

Times Past

Issue No. 15, Summer 2003

Storrington & District Museum

Preserving Yesterday for Tomorrow

THE MILL THAT MOVED

Windmills, once vital to the rural economy, were a common sight in West Sussex but most have gone, surviving only as residences, as at West Chiltington and Washington. They ground the produce of local farms and were the most important source of staple food for the bulk of the population. The rapidly-increasing urban population in the 19th. Century demanded vastly increased supplies of grain which were only satisfied with the opening-up of the plains of Canada and the U.S.A. There were also many water mills powered by the fast-running streams from the South Downs. (See "Storrington's Vanished Watermills"; in "Times Past" no. 12.) But, just as watermills need water, so windmills must have regular and predictable winds.

It was for this reason that the windmill at West Chiltington was moved from its original site near Monkmead to its present position near the centre of the old village. When it was originally built isn't known but the earliest estimate of 1688 has not been authenticated. We do know that on the tithe map of 1840 it is shown in its present position, the move from Monkmead having occurred about 1830. Such a move was likely to have been early if the original site was under-powered. The whole mill was dragged by teams of oxen to the present higher ground and was still working in 1925 when it was then converted for private occupation.

If it seems unlikely that a whole mill could be moved, especially up hill, it can be explained by looking at three types of windmill then found in Sussex.

The earliest type was the POSTMILL, so called because the whole structure centred on a kingpin which allowed the miller to rotate the mill to face the direction of the wind. This was usually done with a long, projecting pole, but a later invention called a fantail - really a set of

sails at 90 degrees to the main sails - allowed the mill to right itself to the wind. David Rennie's drawing shows, in the foreground, what appears to be a tree stump but is, in fact, a sawn-off section of the original kingpin.

Our mill was called a SMOCKMILL because its shape resembled that of the "Sunday best" dress worn by local peasants until well into the 19th Century. The smockmill was a better-presented postmill like "Jill" who stands, with "Jack", above Clayton. Very different is the TOWERMILL such as at Halnacker, where only the cap revolves. Such a mill could not be



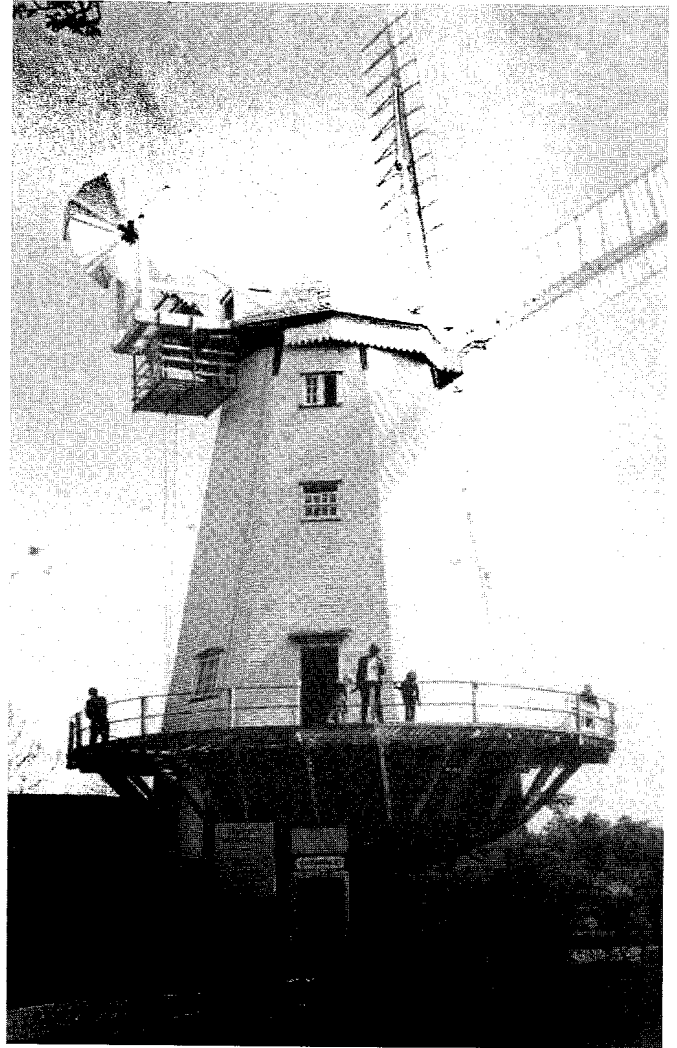
West Chiltington Windmill

moved being a permanent structure.

West Chiltington mill was also known locally as Meeten's mill after the last family to operate it until 1925. The Willmer family worked it after 1845 and had it re-fitted, in 1865, by Coopers of Henfield. It is customary to call the arms "sails" arising from the previous use of ships canvas. Later, spring-loaded shutters were used so that the wind could make its own adjustments and the term "sweeps" is more appropriate. Only two remain on Meeten's mill and they cannot now be turned; extensions to the building would impede movement. In the late years of Meeten's occupation, an auxiliary steam engine was installed.

