



Caroline Dalton outlines the fascinating facts behind the restoration of Wheatley windmill

The earliest documentary evidence of a windmill in Oxfordshire was at Claydon where, in 1196, Henry d'Oilli granted Osney Abbey free entrance and exit across his land to use the windmill.

The great advantage windmills had over watermills was nothing could stop the wind blowing, whereas watermills came to a halt in drought, freezing weather, or if someone upstream diverted the water.

Wheatley windmill is an octagonal tower built of local limestone, patched with local brick. In its heyday it had an ogival cap and four sails, which turned into the wind on roller bearings.

It is one of the three remaining stone tower mills in Oxfordshire. The others are in North Leigh and Great Haseley.

Wheatley windmill is the only one being restored to working order as it still has nearly all its machinery, with many spares available.

The mill stands on a plateau formed by the summit of the hill half-a-mile south west of Wheatley, equidistant from Horspath and Cuddesdon and two miles from Garsington.

It is likely people from all four villages brought their corn to Wheatley mill to be ground. From the tower, the windmills at Brill and Great Haseley can be seen.

There has been a mill at Wheatley since 1671, when it was described as being 'in a ruinous condition.'

By 1702 it must have been repaired, because miller William Jackson was paying a rate of two shillings for it. In 1760, that mill, or its successor, was 'damaged by wind and fire.'

The present mill is probably the one advertised in Jackson's *Oxford Journal* of 1764 as 'a newly built windmill to be let or sold; enquiries to Webb, millwright at Cuddesdon or Davis, schoolmaster at Wheatley'

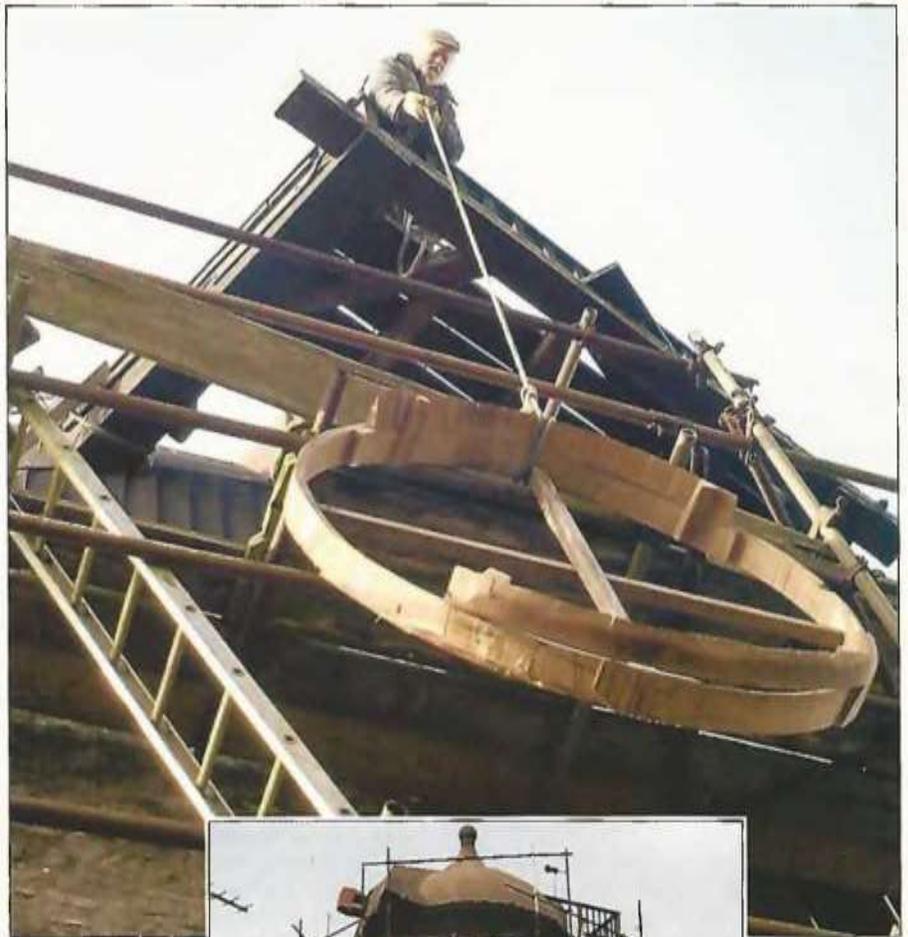
The mill's windshaft may have come from a post mill, which stood about 500 yards nearer Wheatley on or near the site of present day Post Mill House. The post mill and the tower mill appear on Bryant's map, published in 1824, but they both caught fire around 1875, after which the post mill was abandoned.

The tower mill's cast iron cannister box was made in 1784 at the Eagle Foundry, Oxford. In 1806, John Sheldon bought the mill from John Parish for £525. He sold it the next year, when the advertisement described its capacity as eight loads of wheat.

The mill passed rapidly from one owner to another over the next 50 years until 1854, when George Cripps

■ The refurbished sail spindle is replaced at the top of the mill in 2002. Pictured at the back, from left, Dave Woodward of Rotafix Resins Ltd, millwrights David Emprigham and Chris Wallis and crane driver Bill Mills. Front, from left, restoration society members Bob Breeze, Dorothy Avery and Caroline Dalton
Photograph: Jon

