppliers Organic Arable, Copes, Doves. New waterwheel bearing now repaired. Also have leak in lake, local farmer to dredge and fill hole. No visitors in mill since March, shop and bakery reopened this month and it's been manic. Can't mill enough. Breadmaking courses have restarted and booked until January, but this may have to stop.

Sibsey We are open and only have ourselves working at the moment due to CV. We are struggling on against adversity and the project has just started moving again-I hope it isn't paused again for CV.

Stanway Stanway Mill rose to the occasion during the pandemic. In line with other mills, the demand for flour increased rose rapidly, initially caused by panic buying and latterly by people home baking.

My wife and I decided to do our isolation at the mill and production rose from what is normally about 7 tonnes per annum to over 2 tonnes per week. The main problems

were running out of consumables, everything from flour bags to toilet rolls, overheating of the stones due to the much-extended running times, and extreme fatigue of the operators!!

Our retail outlets were very patient and some even agreed to take the flour in 25kg bags and do their own decanting into 1.5kg bags to save us having to do it. We set up a table outside the mill door and had a large number of private customers collecting flour from there and leaving the cash. Several customers were nearly in tears at the thought of losing their long-established sourdough starters. We also delivered a lot of flour to local people in trouble for one reason or another. We collected a lot of new customers, some of which have now become regulars. Ironically the crisis has probably increased the public's awareness of "real" flour which must be a good thing.

Whissendine Like everybody else the flour sales at Whissendine from mid-March to the end of May went mad. I could not grind or bag up enough to match demand. A friend, Johan, built a bagging machine which helped but still the demand could not be matched. In the village the population came to realise that having their own windmill was not just a pretty thing on the hill but had a real purpose. I made sure the village shop did not run out of flour, people came round to make sure I was ok - I even got a Sunday lunch! The flour sales in the village have held up since May and have roughly doubled. The shortage has also led to more outlets, though generally sales have gone down again. On the mill front I am going to have to replace 3 of my sails. The wood has been ordered and, with the help of Johan and John, they will be built in a barn nr Worcester. As the mill gets rate relief, I got one of these government Covid grants which has basically provided the funds to do the sails. Just hoping 2021 is a bit less stressful!!

Wicken Village – patchy increases during lockdown; some up, some down. Restricted sales to the public. We do all our own engineering and repairs wouldn't wait, initially undertaken by Dave alone but now with support. We'll see what happens in the next crisis.

Worsbrough – chose to focus on trade customers and so paused retail sales twice during lockdown. Increase in overall sales has meant working to the maximum allowed by our abstraction licence. The mill is generally working well but we had experienced real issues with water flow as the mill pond is heavily silted. These are to be resolved later this month when the pond is dredged.

Y Felin – Emma, Michael Hall's daughter, taught by him is now the miller. Never known a time like it. Back in lockdown in Wales – the second one has meant almost no customers, whereas between March and September the numbers were unprecedented. Repairs to wheel arms about to happen. Unfortunately, Michael has suffered a stroke and can no longer live at home. (Jenny sent the guild's best wishes to Michael).

Supply issues

Creta Plus – thoughts about sources, direct from manufacturer but also maybe from members - Michael Stoaite, Offley

Jon mentioned both UKGrainLab in May and listening to Farmarama podcast.

Nick talked about his concerns around the age of contributors and wondered how this might be addressed.

Jon suggested linking to the local grain networks to engage younger people.

Future meetings (via Zoom or otherwise)

March dates and details tbc

NB Follow-up Actions = A