

## Wheatley Windmill

There has been at least one windmill on Wheatley's southern horizon since 1671, when a local rate book mentioned that it was 'in a ruinous condition'. A mill is marked on Michael Burghers' map dated 1676. Co incidentally, Samuel Goode, miller of Wheatley, who died in 1678, was probably bankrupt, for his executors refused to act. By 1702, the windmill must have been repaired, because William Jackson was paying a parish rate of two shillings for it. In 1760, according to Jackson's Oxford Journal, that mill was 'damaged by wind and fire'. The present structure is probably the one which the paper advertised in 1764 as 'a newly built windmill to be let or sold; enquiries to Webb, millwright at Cuddesdon or Davis, schoolmaster at Wheatley'. In 1806 John Sheldon bought the mill from John Parish for £525, but he sold it the following year, describing its capacity as eight loads of wheat. For fifty years it passed rapidly from owner to owner but in 1857 George Cripps of Aston Rowant bought the mill and the adjacent cottage. They have remained in his family ever since then, with the exception of a few years when one member defaulted on a mortgage.

The history of the windmill we know today is complicated by the undoubted fact that for some years there were two windmills on the hill. They stood about three hundred yards apart, one on each side of Windmill Lane. Bryant's map of 1824 shows a tower mill and a post mill, as did a watercolour picture owned by the late Mrs Cassie Paintin, who was daughter of Ezra Cripps, the last working miller. The second mill apparently stood in the grounds of present day Post Mill House, the last building on the left side of Windmill Lane, as you walk towards Horspath. Vicar Edward Elton's diary entry for 1st March 1864 was 'Fire in two mills on Wheatley Hill, both burnt down'. In 1884 however, he was still able to take 'walks round Littleworth and the windmills', although almost certainly the post mill was not put back into working order after the fire of 1864.

The windmill we know today is a tower mill, built of local limestone, patched with local brick. In its heyday it had an ogival cap and four sails. It is one of the three surviving stone tower mills in Oxfordshire – the other two are in Great Haseley and North Leigh – and is the only one being restored to working order. From the tower, which is an unusual octagonal shape, it is possible to see Brill post mill and Great Haseley tower mill. Soon Chinnor post mill will also be visible.

For more information see <http://www.wheatleymill.co.uk/>

*Contributed by: Caroline Dalton, 2000*