Grist to the mill

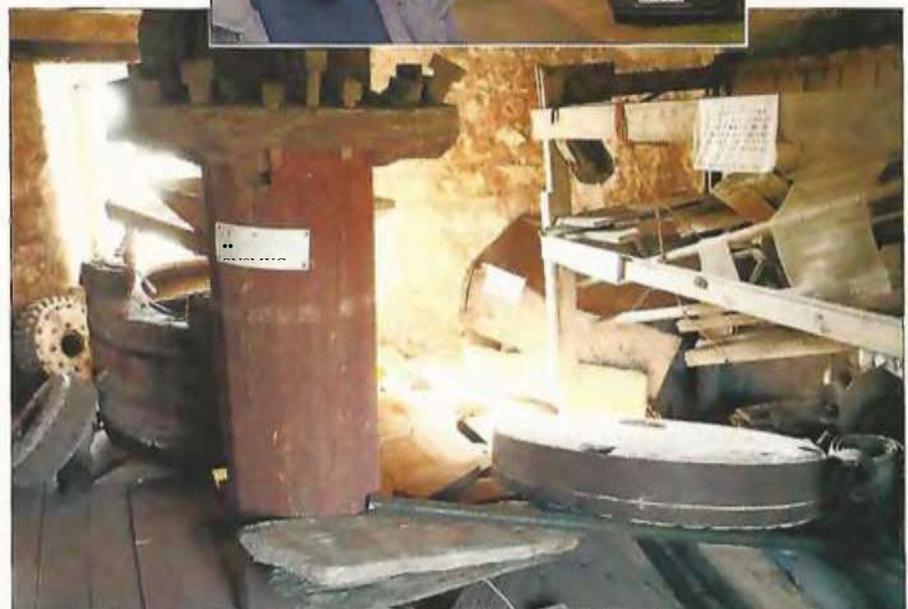


■ Above, Chris Wallis hauls up a mock wallower wheel to see if the real one would fit through the available opening

Photograph:
Damian



■ Left, restoration society member Caroline Dalton at Wheatley windmill



... from page 37

scheme of Oxfordshire farm wagons.

Between the two World Wars, the mill was still reasonably complete but not in good repair. Len Cripps has 1932 report on its condition when the estimated cost of repair was £100 — a huge sum in those days.

Although Ezra had regular work at the brickworks in Littleworth, he did not have £100 spare. So the mill again stood idle — shabby and leaking but not in a desperate state.

Then matters took a disastrous turn. In October 1939, the mill was struck by lightning. The force split the tower from parapet to foundations.

Len's parents were so startled by the noise they both fell out of bed upstairs in the cottage! Unfortunately, the building was not insured.

On her deathbed, Len's mother made him promise not to part with the mill. But funds for its repair continued to elude Len and the windmill became gradually more ruinous with every passing winter.

It was not until May 1976 that Wilfred Foreman helped found Wheatley Windmill Restoration Society, now a registered charity.

Len still owns the mill, allowing the society to continue its restoration work and to open the mill periodically to the public.

Work finally reached parapet level in April, 1991 — 15 years after the society's foundation.

But three years later, restoration was virtually at a standstill. The society was in debt and there was also disagreement about what should be tackled next.

Fortunately, the Co-operative Wholesale Society awarded the restoration society £500 for its project with local people. Then Christopher Wallis, a Buckinghamshire millwright, offered his services.

So from 1995, the society has followed Christopher's recommendations. He rebuilt the curb to sit on the parapet. Next, he made a new cage for the running gear and installed it with the roller bearings.

In May 1997, he turned a new oak finial to the same profile as the one condemned as cracked and leaking in 1932.

Construction of the new windmill cap began in 1998. Christopher used the ribs from the old cap and the new one was lowered into position in October 2000. It had a new skirt by the following May. The restored windshaft came back to the mill in January 2002.

The society is now aiming to finance the remaining work to restore the machinery under the cap and to add two pairs of sails, with the help of a 50 per cent community fund grant from South Oxfordshire District Council.

■ *Wheatley windmill is open on National Mill Day, Sunday, May 11, from 10am-6pm, and again on Sunday, June 8, from 2-6pm. For more details visit www.advsys.co.uk/wheatleymill* ■

Friday, January 25, 2002

Mill is ready to step up a gear

THE restoration of Wheatley Windmill has stepped up a gear.

A crane hoisted into place a large windshaft (left) which will be fitted with sails once funds become available.

Wheatley Windmill Restoration Society is supervising the project.

Chairman Mrs-Caroline Dalton (below, front with volunteers and workmen) said:

"This is another important step. We are now putting in a bid to South Oxfordshire District Council's community trust fund to get money to complete the restoration."

Ten years ago, the three-storey tower of the 18th-century windmill was re-built, at a cost of £20,000.

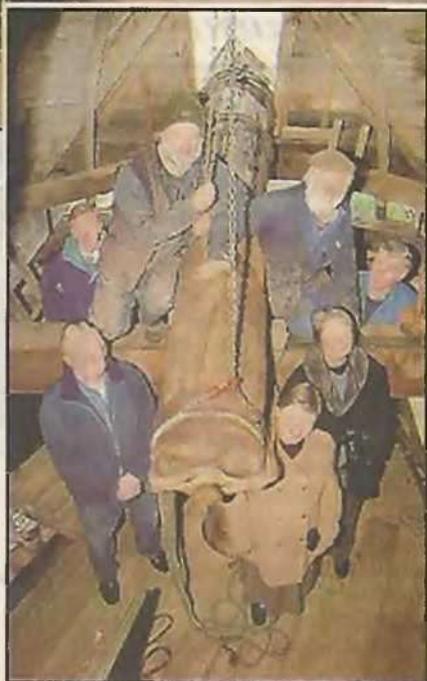
A £33,000 rotating cap followed in 2000 as a Millennium project.

Fundraisers hope to have the work completed in three years.

The site, in Windmill Lane, commands views across miles of countryside to the windmill at Brill, near Thame.

Though Wheatley Windmill is to be restored in full, Mrs Dalton doubted it would be in regular operation.

