

Mill Equipment Origins - Chippenham Smock Mill

Confirming our 'phone conversation last Tuesday, I managed to get to see Philip Barratt-Lennard and inspect the mill equipment proposed for Swannington, during my recent visit to Norfolk. I was shown all the equipment as listed, and was satisfied that it was all in reusable condition (with a few minor repairs) and well worth the amount being asked. The two pairs of millstones had plenty of life left in them, and the iron castings were of good design and quality. Generally the cast and wrought ironwork was rusty from some years of standing but should be readily restorable with a little attention and a few coats of paint.

The equipment originally came from Chippenham smock mill in Cambridgeshire, and is likely to have been made by the millwright's Hunts of Soham, or else by Fysons, also of Soham. Unfortunately both firms have now gone, Fyson's quite recently. Identical cast iron bridging beams, stone spindles and nuts, and governors are to be found in Downfield Mill at Soham (Nigel Moon's), and I enclose for your information a few photographs showing the equipment for sale, and the similar equipment in use at Soham.

The above is an extract from John Boucher's letter of June 1996.

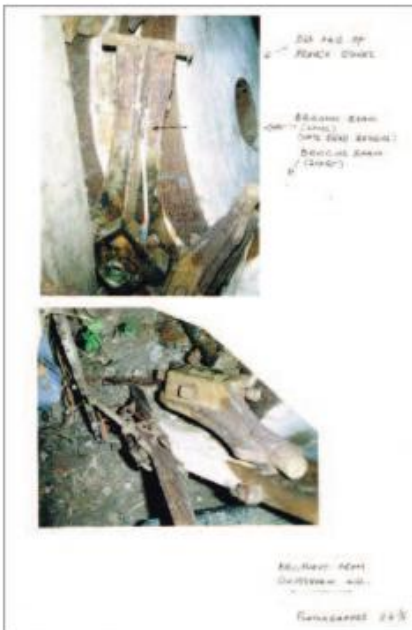
Swannington Heritage Trust purchased Hough Mill in 1994 and began planning its restoration.

The archives include four letters from Nigel Moon during 1995-6. Nigel lived in Stonegate, Leicester and operated Downfield Mill near Soham in East Cambridgeshire, he was preparing to transfer his activities to Whissendine Mill in Rutland which he still operates.

A lifelong milling enthusiast, Nigel introduced the Trust to John Boucher who became the Trust's Mill Consultant. The photographs referred to in his letter were:



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Soham Millwrights

The website <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/cambs/vol10/pp507-529#h3-0007> provides information on the Soham millwrights including:

Successive generations of the Hunts worked as millwrights for over 100 years from c. 1830 until the 1940s.

The Fysons, established as millwrights in 1848 on Paddock Street. Fysons, which employed 91 people in 1988, closed in 1991. The Paddock Street works site was built over by 1994.

Chippenham mill was built in 1883 just to the north of Chippenham village. Soham where both Hunts and Fysons were established millwrights, was four or five miles north west of the mill. The mill has been demolished and only the circular base is visible on aerial maps.

Bill Hale acquired the equipment for the Trust. It was refurbished and included in

the restoration of the mill.

The stone nuts, great spur wheel, tentering arms and governor were fitted on the Meal Floor:

The two sets of stones and the damsel were installed on the floor above, the Stone Floor. The wooden tun around the stones was made by Rod Eynon Baldock and Patrick Cheney in the village joinery.

The equipment was installed during the 1999 mill restoration in time for the March 2000 grand opening.

