

WINDMILL HISTORY

Whilst water mills have been in existence from 1st century BCE, windmills as we know them, did not come into being until the 12th century. Their early design was of an open trestle post mill, just as you see here in Bourn.

Over time the design of windmills changed to make them larger, more efficient and safer, so we are fortunate that Bourn Windmill has survived as a rare example of early windmill design. At one time, nearly every village had a windmill, such was the importance of grinding corn for flour.



BOURN MILLERS

The first recorded owner was John Cook, who sold the mill in 1636. By 1701 the mill was owned by John Bishop, a baker, grinding grain for his own bakery. Our mill was linked to the Bishop family until 1875, and you can see the initials of some Bishop family members carved into the interior of the mill. The last miller at Bourn was George Papworth. In 1926 the introduction of a paraffin engine in the barn made the mill redundant, and it was sold, before passing into the care of local charity Cambridge Past, Present & Future in 1932.

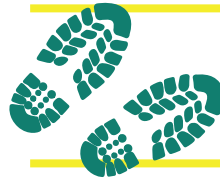
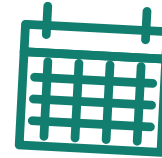


VISITING BOURN WINDMILL



The mill is located 7 miles west of Cambridge, off Caxton Road between the villages of Caxton and Bourn, CB23 2SU. It is a 20-30 minute walk from Cambourne which has a regular bus service to Cambridge.

The exterior can be visited at any time, but to see inside the Mill and have a go at turning it, then come to an Open Day - held one Sunday afternoon per month from May to September. Please visit our website for details. Group visits can be arranged at other times. CPPF members visit for free



There are lovely walks around the mill using local footpaths and you can download these from our website.

The windmill is looked after and opened to the public by a fantastic group of volunteers. If you would like to help them, please contact the charity.



Bourn Windmill is owned and cared for by Cambridge Past, Present & Future, a local independent charity the protects the beauty of Cambridge and its environment. The charity relies on donations from people like you to look after and share its historic buildings and green spaces. If you have enjoyed your visit, please become a member, give a gift or volunteer.

**Wandlebury Country Park, Gog Magog Hills,
Cambridge CB22 3AE**

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Bourn Windmill

VISITOR GUIDE



BOURN WINDMILL



This remarkable medieval building is probably the oldest surviving windmill in England. The earliest written record we have of the mill is from 1636, but the wooden post that supports the mill is a tree felled in the first half of the 1500s, so it was probably built in the reign of King Henry VIII (1509-1547).

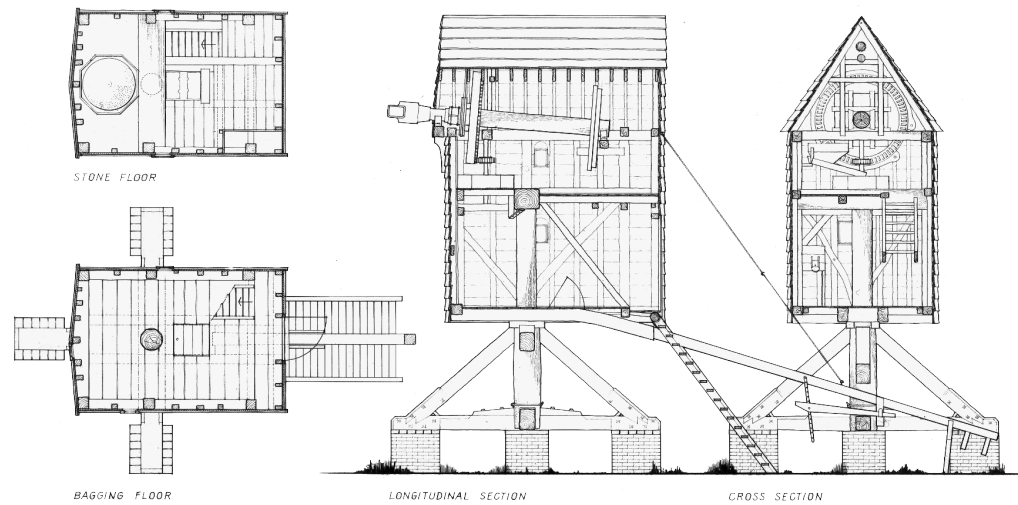


It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and has undergone many repairs and rebuilds during its long working life.

This includes significant restoration work carried out by local charity Cambridge Past, Present & Future, which has owned and cared for the mill since 1932.

OPEN DAYS

On Open Days, visitors can try their hand at pushing the mill around on its post (this is great fun and an amazing sight). If wind conditions are right you may see the sails clothed and turning.



RUNNING THE MILL

Bourn Mill is an early type of windmill in which the whole body of the mill is turned to face into the wind to turn the sails. The mill can be turned by 2-3 people pushing on the tailpole, while the steps are held off the ground.

The body of the mill, with all the machinery inside it, rotates around a massive central post, which in turn is held upright by huge oak beams (known as a trestle). This in turn, is supported off the ground on brick piers. Imagine how they might have built this in the 1500s using only horse power!

This type of mill is called an 'open trestle post mill', of which less than 50 survive.

The body of the mill (or 'buck') has two floors. The upper stone floor contains the grinding stones which rotate against each other to grind the grain. The upper stone is turned by energy provided by the huge sails, harnessing the energy of the wind.

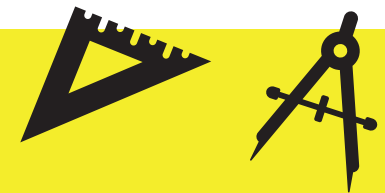
Grain is poured from a hopper into the gap between the stones and is ground into flour. A chute carries the flour down into the meal bins on the lower floor.

To stop the sails, the mill must be turned again so that the sails are 'on edge' to the wind.

In violent storms the miller has to carefully judge the position of the sails on two counts. Firstly, to prevent structural damage as happened at Bourn in 1741 when the miller was killed when the mill blew down as he struggled to turn the sails out of the wind. Secondly, the wind turning the sails with the brake applied, causing friction between the brake and brakewheel, which might lead to a fire. Flour is also very explosive, so fire was a big risk in wooden mills.

Millers spent the absolute minimum necessary to continue the operation of their mill, so when something broke often resorting to straps and plates which were more in the nature of bandages than cures for ailments. Over the centuries bits were replaced and so the mill is made up of parts from different ages, inside the mill much of the historic fabric is still there for us to see today.

The mill machinery dates from the 19th century. The huge oak beams that support the mill had rotted, putting it at risk of collapse and so they were replaced in 2022 with support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England.



Bourn Mill inspired the famous architect, Lord Norman Foster, who visited and studied the mill in 1958 when he was a student. Some of the elevations of the building he prepared while studying architecture are shown.