

# The Life and Times of Holgate Windmill

*Holgate Windmill is a unique and very old Tower Mill built in 1770 in an interesting era; so I thought it would be a good idea to put this into print for a greater appreciation of the age of the mill and the charm of the period.*

▶ Whilst George Ward was putting brick upon brick in Holgate, James Cook discovered Australia. He was not Captain at the time but was a brilliant navigator from the small Yorkshire village of Marton.



James Cook

▶ Ludwig van Beethoven and William Wordsworth got their first sight of the world.

▶ There were of course no aeroplanes and no trains, but there was a car! Joseph Cugnots invented a steam vehicle called the "Fardier" with three wooden wheels and "haystack" boiler.

▶ King George III reigned and although suffering bouts of insanity, bought Buckingham Palace and filled it with wondrous art from all over the world. On display as we speak. Note - He first met his wife at the altar!



Sir Joshua Reynolds

▶ As our George was putting the finishing touches to his windmill's cap, Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Amadeus Mozart was producing the opera "Mitridate Re di Ponto" (a little licence with his name - forgive me!)

▶ The Prime Minister was Lord Frederick North (Tory)

▶ It was the age of: Doctor Samuel Johnson, an important literary figure, Edmund Burke, genius, statesman and philosopher, Joshua Reynolds, English Rococo painter and foremost portrait painter of his time, Boswell, a man of letters and a diarist who fathered 7 children, had Gonorrhoea 17 times and probably produced the best ever biography (Dr Johnson).

▶ The sails are going on now with George admiring his modern new mill possibly with Roben Hay Drummond - Archbishop of York to bless it?

▶ The Poet Laureate was William Whitehead.

▶ Unusually for this period the English did not appear to be at war with anyone!, but only five years of peace remain before the start of the American War of Independance.

▶ Sadly I have not been able to locate a Patron Saint for millers. There is one for bakers, cooks, farmers, gardeners and even milliners, but alas not for millers. Please let me know if I am wrong.



*Go and tell His Grace that its time to come down now and do the Blessing!*

*By Vice Chair - Richie Green*

## GEOFF HODGSON 1929 - 2004



It is with great sadness that the society acknowledges the death of Geoff Hodgson. Geoff was our local historian, writer on all matters connected with Acomb and Holgate and their story, and an exciting and enthusiastic lecturer on his subject. He showed a great interest in the formation of our society and was on hand to offer advice and historical fact when asked. He established 1770 as the date of the building of Holgate Windmill, proving past information inaccurate. Geoff will be greatly missed by all his many friends, his relatives and local people who have an interest in their heritage.

### Holgate Windmill Preservation Society

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Vice-chair: Richard Green

Treasurer: Christine Bramwell

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**Holgate  
Windmill**

**PRESERVATION SOCIETY**

## Planning permission submitted!

After consultation with Windmill Rise residents a planning application to fully restore the mill to working order was submitted to the council in late February.

(see page 2 for full story and pictures)

## From the Archives . . .

by Archivist Chris Weaire

Recently the society had a stall at the Family History Fair and we received a donation of a newspaper cutting from January 1930. The Headline was :-

**HOLGATE WINDMILL PRESERVATION**

At that time the Yorkshire Archaeology Society was trying to save the mill, described as "one of York's famous landmarks" and the last of a number of old mills which formerly encircled the city.

The society's secretary, Dr. Evelyn, said "An expert from London is being engaged by the society in order to ascertain if the mill can be put into working order, and what the estimated costs would be."

Workers in the Railway Works felt strongly that the mill should not be allowed to disappear and suggested setting up a shilling fund to meet the cost. Dr. Evelyn said "This would be a very good beginning, but it would require more than a shilling fund to save the mill. We shall want the help of the public."

Dr. Evelyn added that in 1926 the society held a meeting on the site and influenced the owners at the time to remove the chimney stack close by, "which was an eyesore." He added "The thing is we are out to save the mill. We are seeing so much of York disappear."



William Arthur Evelyn

The question would arise, who would be the authority to take the mill over, and he suggested that the corporation were the authority.

A short undated article follows, entitled:-  
**YORK WINDMILL - CORPORATION AND LEASE OF THE HOLGATE PREMISES.**

A proposal was submitted to the York Corporation Parks and Small Holdings Committee, that after the Yorkshire Archaeological Society have put the windmill into good running order and condition, the corporation should accept a lease of the premises for a term of 99 years, with a condition that the premises throughout the term continue to be used as a mill. The committee, however were unable to recommend the council to accept a lease containing such a term.

There have been more recent attempts to save the mill, other appeal funds and discussions as to whether the mill was worth saving, or "an eyesore".

Once again local people are trying to restore the mill to its former glory.



Photo: Paul Hepworth

*A message from our Chairman . . .*

It may not seem a gigantic step but the submission of a planning application for the restoration of the Mill is a significant move forward in the campaign. There is still a long way to go, not least in the field of fund raising, but the granting of planning permission will be the starting pistol for grant applications. It is quite exciting!