Pictures: Jon Lewis

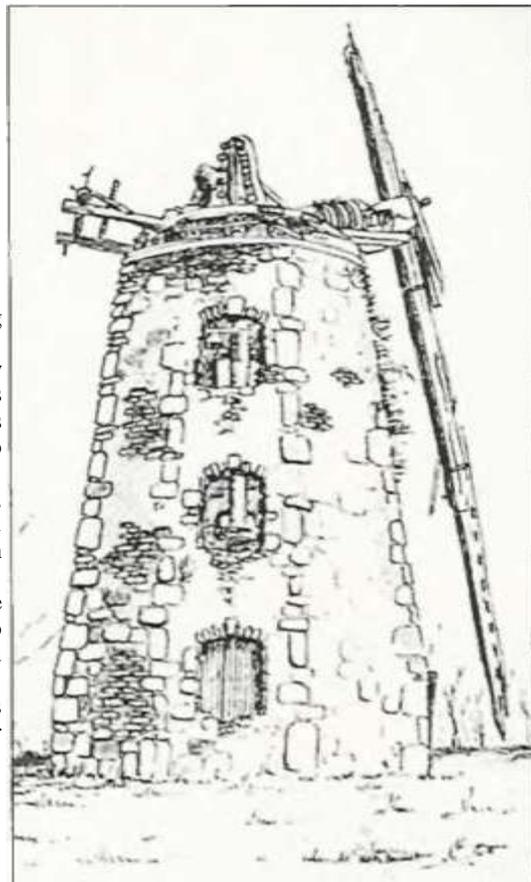




Grist to the mill



■ Above and left, inside of the windmill today Below, a drawing made in 1976 and right, an undated photograph showing the original ogival cap and two sails Photographs: Richard Cave



if Aston Rowant bought it with the adjoining cottage.

The two buildings have been in his family almost ever since then. The current owner is Len Cripps, who lives in Horspath but was born in a cottage which once stood next to Post fill House.

Len was brought up in Windmill Cottage, next to the windmill. He has left the windmill to his son Roy, in trust for his grandchildren Paul and Sarah Cripps.

Len's father, Ezra Cripps, last worked the windmill regularly in 1914. It then had two sails left out of the original four and could grind grain.

There was also an ochre mill. Ochre was used to provide the pigment in paint used for the traditional colour

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Mill clean-up plans are in the wind

Cash plea to help restoration

By IAN TOWNSEND

A WINDMILL'S restoration could be given a major boost if a new planning application is approved.

Members of the Wheatley Windmill Society have put forward plans which they hope will see the completion of the listed building.

The society has the backing of South Oxfordshire District Council conservation officer Nick Doggett, who is eager to get on with the work to restore the 1764 windmill to its former glory.

But where the money is coming from is a fraught question.

Mr Doggett hopes for conservation and listed building grants to fund the restoration and the windmill society is raising money independently.

Mr Doggett recently successfully urged the council's grants committee not to give a grant for a temporary cap on the windmill, because he felt it would simply delay more urgent work which is needed.

Society secretary Miss Dorothy Avery said: "We have put in the application for a new cap on the windmill and for restoration work to its fabric and the engine."

She said the society has worked steadily to restore the windmill over 17 years.

She said: "We have no plans to put the sails back on at this stage but we certainly want to see it back in working order eventually."

"But now it needs a massive injection of funds to get the rest done."

"We will do what we can but it certainly needs grants from outside to help with the work."



Listed building . . . Wheatley windmill in need of a massive injection of restoration cash

Another turn for windmill II

THE restoration of Wheatley windmill took another step forward yesterday with the fitting of a large windshaft.

Pictured, *right*, are Dave Woodard, from Rotafix Resins, millwrights David Empringham and Chris Wallis, crane driver Bill Mills, and Wheatley Windmill Restoration Society members Bob Breeze, Dorothy Avery and Caroline Dalton

Society chairman Mrs Dalton said: "This is another important step. We are now putting in a bid to South Oxfordshire District Council's community trust fund to complete the restoration."

Ten years ago, the three-storey tower of the 18th-century windmill, in Windmill Lane, was re-built at a cost of £20,000.

The installation of a £33,000 rotating cap was completed in 2000, as a Millennium project.

Fundraisers hope to complete the work in three years.

Although the windmill will be restored in full, it is unlikely to be in regular operation.

Picture: Jon Lewis



Oxford Mail ~ Friday, January |f* 2002..

TEAM LEADER SAYS NEW TOP WILL NOT BE LIKE ORIGINAL

Can splits windmill restorers

A RESTORATION group is split over a new cap for its unique windmill.

Rex Powell, founder of the Wheatley windmill restoration team and the man who has masterminded work on the tower over the past 20 years, says the new cap does not fit with the original windmill.

But restoration committee chairman Caroline Dalton and owner Len Cripps say it is vital.

Mr Powell says the committee does not want to see the mill in working order again, but both Mrs Dalton and Mr Cripps deny the claim.

South Oxfordshire District Council conservation officer Nick Doggett supports the new cap idea and the council has given £4,000 towards the work.

It will be installed by expert Chris Wallis who has restored windmills at Lacey Green and Chinnor. He is the son of Dr Barnes

