

Windmills and Watermills in Hampshire

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PART I.

WINDMILLS IN HAMPSHIRE

HAMPSHIRE is not a 'windmill county'. The numerous rivers have always provided sufficient power for watermills, and the windmills have therefore never replaced the older form of corn milling. There are, however, one or two areas of settlement high in the Downs and away from the rivers, and it is in these areas that windmills have existed.

The windmills that have once stood, or still stand, in Hampshire are noted here in alphabetical sequence. There are, however, a number of windmills about which very little is known, and it suffices to mention those here very briefly. R. Thurston Hopkins, in his book *Old Watermills and Windmills*, states that according to a map of 1750 at least six windmills stood along the coast between Milford and Lymington Creek, but none remain today. I myself seem to recall seeing a sketch of Buckler's Hard showing an old windmill near the waterfront. I have also seen an Ordnance Survey Map (date unknown) which indicated a windmill in the vicinity of the main road from Gosport to Fareham, just beyond Elson. There is an old print of Southsea Common which also shows a windmill in the Haslar area of Gosport, and apparently a windmill stood on the green at Rowner. At Hythe, on the Southampton Water, the up-to-date Ordnance Survey map prints the words 'The Windmill' and leaves the rest to imagination. Without doubt, windmills once stood in most of the places mentioned above, but so little is known about them that they have not been included in the general survey set down here.

BURSLEDON:

On the top of the hill on the road leading from the village of Bursledon and the River Hamble towards Southampton stands a windmill in private grounds. Trees now obscure the mill from the road. The windmill is a large black tower mill without cap, sweeps or fan-tail. The body of the mill has been covered by a flat roof in place of the cap, although the curb on which the cap once turned is still in place. When working, the mill contained three pairs of stones (for wheat, oats and barley) and a bean-crusher. The runner stones were taken out in 1931 or '32, but apparently no other machinery has been removed. The sweeps were removed 60 or 70 years ago, according to the present owner. Natural decay is having its inevitable effect, and the stone work, although still firm, is beginning to crumble.

CHALTON:

South of Petersfield, and west of Chalton on Windmill Hill overlooking the Horndean By-pass, stands the most complete mill in Hampshire. Although this windmill is in the advanced stages of decay, it still retains half of a stock and part of the fan-tail staging. Also the brake wheel, cap curb and windshaft are still in place, although all other signs of the cap have now disappeared. The mill is a tower mill with patent self-reefing sails and fan-tail. The mill is built of brick, faced with cement, and the cap used to be round and covered by sheet metal. The site is reputed to be the oldest windmill site in the county, a mill being in the position in 1289. The present building was probably built in the early 19th century. The structure is now derelict and most of the interior has disappeared.

HAMPSHIRE FIELD CLUB PROCEEDINGS

CHAWTON:

An old mill once stood at Chawton, two miles west of Alton station. No other information is available, other than that the mill was built in the 16th century.

DENMEAD:

A tower mill used to stand near the village of Denmead. The mill was known as Barn Green Mill, after the original name of the village. The windmill was built about 1819, but was pulled down in 1922 by a Mr Silvester of Cowplain, and the bricks went into the construction of the road bridge over the railway line at Cosham.

GRATELEY:

In the north-west of the county, near the railway station of the same name, stands a derelict tower mill. The mill was probably built in the early 19th century (perhaps about 1850), but the sweeps have now gone, and the tower is used for storage purposes. Apparently the sails were removed on Easter Monday in 1889, and the mill was worked by steam until 1913 when the boiler burst! An oil engine was installed and this worked the mill for some time.

HAMBLETON:

Two mills have stood at one time in this quiet village. One still stands on Speltham hill, and is little more than a gaunt cylinder of cracked and crumbling red brick. Although the mill was strongly built, the presence of large cracks and holes in the walls, together with weeds growing from many a nook and cranny, indicate that the structure is unsafe. The body of the mill is set in a solid foundation that is of larger diameter than the tower, and thus provides a solid sort of gallery a few feet high, around which the miller could have walked if it was necessary to turn the cap by an endless chain. The tower is similar in appearance to the towers of Chalton and Owslebury mills, which were, I suspect, built by the same millwright. The other mill at Hambleton was on a hill on the opposite side of the village, and remains in name only because the hill on which it once stood is known as Windmill Down.

