

BULLETIN 3.2

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TOCKETTS MILL

Although work is far from complete, Tocketts Mill, between the townships of Guisborough and Skelton in the county of Cleveland, now has a safe future as a preserved mill. The buildings became vacant in 1972 after the death of the last tenant. At that time it was in immaculate condition although it had not worked as a mill for some years. For the next two years it stood empty and the vandals did a thorough job of destroying window frames and loose equipment and removing some of the slates from the roofs. By the beginning of 1975 the place presented a sorry appearance indeed. During this time, however, permission was sought by the owners for the development of the site as a caravan park with the mill as a restaurant. After consultation with the Langbaugh Planning Officer, the Cleveland Industrial Archaeology Society and the Conservation Section of the Cleveland County Planning Office it was decided that the mill, with its machinery, could be regarded as an asset . . . and attraction in its own right . . . rather than a shell to be redeveloped for new uses.

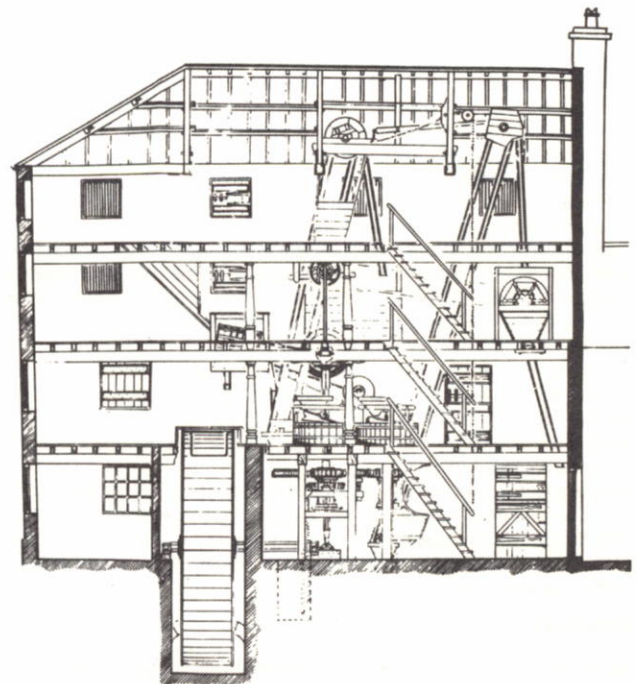
The caravan park development has now reached the end of its first phase. A new road has been built down to the mill, a bridge erected, electricity installed and sewage disposal facilities established. Later, a new restaurant will be built behind the mill and linked to it by a glass corridor at first floor level. At the same time the development of the mill as a museum will be completed.

It was considered, however, that the repair of the 18 foot diameter water wheel could not wait. The wheel has cast iron bosses and shroud plates and wooden buckets and spokes. The woodwork was badly decayed and this meant that there was a danger that the wheel would collapse into the wheel pit. This has now been made good and there is another link with the past in that the work was done by the firm of J. Hauxwell & Son Ltd. of Yarm, the firm which was started in the 1850s by John Hauxwell and which became the most famous firm of millwrights in North Yorkshire with a large team of millwrights, pattern makers, turners, etc.

The mill house has now been converted into the shop and manager's flat but the outside is restored to its original condition. The ground floor of the mill has been cleaned and lighting has been installed to show up the hurst machinery. A small display of photographs, drawings and millwright's tools has been set up by students of South Park Sixth Form College as a joint project between Liberal Studies and Technology Departments.

During the next two years work will go ahead on restoring the upper floors and the machinery. There are three sets of millstones (one by Mountains of Newcastle), a grain dresser, a silk screen, two elevators and sack hoist. All are capable of going again. At the same time a recirculating pump will be put in to drive the water wheel. The pump will fill the mill pond which will then empty over the wheel into a large underground tank.

Unfortunately, the history of the mill is thinly documented, but it is clear from the building that it is a mid nineteenth century mill on an older steading, probably of the seventeenth century. In fact a document of 1679 records the establishment of a new right of way for "horsemen and footmen" from the "New Mill" in the Upleatham area, and this probably refers to Tocketts. If so then it is close to the date of the first building on the site. The early nineteenth century saw the rebuilding of many mills in the Cleveland area as a



result of great improvements in agricultural practice. Many of these did not have the working life they were planned to have, because they were overtaken by the development of steam mills in Stockton and Yarm and by the growth of the railway network. For many of them the end of their flour milling came by the 1870s and they continued to work simply as meal mills. Most had their flour making machinery taken out, but at Tocketts it remained. The mill has survived as the most complete in the area.

There are many problems yet to be overcome, and these have not been reduced in intensity by the present economic climate. So far it has not been possible to obtain any grant for restoration. On more detailed matters, they would be very pleased to have advice on how to obtain 5" wide canvas belts for driving the ancillary machinery and they are also searching for corn milling exhibits (redundant machinery, equipment, scales, weights etc., as well as photographs, letter headings etc) as there will be a reasonable amount of display space available eventually.

At present all members of the public are welcome in the area of the mill . . . there is a very fine bar not far away ! Visitors can go into the ground floor to see the water wheel, hurst machinery etc. The mill floor, second floor and garner floor are not open as yet because of repair and insurance problems. It is hoped that this can be put right in the fairly near future.

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