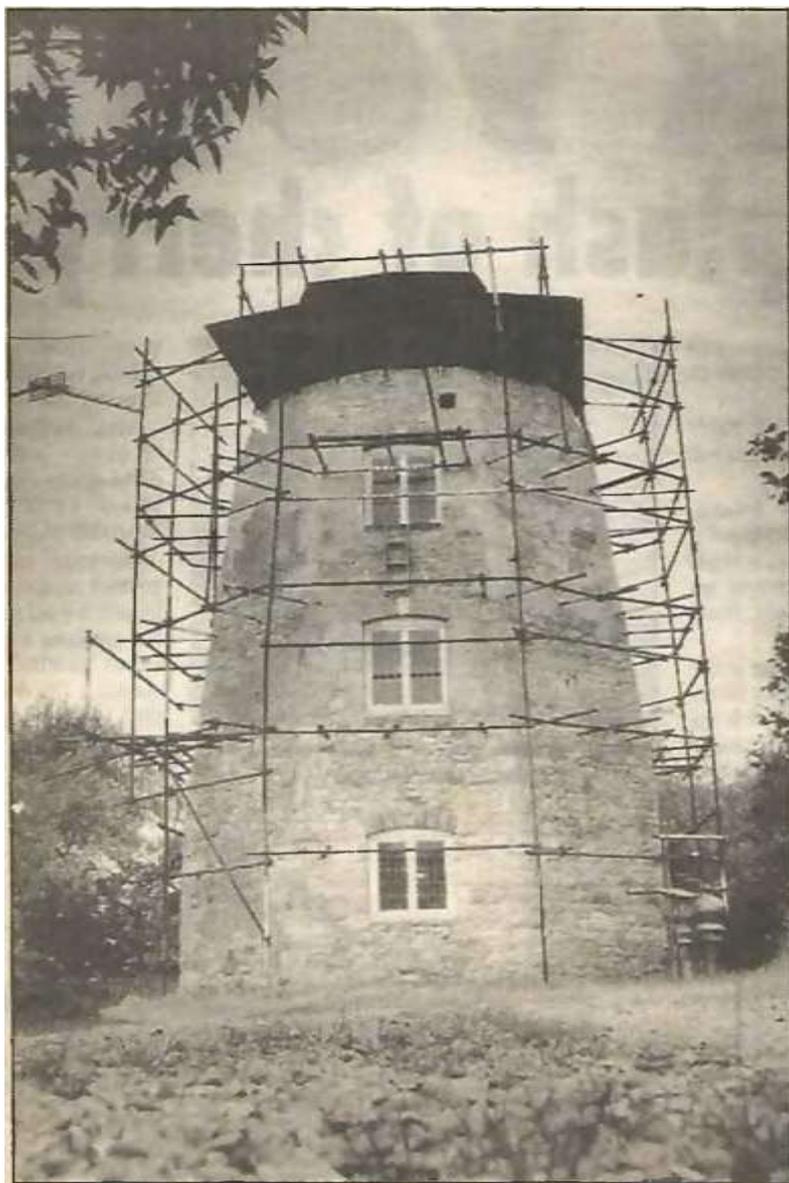
By IAN TOWNSEND

Wallis who invented the bouncing bomb used in the Dam Busters' raid.

Mrs Dalton said Mr Powell had been a leading light in getting the mill restored. She added: "Mr Wallis has used as much original timber as possible for the seating for the cap and once it is in place we will restore the working machinery and show the public what a real mill was like."

Mr Wallis urgently needs 40 pieces of elm, 12 inches wide and two-and-a-half inches thick with a slightly curved grain, to build the rim on top of the tower and to house wheel bearings so that the cap can move to face the wind. He can be contacted on 01688 523444.

There will be an open day at the mill on August 11.



TAKING SHAPE: The Wheatley windmill is dividing local opinion

WEDDING ON CHRISTMAS DAY

December 28 1958. Oxford Times

Mr. and Mrs. Ezra Cripps, of Old Windmill House, Wheatley, celebrated their diamond wedding on Christmas Day.

Mr. Cripps, who is 84, was born at the Windmill House where, except for a short period, he has lived for all his life; His wife, Rosina, is 83, and was born in Headington. They have one son and one daughter, both married, and one grandson and one grand-daughter.

Their marriage took place at St. Clement's Church, Oxford, immediately after morning service on Christmas Day 60 years ago, and they have lived a peaceful, quiet life together ever since.

Mr. Cripps' main interest is in his work¹*. He worked as a boy in the gardens and grounds of the Mill, which dates back to 1784, has, been in his family for more than 100 years, and is now owned to him.

"The Windmill," he says, "was struck by lightning in 1939, and the top sail was torn off, preventing the Mill from further work."

The Mill was actually in use until the 1914-18 war, and worked until the time of the damage.

At the age of 16 Mr. Cripps went to work as a stone-dresser at the Old Castle Mill, Oxford, and immediately after their marriage, he and his wife went to Wycombe where Mr. Cripps worked as a corn-miller for some years.

Returning to Wheatley, to the Mill House. Mr. Cripps drove a steam crane for a time and eventually went into the building trade with a firm at Hors-path, where he remained until illness, forced him to retire six years ago. ->

Mr. Cripps is now compelled to keep to his bed, having lost the use of his legs, but is otherwise very cheerful and conversational.

Mrs. Cripps is a keen whist player and bowler, having won many prizes—only this year she won a tea service for bowling at a local fete. All her life Mrs. Cripps has been very keen on music, song and amateur dramatics having taken leading R musical comedies (in- cru4ii^A.7]he Gilbert* and Sullivan operas), pantomimes and variety performances. ■ In earlier days she took part in local pageants, and has performed at Blenheim Palace on several occasions.

She is still a performer and loves to give turns at the village's "Not So Young Club," of which she herself is a member.

All her life has been devoted to work for others, organising collections and events for various charities, and at many of the fetes in Wheatley and district she could be seen until quite recently wearing her home-made gown of 100 pockets, containing presents for sale. Mrs. Cripps was an active member of a local concert-party until turned 70.

Perhaps the thing that she is most proud of is the fact that she was elected Coronation Queen of Wheatley in 1953, when she headed a carnival procession round the village. Her costume and crown were made by herself, and included a 100-year-old wedding gown given to her by a friend.

Windmill repairs will mean a heavy

WORK to restore



WHEATLEY WINDMILL: Returning to former glories?

volunteer helps an enthusiasm which should be maintained and this can only be achieved by constant funds. The restoration of this mill is important, both from a heritage point of view and as an educational asset."

But the report also says that volunteers alone will not be enough to restore the mill, and that expert assistance might be necessary.

grind...

Wheatley's 18th century windmill will be anything but plain sailing.

Volunteers are urgently needed to make sure the restoration of one of the county's landmarks is a success.

Today the campaign to save it is expected to get a big boost with a £300 cash handout from the county council.

But windmill expert Wilf Foreman, who is leading the campaign to save Wheatley's windmill, said: "It's going to be a big job."

The campaign began last year when the parish council launched an appeal for badly needed repairs. The windmill — built in 1784 — has been closed for 60 years and has badly deteriorated.