Not so exciting but significant nevertheless, is the movement of the Society towards becoming an incorporated charity. This would mean that the Society would have its own legal identity, giving limited liability to its members. Thus members of the committee (trustees), present and future would be protected from personal liability. Heaven forbid that such a situation should arise but the committee felt that there should be provision for protection should the need ever arise.

This will be my last message as Chairman. I shall not be seeking re-election at the AGM. June and I are planning a return to our roots in Filey. We shall continue to be members of the Society but living in Filey would not be too convenient for committee meetings etc.

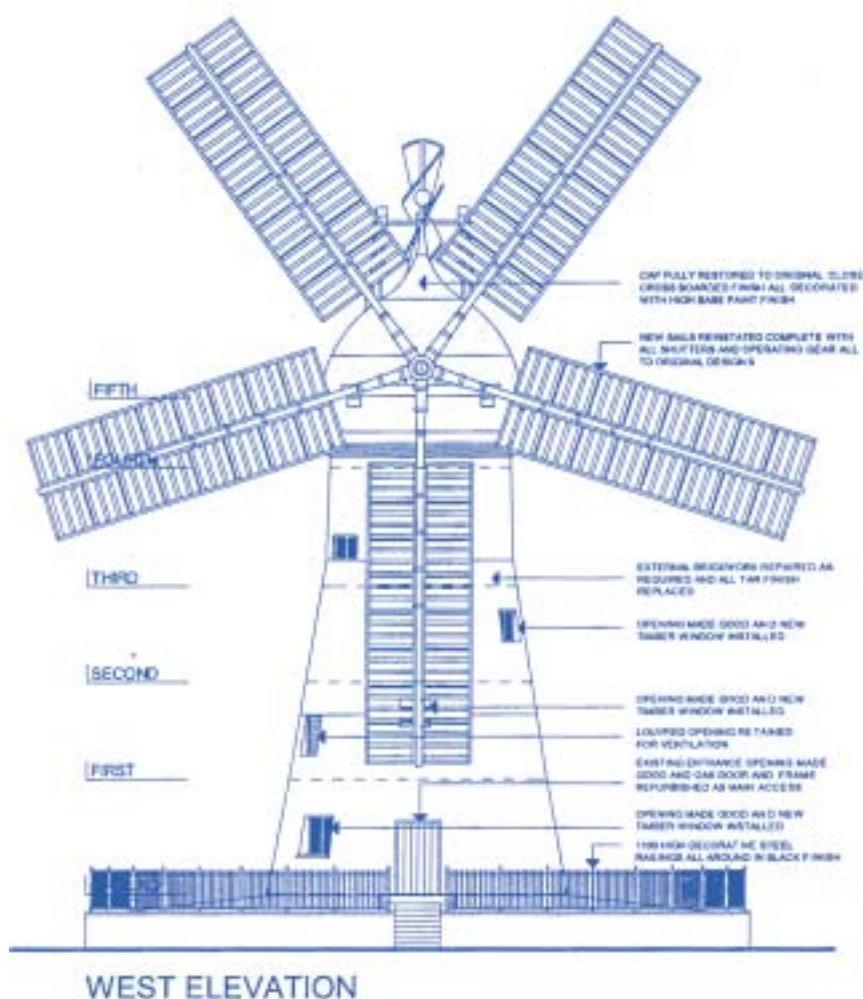
In the year 2000, when Christine Bramwell explained her "dream" for Holgate Windmill at the then Neighbourhood Forum, a few of us gathered together at the end of the meeting to see what might be done in the future. I was the only one in the small group to have chaired a meeting, so the lot fell to me. It has been a very happy duty and the fellowship of the committee has been of great value to me, an unexpected reward. However, disregarding the move to the coast, there are now much younger people keen to serve on the committee (that's encouraging!) so, perhaps, it is time for an old lag like me to step down.

Thank you for all your encouragement, please continue to support the committee. They are a hard working, cheerful bunch and may the Society go on from strength to strength.

Robert Hall  
Chairman.

# The shape of things to come?

by Steve Potts - Committee member

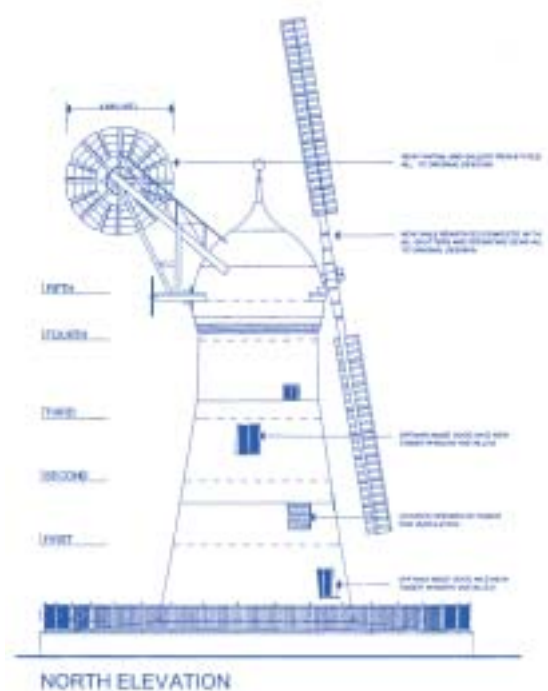


About a dozen residents met with the Society to discuss the proposals and raised issues such as vehicular and pedestrian access, hours of opening, possible operational noise and vandalism. Everyone expressed their support for the proposals in principal and the Society thanked them for their input.

