

RENOVATION: Project complete after 34 years

A song and dance over restored mill



■ Dan Hearn

MORRIS dancers clashed sticks to celebrate the refurbishment of one of Oxfordshire's last remaining windmills.

The Wheatley Boys Morris Dancers performed as visitors inspected the restored wind-mill in Wheatley on Saturday.

The 18th century mill, off Windmill Lane, is working again for the first time since 1914 following a 34-year fundraising campaign.

The mill was originally used to grind wheat and ochre.

Also joining in with the celebrations was the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, Tim Stevenson.

And while visitors were unable to see any milling - because of the lack of a miller - it is hoped the mill will be operating again within weeks.

Mavis Ramsden, who has been involved with the restoration since the campaign started in 1976, said: "It was really nice to see so many enthusiastic people visiting. We had an excellent turnout, considering the weather was not particularly nice.

"We weren't able to mill, unfortunately, which was a shame, and while we had another go on Sunday, that wasn't hugely successful because there wasn't enough wind.

"However, as soon as the conditions are right, the mill will be in operation."

■ The fundraising campaign was launched when mill enthusiast Wilfred Foreman encouraged owner Leonard Cripps to restore it.

Mrs Ramsden, whose great grandfather George Cripps once owned the mill, said: "There are so many people in this area who have connections to the windmill. It is an integral part of Wheatley's history, and that of the whole of Oxfordshire.

"We should be doing everything we can to preserve buildings like this because they forge such a strong link to our past."

In 1907 there were about 70 windmills in Oxfordshire. Now there are only seven left, with one converted into a house.

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