First, volunteers weatherproofed the windmill, and cleared away the debris in the cap and upper floors.

Some of the heavy machinery at the top of the tower was removed by a giant crane.

The Wheatley windmill is one of only three left in the county — others can be found at Haseley and North Leigh. Its octagon-shaped tower is unique in Oxfordshire.

It would cost up to £20,000 to restore it professionally, but the volunteers hope to do the job for a fraction of that figure.

Mr Foreman told the Star: "If we have enough volunteers, then we can really make a good start this summer."

Today the county council's recreation committee will decide on giving the project a £300 grant.

A council report says: "There appears to exist amongst members of the Restoration Society and



ABOVE: The new cap. Right, the windmill. Below, the two are joined
By Victoria Owen vowen@nqo.com

A VILLAGE landmark is one step nearer completion after six years of hard work and £14,000 funding.

The familiar windmill at Wheatley, near Oxford, has had a new cap lifted into place. Sails will eventually be fixed to the metal top, which was made by engineer Christopher Wallis after he was approached by the Windmill Restoration Society.

Society chairman Caroline Dalton someone to do this particular stage amount of money to fund the project. Getting the cap through Wheatley was a bit of a problem, but once at the site, it went on quite easily.” said: “It was quite difficult to find and we had to find a considerable

The windmill, in Windmill Lane, stopped grinding grain and local ochre in 1904, and was damaged by lightning in 1939.

The restoration group has managed to rebuild the tower but Mrs Dalton thinks it could be another five years before the building is finally opened to the public.

She said: “It would be great to see it finished by 2006, but it’s hard to say exactly, because it’s quite difficult to find the right raw materials - because of health and safety they are not things you can buy off the peg.” the peg.



The restoration group estimates

“When it is finished it won’t be the project still needs £20,000. To able to be a working mill though, make a donation, call 01865 872496.

The cap fits, so let’s sail





Mill work unveiled

A MAJOR step forward has been taken towards the complete restoration of Wheatley's historic windmill, pictured above.

A 'cap', costing £34,000, was lowered on to the main building to mark National Mills Day.

Hugo Brunner, Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, was among those who

OXFORD MAIL - May

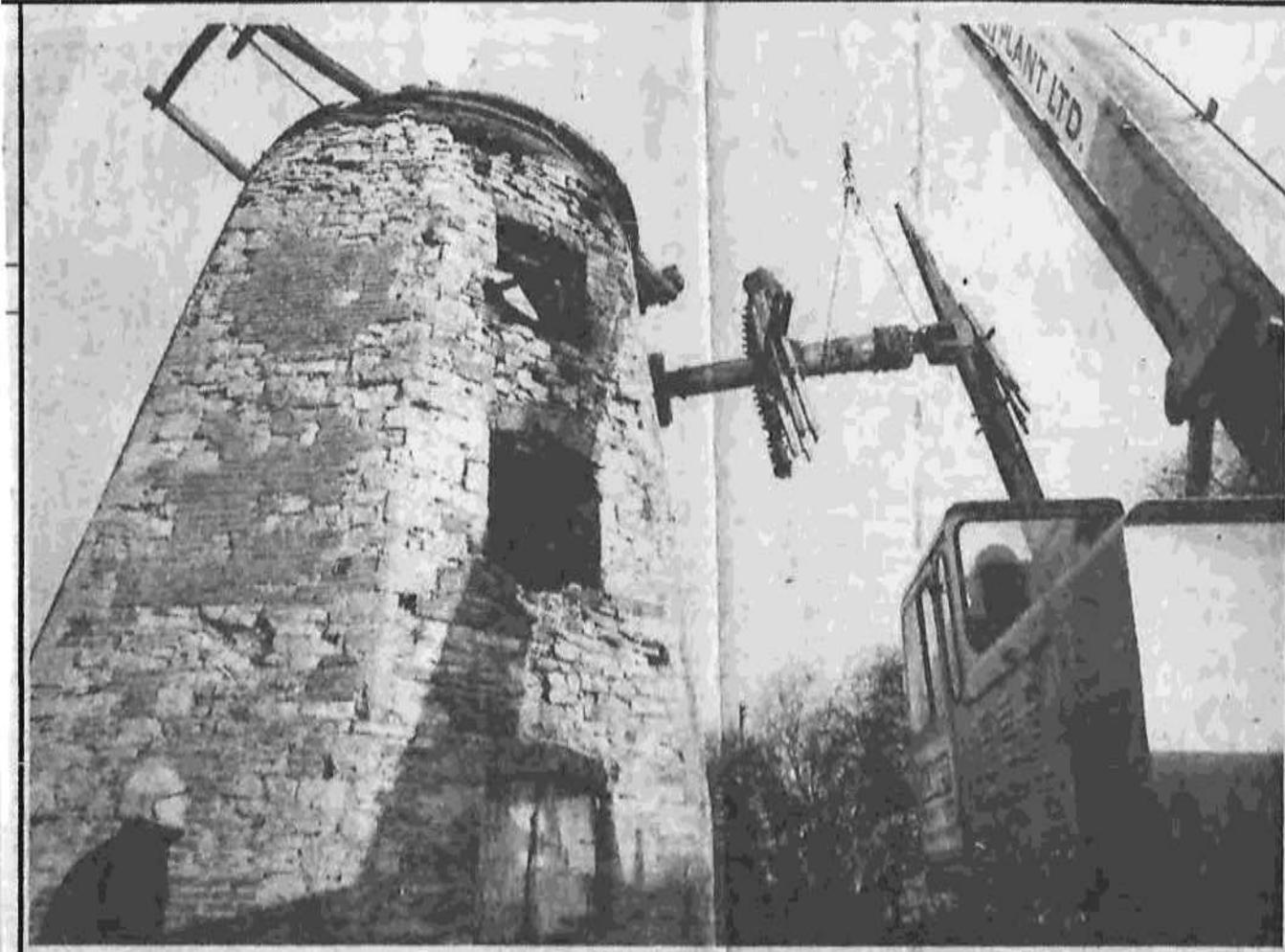
16th attended the ceremony, and the mill was open to the public. Work has been going on since the restoration society was formed 25 years ago.