As a result of that meeting, and in response to the discussions, the design proposals were amended slightly and Planning and Listed Building Consent Applications submitted to the City Council on 17 February. Notices have now been published in the local press and on the mill itself and the applications are currently under consideration by City Planners and the various consultation groups within the planning system. The application documents and drawings are available for inspection at the Planning Department at no 9 St Leonard's Place in York. It is hoped that a decision on the applications will be made by the middle of April 2004.

To further the Society's ambitions to restore Holgate Windmill it is necessary to obtain Planning Approval and Listed Building Consent from the City of York Council. The Heritage Lottery Fund will require these approvals when the Society eventually submits its application for grant aid. They are also vital to ensure that the City Council Planning and Highways Departments fully support the renovation proposals for this important Grade II structure.

In late 2003 survey drawings of the existing mill's floor plans and elevations were produced and these were then used as the basis for design drawings showing proposals for the refurbishment of the external fabric including the replacement of sails and fantail. The Society then distributed copies of these proposals to all the residents of Windmill Rise together with those on Acomb Road affected by the works, inviting their comments and giving them an opportunity to discuss any concerns they might have in person.



Drawings copyright - Steve Potts Architect.

# newsround

## WEBSITE

Mark Hoult has made a number of improvements including a new drop down menu system plus a tribute page to local historian David A. A. Lodge (1932-2003) who campaigned over many years, for the Windmill's restoration. Our thanks to Judith Lodge, for her kind permission to display this article.

Another new page concerns Eliza Gutch, the Mill's last private owner, and her family connections, which have influenced several local street names. One of her descendants, a genealogy expert has submitted a few amendments and we can now reveal that Gutch family ancestors were christened, in the faraway villages of Tisbury and Chelwood.

Mark plans to add a guestbook to our main site, in due course. Our thanks to him and his partner Helen, who has taken over the Membership Secretary's role.

## YORKSHIRE FAMILY HISTORY FAIR

Our sales and display stand was present at this Oaklands School event, in March. Public attendance was disappointingly quiet, but we sold a respectable number of Mill books, and a few badges. We also received £14 in donations, which covered over 50% of the cost of hiring the space from the organisers. The highlight of our day came from a local resident, who kindly donate a newspaper cutting from the early 1930's. (see archive story on page 1).

## ACOMB NUCLEAR WAR BUNKER

Just along the B1224, another local group is beavering away with the co-operation of English Heritage, to restore the former Nuclear War bunker, behind the recently demolished Shelley House. It was built in 1961, for the Royal Observer Corps to monitor and report WW3 atom bomb attacks on York, and the ensuing fallout patterns. There may be future opportunities for co-operation between us.

*by Paul Hepworth - Committee member*

## TALKING THE TALK . . .

*This year the society has put its new computer to good use. Richard Green and I have been giving talks on the History of Holgate Windmill and Milling to local area groups and societies, using our Powerpoint presentation package, raising our profile and funds for the society. If you have a group or society who would be interested in having this talk please contact Christine Bramwell on 01904 786883.*

## EDUCATION WORKBOOKS

The Educational workbooks are almost finished and look great. These are at a National Curriculum Level 2 standard and will be distributed to the local schools, as a teaching aid. Although these will really come into their own once the mill is renovated, they are still useful now to show the local schools what kind of educational tools will be available.

Membership of the society is still rising. We currently have almost 160 members, from as far away as Australia and the USA.

The website has proved popular and is being regularly updated each month so keep an eye on [www.holgatewindmill.org](http://www.holgatewindmill.org) for the most recent information.

Merchandise is selling very well, especially the booklet on Holgate Windmill. Over 700 have already been sold.

*by Helen Daniels - Membership Secretary*

## stop • press

Committee member and architect Steve Potts reports that he has been contacted by Environmental Health regarding our planning application. They have asked for a Sound Survey of a windmill, working and not working to gauge the effect on local houses. Ellis Mill which is surrounded by houses in the centre of Lincoln would be an ideal subject for such a survey.

## stop • press

## Dates for your diary . . . .

We will have a stand at all the fairs mentioned.

- ▶ 19th May: AGM at Bishopthorpe Palace.
- ▶ 31st May: Subscriptions due for renewal- letters will be sent out closer to the date.
- ▶ 17th June: Fund raising event at Bishopthorpe Palace.
- ▶ 27th June: West Bank Park fair
- ▶ July (date to be confirmed): Open Gardens for society members only.
- ▶ 18th September: Barn Dance, English Martyrs Church Hall, Holgate. Tickets £5, please contact the Membership Secretary on (01904) 795698 if you wish to purchase tickets.