West Chiltington windmill, like about half of those left in West Sussex, has survived only after conversion to private residence and, as such, recently came onto the market again.

The last windmill to be built in West Sussex is believed to be the smockmill at Shipley. It was built in 1879 by, appropriately, Grist and Steele, of Horsham. Only the top needed to move and this had the assistance of a fantail attached, like the sweeps, to the cap. As at West Chiltington, steam power augmented wind power and the mill is still able to grind corn for demonstration purposes - but with electric power. "Mrs. Shipley" was purchased, together with "Kingsland" next door, by Hillaire Belloc in 1906. It has recently featured in the B.B.C.'s mystery series "Jonathan Creek."



Shipley Smockmill - note the Fantail

Storrington's Home Guard

Our recent "DAD'S ARMY DAY" and exhibition brought crowds to the Old School but disappointingly little information about STORRINGTON HOME GUARD until now.

Mrs. Philippa Forwood, who lives at West Chiltington, has provided valuable information about her father, Major A.E. Cook, M.C., who was the first C.O. of the Storrington platoon from its formation, in 1940, as the Local Defence Volunteers. Second in command was Captain H.E. Denys Elliott of Roundabout Farm, from whom R.F. Wells bought the land for the Roundabout estate.

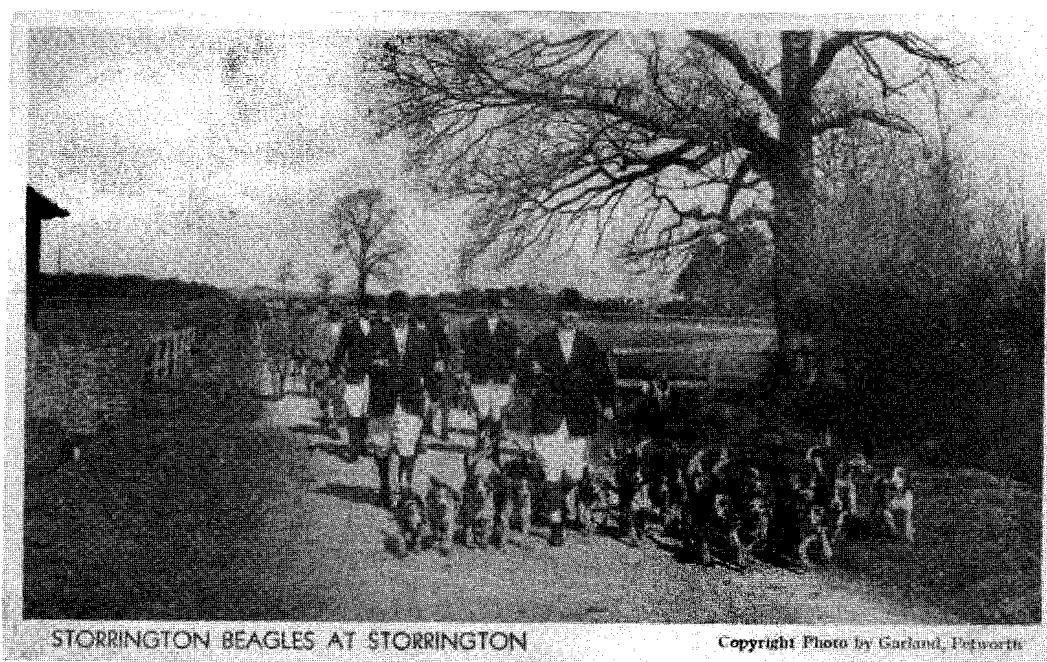
Major Cook spent 1914 to 1918 at the Western Front where he won the Military Cross and was twice mentioned in dispatches. In a war in which millions died, the Major showed a remarkable ability to survive; in one day he was blown three times into the Ypres Canal and later, in Ireland, he fell into a mill race from which he was rescued. His spell of duty in Ulster saddened him but did not interfere with his military role; he just felt the I.R.A. was composed of fellow-countrymen; not a view shared by Republicans, of course.

His next move was to Argentina and then back to England where he and his family lived at Greatham Farm

where, in 1926, he started a beagle pack. Near neighbours were Alice and Wilfrid Meynell at "Humphrey's Homestead" (See "The Meynells of Greatham", "Times Past", Nos. 12 and 13). Philippa remembers the parties held round the swimming pool, still used today by descendants of Wilfrid and Alice.

The Cooks then moved to a house called "Newbiggin" on Amberley Road where, in 1940, the Major set up his command post. Before that, however, he had already become a well-known figure with his Storrington Beagles. In those days, hunting with hounds aroused less emotion than it does today and the sound of hunting horns from the High Street brought out many local followers. Major Cook was also a regular patron of the "White Horse" where he no doubt met two other notables - John Ireland and Arnold Bax. Of Bax, he said, no doubt in jest, "I thought he was a gentleman but he was only a musician!"

