

Celebrating Villages restored

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Wheatley's windmill is in full working order again after a restoration campaign spanning more than three decades. A celebration marking the completion of the work on the 18th-century mill, one of only a handful of working windmills left in the county, took place during the annual national Mill's Weekend on May 8-9.

A fundraising campaign to restore the building started in 1976 after mill enthusiast Wilfred Foreman encouraged owner Leonard Cripps to restore it.

Originally, the mill, which had not worked since 1914, was used to grind wheat and ochre.

Wheatley Windmill Restoration Society treasurer Caroline Dalton, who has been an active member of the society for more than 20 years, said: "We think the restoration has cost somewhere in the region of £200,000. In the early days we had a series of jumble sales, coffee mornings and cake sales.

"Then we had grants from South Oxfordshire District Council and various trusts. When members of the public come to see the mill we ask for donations and they are usually very generous. We also had several legacies."

Mavis Ramsden, whose great grandfather George Cripps once owned the mill, has been involved in the restoration project since the outset.

She said it had been a great community effort by volunteers and it was amazing to see the mill working again. "We did wonder if it would ever get finished, but it has. It will be wonderful to see it grind corn."

"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," she added.

To mark the occasion, Wheatley Boys Morris side revived a traditional local dance which celebrated the windmill.

Also joining in with the celebrations was the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, Tun Stevenson, who praised the hard work of everyone involved in the 34-year restoration project.

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

Caroline Dalton, who has written a short history of the mill, I added: "In 1907 there were something like 70 windmills in Oxfordshire. Now we are down to about seven and one of them has been converted into a house."



, Mavis Ramsden, daughter of Leonard Cripps, with Caroline Dalton, chair of the Wheatley Windmill Preservation Society, and society member Donald Gray. Above, from left, chairman of South Oxfordshire District Council, Malcolm Leonard, the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire Tim Stevenson, and millwright David Empringham

