



MILL BITS

The Newsletter of the CRANBROOK WINDMILL ASSOCIATION

November 2025

Chairman: Nick Vinall, Secretary: Andrew Riddell, Treasurer: Susan Hooper

The KCC situation

Progress has been very slow since the KCC decision in July 2024 to divest their eight windmills in order to save on the costs of maintenance. The political change at KCC from Conservative to Reform meant that windmill considerations were postponed several times. It is now expected that the new Heritage Conservation Strategy will be agreed in January and pave the way for divestment. At a recent meeting we were assured by KCC Officers that divestment will be (quote) “by a method that ensures that the windmills have a sustainable future in which they are appropriately cared for and maintained as community assets”. Details of the divestment mechanism have yet to be decided but there are two broad possibilities.

1) The windmills might be sold, probably for a nominal sum, to an appropriate group or organisation that can meet the sustainability conditions. The windmills would remain as community assets, open at times to visitors. They could not be converted into other forms such as houses or holiday lets. The new owners would be responsible for all expenses such as insurance and maintenance.

2) An alternative is that the windmills are retained in KCC ownership but are leased for 25 years to an appropriate organisation with the same conditions as in option 1. It is likely that KCC would remain responsible for insurance but not maintenance.

The main problem is raising the money to cover the costs of long-term maintenance; about £30,000 extra per annum would be needed for Union Mill. Windmill groups, including CWA, will be considering their situations in more detail when further KCC plans are published.

Teddy Bears' Picnic and Zip-Wire Event

Our regular “high-flying” event took place on August 25th and was as popular as ever.



Biggles is ready for action



His public and aspiring pilots await

A Special Visitor

The editor was on duty on Sat 12th July and was surprised to see a young man, about 25-30, with a white stick coming upstairs to the Meal Floor. He was accompanied by his parents who told me he had been blind since birth but with specialist teachers he had gone onto University and obtained a degree. He (with his parents) was obviously not someone to let his disability prevent him from exploring the world around him. His mother was particularly attentive and helped him to step out onto the staging while giving him a commentary on what could be seen.

Visitor Feedback

From the visitors' book

"Cool" was a common word used, with comments on how well the guides are informed. On August 28th one comment was:

"Haven't been up, yet. It's cute!
Will review once up.
I've been up! SO COOL! "
(Is this "Facebook speak"?)



In Conversation

On September 20th the windows on the Stone floor were smothered with flies (photo right). When one lady visitor commented on them, I explained that they had come in to shelter during cold nights and/or wet weather, then couldn't get out and just DIED here, to which she answered, "So the Windmill is really their care home!"

Improved Winnowing – Nick Vinall

Anybody who has used our traditional winnower on the Machinery Floor will know how slow and inefficient it is to separate the grain from the chaff. A fair amount of chaff still remains so our flour needs to be sieved before use.

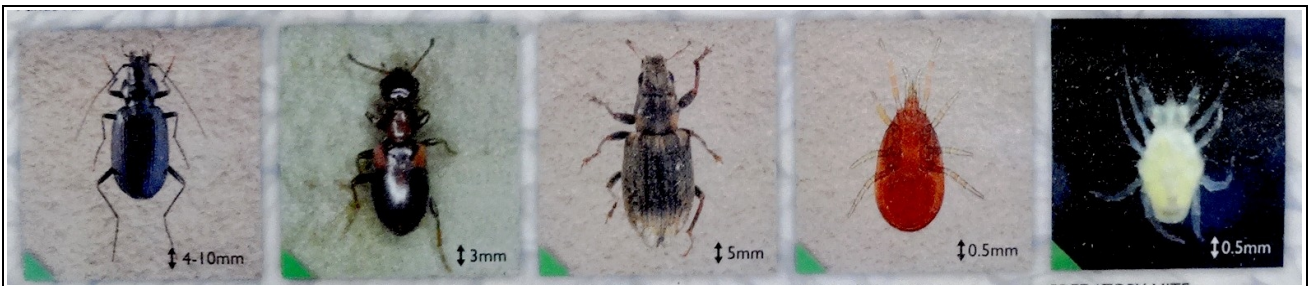
I wondered if it would be possible to use a sieve to remove chaff but how big should the mesh be? Tests showed that 4mm mesh was too small with hardly any grain passing through. 5mm mesh was better but also allowed too much chaff through, 4.5mm was optimum. It still allows very fine chaff through but is much better than the winnower and is much faster. 2kg of grain can be sieved in about 30 seconds.