The Home Guard's weapons were kept at the monastery consisting of rifles with ten rounds for each, a flame-thrower and, no doubt, a number of shot-guns. In charge of musketry was ex-General Green, content now with a humbler rank. Training took place in the sandpit in Chantry Lane and patrols were made on the Downs above, where they would often meet the Mounted Home Guard, commanded by Colonel Thynn. Great rivalry prevailed between the two groups who would often lie in ambush for each other. Joint exercises were held with the smaller Fittleworth platoon. We are grateful to Mrs. Forwood for all this information and for the photograph. Does anyone recognise the road there? Fryern Park, maybe?



FRIENDS' NEWS

We hope that you all enjoyed the the Summer Programme and could take part in some of the outings. We would like to have a "Letters to the Editor" section in this, your Newsletter, so if you have any comments, news, grumbles, praise, requests for changes in activities, etc. LET US KNOW.

"ENJOY SUMMER"

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, **THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 11 th, 2003**

Your officers and committee members will be due for election or re-election for the next three years Several vacancies, have occurred since our first A.G..M. and some have been filled

by co-option. The following members offer themselves for service: -

Chairman - Philip Beaumont
Vice-Chairman - Geoffrey Robinson
Hon. Sec. - Kate Wise
Hon. Treasurer - John Wharmby
Membership Secretary - Jean Robinson
Programme~ Secretary - Gina Wilmshurst
Volunteers Co-ordinator - Michael Taylor
General Committee :-Meg Everitt; Gena Grenney,
 Jean MacWhirter, Pauline Archibald., Joan Taylor

The committee is thus short of its maximum by five members.

Volunteers please to, the Chairman on 01903 744389

Curator's Corner

by
Helen Whittle

At first sight it looks as though it is a quiet summer for the Museum. Not so ! Although there is no Carnival this year and we are not going to be present at the Parham Steam Rally, there is plenty going on.

The Home Guard Day was a great success and the weather was reasonable for the time of year. Although, ideally, we would have appreciated a little more sun and a more settled outlook, it was perhaps just as well that it was not over-hot for the sake of the uniformed participants.

The Home Guard exhibition was followed by a tribute to the Trefoil Guild. The Guild is the umbrella organisation for the Guide and Brownie movements and is celebrating its 50th Anniversary in the area this year. The anniversary was marked by a church service at St Mary's, Storrington, followed by a celebration tea in the Old School. A special exhibition runs in the Museum for two months.

Planning is under way to mark the 50th anniversary [3rd October] of the death of Sir Arnold Bax, the renowned composer, who came to Storrington for a holiday and never left, living at the White Horse Inn for many years. A special exhibition will run October/November in the Museum in conjunction with the Bax Society, accompanied by a lecture and, we hope, a recital of some of his work. If you think that you have never heard his music then try some – you may find it is more familiar than you thought ! Further details of these events will be publicised as they are finalised.

From Eastbourne Gazette July 24 1929 :-

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“Rational Dress for Men”

I am not a faddist in regard to summer clothing for men, although I think we are very irrational. But better that than the so-called rational dress which is advocated in some quarters. One day last week I saw a man in Terminus Road who struck me as a very good example of the extreme to which every good cause can be carried. He was an elderly man. I think he must have been between 60 and 70. He was bareheaded and wore a short, pointed beard

Beneath a tweed jacket there showed a dark-coloured shirt of a tint which gave it the appearance of being none too clean. He wore shorts of that same, unlovely colour – such shorts that they were well above the knee. Thick stockings and boots completed the ensemble, as the ladies say. I felt amazingly self-satisfied in a flannel suit and even a stiff, linen collar, and I imagine that I was cooler than my rational friend. The ideal summer wear for a man, I think, is a soft shirt which is open at the neck, an alpaca jacket and flannels. But few employers favour that style for business.

During the week-end I saw a man wearing plimsolls without socks, the shortest of shorts held up by a silk handkerchief, a shirt open at the neck, and his sleeves rolled up. With a friend, who was more normally dressed, he walked to the entrance of a fashionable hotel, but at the door his nerve failed, and he returned to the pavement to await his friend ”

[How times have changed ! I wonder if the last character referred to was the “Becks” of the day ?! Incidentally, the “spell-check” on my laptop wasn't impressed by the grammar and spelling of this piece, which I have reproduced verbatim]

WINTER PROGRAMME (2003)

THURSDAY, 11th SEPTEMBER

Annual General Meeting.—followed by a short talk by Museum Curator Helen Whittle on **Samuel Pepys**.

Admission free

THURSDAY, 9th OCTOBER

“What if King Henry had not divorced Catherine of Aragon?” by James Craddock

THURSDAY 13th NOVEMBER

“Local Postcards taken by W J Drewett, 1905—1930's”

A talk by Alan Barwick.

THURSDAY 11th DECEMBER

“Food in West Sussex” by Caroline Adams