The fitting of the cap itself is the culmination of three years' work.

The next stage is to fit the sails to the cap.

Picture: David Fleming

OXFORD TIMES, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1977



With heavy machinery moved from the top of the Wheatley windmill by crane, the restoration committee — who hope to restore the building for a fraction of the professional estimate of £20,000 — can now add a weatherproof roof to stop further deterioration inside. Picture: Athar Chaudhry.

Windmill sails to success



.X. ONE of Britain's most unusual windmills will soon ^M be open to the public. The Wheatley windmill fell into ruin in 1939 after being struck by lightning. Now it is being lovingly restored by the locals as a museum piece.

.X. Sunday was the annual windmill open day and ~ numerous stalls helped to raise £245 towards the renovation. The open day took place during the Wheatley Festival Week and was dogged by bad weather.

But restoration committee chairman Arthur Maddocks was delighted by the event "It was quite an achievement to raise so much despite the weather," he said.

One visitor was five-year-old Jennifer Brasford from Wheatley who was so excited that she wanted to be a windmill too.

^. The Wheatley windmill has been a familiar ^M Oxfordshire landmark since it was built in 1780. It is one of only three eight-sided mills in the country. Another fact that makes it unusual is that it was used in the 19th century for making pigment dye as well as for grinding corn.



Bringing grist to the old mill. . .

Time was when windmills such as this one (left), at Wheatley, were landmarks as familiar as the parish church and pump. Oxfordshire alone had 300 or more — now there are only three.

Wheatley windmill, built in the 18th century, is one of the luckier ones. While it may still look only a shadow of its former self, it has the backing of a small, but enthusiastic, band of volunteers who may be able to secure its future.

So far, members of the Wheatley Windmill Restoration Society have raised more than £2,000 and put in many hours of voluntary labour.

The hope is to use the mill as a folk museum, eventually restoring it to full working order. But before that can be done, the group urgently needs more funds.

So far, they have cleared away debris from inside the mill, put in a concrete floor and damp course, jacked up the machinery, and cleaned and repointed large parts of the outside walls.

But they can get no further until they have raised the money to pay a professional to renew the rotting ends of the beams inside the mill.

Altogether, they estimate it could cost up to £20,000 to repair the outside and replace the copper top which was badly damaged by lightning in 1939. It will be an expensive job.

But Wilf Foreman, Oxfordshire's foremost windmill expert, is convinced the mill is worth restoring, if only for its unique engineering features, and its unusual octagonal shape.

It was Mr Foreman who first spotted the derelict mill, and approached the mill owner, Mr Len Cripps, to find out whether he would be interested in restoring it.

The job was too big for Mr Cripps to tackle himself, but he agreed to let the mill to the newly a ten-year lease, to give them time to do the work.

The mill has been in the Cripps family for 120 years. It was used not only for grinding com for neighbouring farmers, but also for grinding beans for cattle food.

Separate grinders worked by the mill machinery were also used for grinding yellow ochre. But the mill fell into disuse with the advent of portable mills.

Other disused windmills in

Oxfordshire can be seen at North Leigh and Great Haseley.

Certainly, injecting life back into buildings left uncared for decades is a time-consuming and expensive task.

But according to Mr Foreman, who has made a study of wind and water mills all over the country, Oxfordshire has not been in the forefront of restoration.

Perhaps the Wheatley Windmill Restoration Society can change that.

OXFORD TIMES

2nd February 1979

Landmark is under threat

VOLUNTEERS and money are needed if one of Oxfordshire's notable rural landmarks is to be restored, it was claimed at the weekend.

The Wheatley Windmill Restoration Society held an open day to publicise the work it has been carrying out on the mill for the past 12 years. Two thirds of the stone tower has been restored but chairman of the society Mr Arthur Maddocks said yesterday there was still a long way to go.

The work on the rest of the tower is going to cost around £4,000 — the society's total annual income. "Then we must rebuild the cap and sail and that will cost about £20,000 said Mr Maddocks. "And we're always short of people to help us with the work."

Mr Maddocks of Wheatley High Street, who took an interest in the mill after retiring to the village seven years ago, said Wheatley was short of ancient monuments and the windmill was "an important local landmark".

Visitors were shown around the mill by Mr Desmond Kay of Dale Close, Oxford, who has been closely involved in the restoration work. "This is a very special windmill because it has an octagonal tower," he said.

"We're always looking for carpenters and masons to help us."

Mr Wilfred Foreman, the 80-year-old former architect from Lake Street, Oxford who founded the society in 1977, said: "with another £2&,000 we could finish this job. It's lovely to see so many people here — but let's >pe it makes a difference.

Oxford Mail August 14th 1989



*Sail time... Wheatley eight-year-old Christopher?tmner_ buys a model windmill to help the real thing **

**Wind of change for
mill**



Labour of love: retired builders James Munt (left) and Rex Powell who are restoring Wheatley's 18th century windmill to its former glory

BUILDERS Rex Powell and James Munt are involved in a labour of love painstakingly restoring an 18th century windmill to its former glory. For the past eight months they have been working on the main structure of Wheatley's stone windmill which has been derelict since it was struck by lightning in 1939. Villagers launched a major campaign to raise funds to restore it 20 years ago.

Now, thanks to grants totalling £1,000 from the Oxfordshire Buildings Preservation Trust and South Oxfordshire District Council, the work has been progressing at a steady pace.

Retired Rex Powell, who is working free of charge in his spare time, said: "It's very satisfying seeing the old mill gradually take shape again, but we are getting to the difficult bit now. The octagonal shape of the base changes into a circular shape just over half way up.

"We have got to faithfully follow that line which is going to require a lot of careful work. Each stone has to be made good," he said.