HAYLING ISLAND:

The last mill to disappear from Hayling Island was one which stood in North Parish, on North Common, opposite to the present North Hayling station. This windmill was destroyed by fire in 1886. It appears to have been a large tower mill, with fan winding gear and common sails. It drove two pairs of stones, and the cap was similar in appearance to that of Chalton windmill.

Another windmill appears to have existed on the highest point of the Island, known as Windmill Hill, about midway between the National Schools and Tournier Bury. The remains of this mill, and one other, were found on the top of a neolithic burial mound during excavations of the same. Evidence showed that one of the mills had been burnt down.

A small salt windmill used to exist on the marshes, possibly at the south end of the Island. The windmill was a very simple structure, consisting in the main of a centre post and trestles, surmounted by a windshaft carrying four common sails and a vane to turn the sails to the wind. The mill was used to pump brine from the brine-pans into boiling vats. The brine-pans were simply excavated shallows in which salt water was allowed to stand for a week or two until it became brine. I believe that the brine was used for pickling.

HORNDEAN:

A tower mill is reputed to have once stood in Horndean, and I have had the privilege to examine some photographs of the same. The mill looks very similar to the windmill at

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Chalton in as much as both mills (there was also a photograph of Chalton Mill), were in a similar state of disrepair. I have heard Chalton mill called Horndean mill, and as Chalton mill overlooks the Horndean By-pass it is easy to understand how a mistake could be made. The Horndean mill is reputed to have been built in 1729.

LANGSTONE:

A combined wind and watermill still stands at Langstone, although it has now been converted into a residence. The water was worked by the tide. The windmill was a fairly large brick tower mill, but all that now remains is the main body, covered over at the top by a roof. The windmill fell into disuse in the late 19th century, but in its active life was the frequent haunt of smugglers. Rumour claims that a passage connects the mill with the old Royal Oak tavern.

OWSLEBURY:

I was informed that a windmill used to stand at 'Osselbury', near Winchester, and I was at a loss to know where such a place could be, until I discovered that Osselbury would be the phonetic spelling for the village of Owslebury.

Owslebury is a small village on top of a hill, about five miles east of Winchester. I was also informed that a fine brick tower mill in excellent condition stood in the village as recently as 1929. A visit to the village revealed that two windmills used to exist there. One mill was a corn mill, and the only evidence of its previous existence is the presence of a 'Mill House' and an 'Old Mill Stores' adjoining the house. Apparently the mill stood in the grounds behind the store. The most concrete information available was that the mill had disappeared in the war as a result of bombing! I think it possible that the mill may have been demolished as a potential danger to low-flying aircraft or because of its significance as a landmark.

I was fortunate in being able to contact a Mr Bridle who used to work the second windmill at Owslebury. Mr Bridle's mill still stands. It is a brick tower, and is derelict. The mill was built to pump water to a neighbouring farm, and a bore-hole was sunk to a depth of 500 ft. for the purpose, as it was necessary to find a water layer, there being no spring available as a source of supply. Mr Bridle thought that the mill was about 100 years old, and indeed the structure does not look very old. I was given to understand that the mill carried spring shutter sails, and a fan-tail projecting from the familiarly shaped cupola as on most Hampshire mills. The tower is about 40 feet high and is of a more slender build than that of a corn mill. Mr Bridle remembered removing the sails at the beginning of the first world war. Apparently the sails were never very successful, and a traction engine was often used to provide the power needed to work the pump. Eventually the mill had an engine installed, and worked minus cap, sails and fan-tail, until five or six years ago. The bricks from the mill reservoir were used to lay the foundation of the roads in the new housing estate at Owslebury. There is now talk of the tower being demolished completely. Although one or two rafters remain to show the position of the floors, the mill is little more than a roofed-in brick shell. The well has recently been cemented over.

OTTERBOURNE:

A smock mill is stated by J. B. Paddon—an authority on windmills—to have stood in this village at one time.

PORTCHESTER:

A mill, possibly a tower mill, once stood about 200 yards east of the Wicor Factory. Although only a stump possibly remains, the tower used to be about 40 feet high.

[To be continued]