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found work at other mills; others followed different occupations such as gardening.

Obadiah emigrated to Australia, where he became a music teacher. One of his sisters went with him and married an Australian. Ezra found employment at Grubb's Mill (Castle Mill) in Oxford, and walked to and from work every day. And then there was Tom . . .

In any family this size there is often one who is a bit of a rebel. As soon as Tom was old enough he moved out of the house, preferring to sleep in a small, stone building next to the pig sties, alternating with the apple house at the bottom of the garden.

He assisted his father at the mill, one duty being that of helping with flour deliveries. On one memorable occasion he managed to cover himself in flour from a split sack. It was an early winter's morning, in other words still fairly dark, and meeting some school boys along the road he managed to frighten them half to death convinced, as they were, that they had seen a ghost.

At one time Tom was responsible for the running the mill at Holton but, unfortunately, he was a heavy drinker. However, he must have had some charms as he found himself a lady friend and they were saving up to get married. No doubt she put more into the savings account that he did and, while he did make an effort for a while, he ruined his chances by drawing out all the money and going on a drinking spree.

That, needless to say, was the end of any marriage prospects and Tom died in 1929.

In 1939 Wheatley Mill was struck by lightning. The crack of thunder and reverberations were so sudden and so violent that Len Cripps and his wife, Rosina, are said to have fallen out of their bed in Mill Cottage.

The resulting damage was the beginning of the mill's physical decay, though grinding had ceased in 1914.

The fortunes of the now somewhat forlorn mill were to change. In 1976, Will Foreman decided to write a book on windmills in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. In the course of his research he visited Len Cripps and the Wheatley Windmill Restoration Society was born.

Progress was slow at first, but the original windshaft has been repaired and reinstalled; a new break wheel has been painstakingly reproduced. The cap with some new ribs, but as many as possible repaired, has been replaced and

numerous other items are in the process of restoration.

On July 30, the mill's new sails, crafted by Chris Wallis Engineering and David Empringham of High Wycombe, were hoisted. The wood used is larch, felled on the Shotover Estate and then given to the restoration team by the late Sir John Miller. Sir John was on the windmill committee and was a keen supporter until his death last year.

Many Wheatley-born folk keep in touch with events at the mill through a website, created by a member of the younger generation of the Cripps family.

A number of names are associated with the restoration of the mill and should not be forgotten. Rex Powell and Jim Munt for their work on the stone. Dr Desmond Kaye, who laboured with Len Cripps on the internal woodwork, and Christopher Wallace, who worked on the mechanics. He had, of course, been working towards the final goal of getting up the new sails.

Sadly, Christopher died in April 2006 and a search began for one of the few people in the country with the expertise to undertake the rest of the work.

Luckily, David Empringham has taken over and this has led to the culmination of all the hard work of the family, the restoration society, Oxfordshire County Council and individual supporters.

A grand party was held on August 4, when 65 members of the family gathered, along with 21 members of the restoration society, to mark the mill's two anniversaries in style.

Wheatley Mill is within walking distance of the local primary school and it is hoped it will become a teaching aid for school groups from there and further afield.

© There are regular open days at Wheatley Mill —the remaining dates for this year are: September 9, (2-6pm) and October 14 (2-5pm). Free admission. For more details visit the website: www.wheatleymill.co.uk



From top, Len Cripps, Ellen Cripps with her granddaughter, Cassie, and George Alfred Cripps