Rex and James, who is also retired, will probably be working through the winter to complete this part of the restoration.

"Once the tower is completed up to the rim, the structure will be safe for years," said Arthur Maddocks, chairman of the Wheatley Windmill Restoration Society.

"This means that however long it takes to

**HELEN PEACOCKS
TALKS TO TWO
DEDICATED MEN
DUST RESTORING
A WINDMILL**

raise the tens of thousands of pounds needed for the cap, machinery and sails, at least we know that the main bodywork is done and the mill has been saved from total ruin," he added.

Recently the society held a car boot sale next to the mill, offering the public a chance to see how the work was progressing under Rex's hand.

Arthur said: "People were fascinated with the project, and excited that it is going so well."

He said thousands of pounds were still needed before work could begin on restoring the mill's machinery and sails, but there was an air of confidence about the project.

"I'm sure we can raise the rest now we have got this far," he added.

The Oxford Star, August 30th 1990

Windmill receives windfall

A CAMPAIGN to restore Wheatley Windmill to working order has received a £500 boost from the Council for the Protection of Rural England.

The existing tower dates from 1760 although a mill of some description has stood on appropriately named Windmill Hill, in Wheatley, since 1677.

The building is owned by Len Cripps, of Horspath, whose daughter Mavis Ramsden lives in the adjoining mill house.

Workman Chris Wallis is pictured, *right*, carrying out some preparation work.

Wheatley Windmill Restoration Society chairman, Caroline Dalton, welcomed the gift but said £60,000 more was - needed.

Picture: Damian Hallowell

OXFORD MAIL
18 February 2003





Mill receives a windfall

A CAMPAIGN to restore Wheatley Windmill to working order has received a £500 boost from the Council for the Protection of Rural England.

The existing building dates from 1780, although a mill of some description has stood on appropriately-named Windmill Hill, in Wheatley, since at least 1677.

The building is owned by Len Cripps, of Horspath, whose daughter Mavis

Ramsden lives in the adjoining mill house. Wheatley Windmill Restoration Society, a charity, has been overseeing repairs and has secured access for the public.

Its chairman, Caroline Dalton, above, welcomed the gift from the CPRE, which takes campaign funds to £20,000. A further £3,500 is promised from other sources.

But Mrs Dalton said £60,000 more was needed

and it could be 2006 before the sails turned again.

Sir John Milner, who owns Shotover Estate, near Wheatley, recently donated timber beams that will eventually carry the sails.

All the tower's masonry has been repaired, out craftsmen based at Widmer End, near High Wycombe, still have a lot of work to do on the internal wooden fittings.

Mrs Dalton said Obviously, I would like

everything to be finished tomorrow, but it will be two more years before the larch timber that Sir John gave us is fully seasoned.

"We are hoping to complete the work in the next three years"

South Oxfordshire District Council has pledged £40,006 if the restoration society can match that figure with its own fundraising.

Oxfordshire Weekly

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Thirty-year restoration project culminates in cautious first, few rotations

Village's windmill creaks into action

By THOM AIRS
news@oxfordtimes.co.uk

A WINDMILL that has stood unused for nearly 100 years has come back to life.

It was the culmination of more than 30 years' work for Wheatley villagers, as all four canvas sails were attached to the rebuilt timber frame of Wheatley Windmill and the mill creaked back into action.

Caroline Dalton, chairman of Wheatley Windmill Restoration Committee, said: "It looks stupendous."

The mill was last used regularly in 1914 and a restoration society was formed in 1977. The restoration has cost in the region of £150,000, with funding coming from open days at the mill and a £38,000 grant from South Oxfordshire District Council.

Mrs Dalton, who has been involved in the campaign since 1989, said: "Just about everything has had to be done. The tower was cracked right down the middle because it had been struck by lightning."

Millwrights David and Stephen Emperingham and Karl Bettles have been helping refurbish the mill. Last Friday they got the sails rotating again.

Mr Bettles, who had to apply the brakes after high winds got the sails moving rather faster than the recommended eight revolutions per minute, hailed the test run as a success.

He said: "You're a little bit concerned



■ IN MOTION: Millwright Karl Bettles at the Wheatley Windmill last week when it's first run because there's a lot of old machinery there."

Picture:

.. IN YOUR LIVELY OXFORD STAR

Jumble sales are not enough

Arthur Maddocks of Lynton House, High Street, Wheatley, chairman of the Wheatley Windmill Restoration Society. Here he tells of the campaign to restore the windmill...

FOR the last six years the village of Wheatley has been trying to restore its windmill.

That means of course jumble sales. But Wheatley is a very active village. On October 1 there were two jumble sales and one car boot sale. Even so the windmill got £160. Not bad.

The windmill has also had some grants from local authorities but it is no secret that they are not exactly flush with cash these days and may not be so generous in future.

So far a lot of the work on the mill has been done by volunteers at no cost except for materials.

But the next step is likely to need professionals. It is necessary to repair the stonework of the top half of the mill and it will require heavy lifting gear, other special equipment and something more than enthusiastic amateurs.

If it is to be done at all, it is

best to do it in one go.

But where do you find the several thousand pounds?

The jumble sales will go on of course.

They haven't changed much since Grandma's day. Now that we are told that we are entering a computerised, cashless world, we need a computerised, highly productive jumble sale or some substitute. Any ideas?

If you have, or if you have a few thousand pounds you don't want, the Wheatley Windmill Society (83 High Street, Wheatley or Wheatley 2213), would be delighted to hear from you.

• **BELOW:** Windmill owner Mr Len Cripps holds a model of how it once looked and how it will look again. With him is Mr Arthur

Maddocks.



Village's windmill creaks into action

By **THOM AIRS**

news@oxfordtimes.co.uk

A WINDMILL that has stood unused for nearly 100 years has come back to life.

It was the culmination of more than 30 years' work for Wheatley villagers, as all four canvas sails were attached to the rebuilt timber frame of Wheatley Windmill and the mill creaked back into action.