Total cost of cardboard box and 12" x 12" sieve was £6.

Group Visit to Weald Granary

On Wednesday 25th June, about a dozen CWA members met at the mill and shared cars to visit the Weald Granary near Mereworth. We were greeted and shown into the laboratory, where the manager, John Smith, and his chief lab technician gave us a run down of what tests were carried out when a lorry load of grain arrived and before it was unloaded. While the lorry stood on the weighbridge, the contents were sampled remotely and transferred by overhead pipes directly into the lab. The lorry was then parked up while these tests were carried out to establish its quality, according to several criteria. Most importantly, moisture content and any evidence of germination had to be established which might affect the value and eventual selling price. The lab wall had a large whiteboard where the location and progress of dozens of batches of grain were recorded, as well as charts and tables for reference when checking test results. One was of twenty different “Insects and Mites found in Grain and Grain Stores”. (just five shown below)



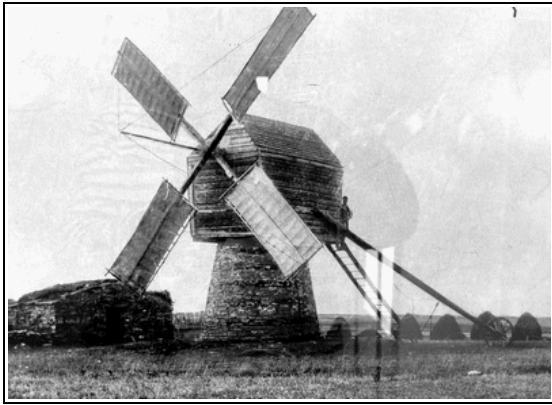
We were then shown round the yard where a lorry was being loaded with grain bound for a customer (photo right).



Left: Nearby, a new grain dryer was being installed which necessitated the removal of some warehouse panelling and the use of some heavy lifting equipment.

Windmills in the Orkneys

Our secretary, Andrew, visited the Orkneys earlier this year and noticed a couple of photos of windmills on display in the Museum in the principal town, Kirkwall.. The accompanying notes were minimal but both were situated on the island of Ronaldsay, the most Northeasterly island of the archipelago that makes up the Orkneys. It's so remote that you can't even Google drive around it! The weather in the region can get very hectic at times so that trees are few and far between and one wonders how the sails of these windmills were controlled. The photo on the right (below) suggests that it was “not easily”. When working, it powered a threshing machine.



Two of Ronaldsay's past windmills

Peggy Fryer



We were sad to hear of the death of Peggy Fryer who had been in a Cheshire care home for several years. With her husband Jack, Peggy and others were the inspiration and drive behind the formation and success of the Cranbrook Windmill Association in 1982. The official launch came after a public meeting in the Vestry Hall in April, chaired by Jack. At the time the Mill was full of rubbish and very dirty but a posse of volunteers, rounded up by Peggy, made it presentable enough to open for visitors on Saturday afternoons just a few weeks later

in May that year, a remarkable achievement.

Peggy continued to be a driving force in CWA for over 30 years, even after Jack had died. She was very keen on the social aspects of CWA and many longer standing members will remember her organisation of summer and post-AGM parties. She was a talented artist and her memory lives on in her windmill artwork.

RIP Peggy.



In mourning for Peggy

Final Bits

Photos; Nick Vinall, Andrew Riddell, David Hall, and the editor.

You can catch up on past issues of Mill Bits by visiting the website on [this link](#).

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