

Thank you, Hazel. Well this is a very auspicious day. We are looking at the only open-trestle postmill with a fantail for automatic turning to wind in the country – possibly the world – so I'm sure you'll agree that, seeing it looking so wonderful, makes us all very proud.

There has been a windmill here since at least the sixteenth century but, being made of wood and sometimes having thatched roofs, they had relatively short lives. This one was built in 1819 using many timbers from an earlier mill on the same site, so it has done well to reach 200 years old. It might well not have done though, as in 2011 it was in a very sad state of disrepair. Cambridgeshire County Council could no longer maintain it and offered it for sale. After the Parish Council had had a survey carried out, it too, quite rightly, decided that it was not the sort of thing that the village could afford to look after.

The mill might today well have been a pile of firewood or completely replaced by a new house were it not for Jim Brearley and Jeff Gill. They put their heads together (over a pint in the Pheasant as I understand it) and came up with a plan to form The Great Chishill Windmill Trust and set about raising money for a major restoration to save the old beauty.

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) was the first external organisation on the scene. A group of members visited in September 2011 and shortly afterwards SPAB agreed with the Owen family that a bequest of £29,000 from Lyn Owen left to save a mill could be given to our Trust for this restoration.

Hazel became a Trustee in 2014 and, together with Jim and Jeff, organised a Windmill Awareness Day in the Village Hall. From this villagers began to think how they could help directly with fundraising and we came up with a few novel ideas. As well as live music evenings courtesy of Bill Jones and the Elderly Brothers and Craft Fairs organised by Lindsey Crawley, we had a cookbook compiled by Hazel that sold really well (see I resisted saying 'like hot cakes'). My wife Wendy and I gave Dancing lessons (I bet you didn't realise that under this mass of blubber there was once a set of twinkle toes). Later on we benefited from metal detecting days run by Zoe and Klaine of the Pink Wellies group.

All these brought in significant contributions that convinced Historic England to offer a grant of over £15,500 providing sufficient funding for the project as we then understood it.

The team of Trustees had been built with first Hazel and then I got roped in, so we felt set to manage the tasks ahead. Sadly though, just as the real work was about to begin, in January 2017 Jim Brearley passed away. It was some time later that we were brought back to strength when Bob Hatt joined us.

We soldiered on but, unfortunately, as soon as weatherboards were removed, we could see that structural timbers were in a far worse state than expected and much more money and time would be needed. That's when villagers and Friends of the Windmill really showed their support. We sought the money to pay for new weatherboards that clad the mill via a 'Sponsor a Board' appeal. This raised £18,500, an amazing figure of such note that Historic England quickly decided to raise its grant to £77,000 to ensure that all of the structural work required to remove it from the Heritage at Risk list could be completed. We are deeply indebted to Historic England, SPAB, and all who gave time and money to the fund for making this whole thing possible.

So we are here to admire the excellence of the restoration work by MillBill Millwrights, Bill Griffiths and his assistant Klaine Feagan, and to thank Dave Pearce and Martin Davies of Cambridgeshire Windmills Consultancy for overseeing the technical issues. We must as well thank all the volunteers, especially our farmers Chris Bates, Peter Wiseman and Terry Ingle for their time, effort and use of equipment and facilities that has made the job so much easier. Committee members, Tony Andrews, David Livingstone and John Wahlich put in great effort restoring the sails, trestle, track and many ancillary pieces. And you will discover later at the village hall Hazel, Gillian Phillpot, Clarice and John Wahlich and their team of volunteers have worked tirelessly on a tea to make up for you having to cut lunch short to be here.

We must also thank most sincerely the neighbours for their tolerance and assistance: Bob and Jean Hatt; Peter and Lorraine Brand; and, in particular, Ann and Graham Lillecrap who have been wonderful in providing cups of tea and electricity throughout the duration of the work and have kindly allowed the use of their orchard for us today.

We have several special guests with us today. There have been only two milling families at Chishill over the last 300 years – the Andrews and the Pegrams – and we are pleased to welcome members from both of these families today. Many of them have made special efforts to attend, including Andrews descendants,

Viv McCullough from NZ and Margaret Evans from Malta who are visiting England just for this event.

The restoration was set on the right track by the bequest from Lyn Owen that I mentioned earlier and we are therefore pleased to see his brothers and their families with us today. We like to think that Lyn would be very pleased with the end result.

One more family deserves special mention and that is the Brearleys, who decided that they would like to buy a bench to be placed here so that folk can sit awhile, enjoy the windmill and reflect on the man who stirred us all into action. So for the first part of the formal proceedings I would like to ask Pauline and Simon to reveal the bench here to commemorate Jim Brearley, our first Chairman and organiser of the mill's rescue. Thank you Pauline and Simon.

Also amongst our special guests are representatives of Historic England who have been generous in their support and guidance in dealing with a listed building on the Heritage at Risk list. I'd therefore like to ask Trudi Hughes, our specialist Heritage Surveyor, to say a few words.

Now we come to the main event, the re-opening of the mill. We are thrilled to be introducing Sam Smith, who knew the mill whilst growing up in this village. Sam has, of course, become an international star who performs to sell-out crowds around the world. But today, he has chosen to perform for us – a simple ribbon cutting because, as he says, he loves Chishill. Thank you so much Sam.

Maybe you have noticed that we do still have work to do so, whilst you are welcome to take a look inside, we would love to give you a proper viewing so please do visit our website and use the contact us page.

The coach will now start to take you back to the village hall where complimentary tea will be served, Bill Jones will entertain you with a few songs and there will be images and information on the mill's history.