Caroline Dalton, chairman of Wheatley Windmill Restoration Committee, said: "It looks stupendous."

The mill was last used regularly in 1914 and a restoration society was formed in 1977. The restoration has cost in the region of £150,000, with funding coming from open days at the mill and a £38,000 grant from South Oxfordshire District Council.

Mrs Dalton, who has been involved in the campaign since 1989, said: "Just about everything has had to be done. The tower was cracked right down the middle because it had been struck by lightning."

Millwrights David and Stephen Emperingham and Karl Bettles have been helping refurbish the mill. Last Friday they got the sails rotating again.

Mr Bettles, who had to apply the brakes after high winds got the sails moving rather faster than the recommended eight revolutions per minute, hailed the test run as a success.

He said: "You're a little bit concerned when it's first run because there's a lot of old machinery there."



■ IN MOTION: Millwright Karl Bettles at the Wheatley Windmill last week

Picture:

VOLUNTEERS SET THE WHEELS IN MOTION



Volunteer workers are hoping to put the wind back in the sails of an ancient Oxford landmark.

But it could be 10 years before the wheels of Wheatley Windmill grind into action.

And then a traditional craftsman will have to be found to keep it in working order.

Restoration work has already started on the 200-year-old mill.

It has been decaying since it was last used in 1910.

Now the Wheatley Windmill Restoration Society has been granted a 10-year lease to restore it to full working order.

One of the men behind

Mill project could take 10 years

the scheme is 70-year-old Wilf Foreman, an expert on the construction and restoration of all types of mill.

"Oxfordshire is rather slow when it comes to restoration work.

"There is no money available for this project so we need volunteer helpers.

"Even if it takes 10 years it would be worth it.

"Young people should be able to see these mills in working order; it's part of our history.

"It would need a resident

millers there to see that it didn't decay again."

The society is holding a working weekend on June 28 and 29.

Volunteer workers are asked to meet at the mill.

**Oxford Journal
20 June 1980**

RESTORATION OF WHEATLEY MILL

WHEATLEY windmill is working again after years of neglect, and no-one is more delighted than Mavis Ramsden.

Her family has been connected with the mill for more than 150 years.

Her great grandfather, George Cripps, bought the mill in 1857 and it was worked by him and his sons, including Mrs Ramsden's grandfather, Ezra Cripps, until milling stopped in 1914.

Mrs Ramsden writes: "As a child, I remember the mill was in a very poor state having suffered from neglect and also from being struck by lightning in 1939. The mill was then used to store garden tools.

"In 1970, I moved into my grandparents' cottage next to the mill. By then, the mill was in poor condition, the inside was unsafe and the walls were crumbling."

The turning point came in 1976 when Wilfred Foreman, who was doing research for a book on windmills, asked if he could look over the mill.

He was impressed with the amount of machinery that was still inside and thought the building was worth restoring.

A group of local people formed the Wheatley Windmill Restoration

Society and, within a year, had raised enough money to hire a crane to remove debris from the top of the tower and start the restoration programme.

The work has taken 36 years, but the dedication of those volunteers is now clear for all to see.

Mrs Ramsden recalls: "The first task was to replace the beams and put a temporary cover on the top.

"The stone tower was restored and work began on the machinery, replacing the floors, making a new brake wheel and wallower and repairing the millstones and hoppers.

"A new cap was built off site and on October 8, 2000, this was transported by road from Buckinghamshire to Wheatley and a crane lifted the cap on to the top of the mill. It was a perfect fit.

"This was a great day for the society, with much applause from all the locals who came to witness this event.

"The next task was to add the four sails. In 2007, a crane was hired and all four sails were attached.

"In 2010, Oxford Preservation Trust presented the society with an award for the restoration work at the mill which is now a landmark that can be seen from parts of Oxford.

"There was more work to be carried out on the machinery inside the mill and this was completed in 2012. This was when the first corn was ground and the first flour produced since 1914."

Many local people have been involved in raising funds and helping with the restoration - and there is no let-up in the work as the mill has to be maintained.

Mrs Ramsden tells me: "When the public visit the mill, many tell me about their memories of running past it on school

country runs and with ~~the~~ Sunday walks parents.

"I have been fortunate to have been part

of this project over the years and it has been a privilege to see the mill change from a sad ruin to a working mill, preserving our rural history for the future."

For more information, go to www.wheatleymill.co.uk • The mill will be open to the public on Sunday, May 11, from 11am to 6pm during National Mills weekend. Visitors can go to the top of the mill and see the machinery. The mill will be open from 2pm on the second Sunday of the month from June until October.

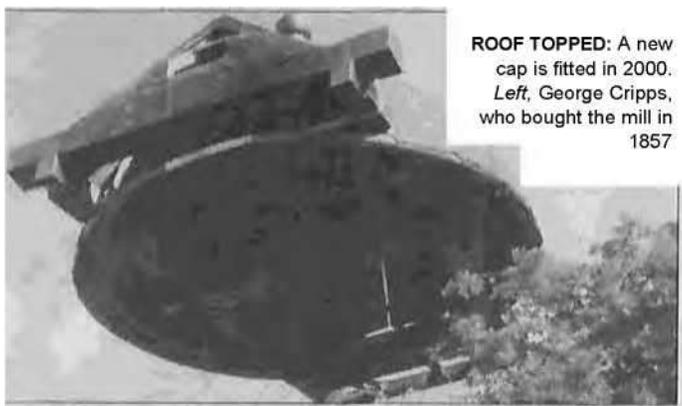


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WE ARE SAILING: ^vfae mill in 2009, with its sails attached. *Left*, Wheatley mill in the late 1950s



CROSS

Mavis Ramsden,
grand-daughter of the
last miller, Ezra
Cripps, recalls her
Memories of
Wheatley windmill
Oxford Mail
31 March 2014



ROOF TOPPED: A new cap is fitted in 2000. *Left*, George Cripps, who bought the mill in 1857