



## Vincent Pargeter (Millwright) Ltd

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### **Stansted Mountfitchet Windmill, Essex.**

#### **Report based on visits made 20/8/14 and 5/9/14.**

It was decided to make two visits to allow for a thorough inspection of the sails. The Millers were keen to know whether the sails were showing signs of decay so that future maintenance or renewal could be planned.

#### **The Cap.**

The cap is turning satisfactorily and is watertight. However, the structure that supports the worm that turns the cap was still considered to giving some trouble. In particular, the horizontal beam that carries the right-hand bearing of the worm has a split which appears to open and close according to which way the cap is moving. Various pieces of ironwork have already been added to try and correct this defect, and further additions were discussed.

It was decided to monitor closely the performance of the worm in the near future, and take action if matters get worse.

#### **Fantail.**

The old fan is still in place, but new blades have been made, and are almost ready to be fitted. The new blades will correct the lack of clearance between the fan and its supporting structure which became apparent in last winter's gales.

The supporting structure of the fantail is in fair condition, but in need of painting.

The cross-member that carries the two upright posts is deteriorating at its ends. This beam is 6 ½" square, and is fastened to the base timbers by bolts passing through near its ends. If decay continues, these bolts will become ineffective, and the fantail could be dislodged in a strong cross wind.

The ends of the beam need to be scraped clean of softened wood, and well treated with a wood preservative. Once this has dried, a trowelling grade bitumen mastic needs to be applied generously to the ends.

Code 4 Lead flashings should be dressed over the ends of the beam, about 7" along, removing the nuts to allow for fitting it over the bolts. The nuts may then be refitted, using wider washers underneath to spread the pressure more evenly. The lead needs to be dressed a little up the posts, bedded on white mastic and secured by copper tacks. Plenty of bitumen mastic should be applied underneath before the lead is fitted, and the excess cleaned off. This will prevent moisture condensing under the lead. The lead may then be painted white to match the rest of the woodwork.

The whole of the white-painted woodwork of the fantail needs to be prepared and repainted. This should be done with a linseed oil paint, and Kreidezeit Stand Oil paint is suggested. This system includes the use of a base oil to treat any bare areas of woodwork, followed by a coat of half-rich paint, and a final coat of full-rich paint.

The oak boards forming the decking of the fanstage need further treatment. They have been cleaned of bird droppings, but need to be treated with a wood preservative and finished with a coat of boiled linseed oil.

The boards would benefit from a thorough wire brushing before applying the wood preserver. When this has dried, a generous coat of boiled linseed oil needs to be applied. This work needs to be done when the wood is dry.

### **Windows.**

Some of the putty securing the glass into the window casements was noted to be loose. All the windows need to be checked, and any loose or loosening putty removed. The casements should be checked for decay and repaired as necessary. The rebates need to be treated with base oil and primer before applying new putty. The putty should be painted 2 coats after it has hardened.

### **Tower.**

The pointing to the tower brickwork is falling out in places, and should be dealt with before too long. There is also moss growing on the northerly side which need to be brushed off.

Some weeds have rooted into the tower between the 2<sup>nd</sup> iron band and the brickwork. These should be dug out and any gaps filled with mortar.

### **Sails.**

It was decided to make a thorough inspection of the sails on this occasion.

Each sail was accessed by ladder, and climbed so that all areas of woodwork could be examined. The timber was tested with a probe to detect areas of softness that would indicate decay.

The inspection did not show any serious causes for concern. All the woodwork appeared to be hard and sound. The only problem was that some of the sail bars

appeared to be rather loose in their mortises. This could be corrected by driving in tapered hardwood wedges coated in paint.

The sails, however, do need repainting, some areas becoming bare of paint, and others coated with green lichen.

### **Conclusions.**

It is recommended that the external woodwork be repainted next year. This includes the fantail, sails, windows and doors.

At the same time, attention can be given to the partial re-pointing and cleaning of the brickwork.

Scaffolding the mill is very expensive, but several millwrights are now using rope access, which is much cheaper, and acceptable in terms of today's health and safety legislation. I can inform you of firms available to do this work.

The Millers can continue to look after the everyday maintenance of the mill, assisted by Steve Mansfield, who will fit the new fan in due course.

### **End of Report.**

*Vincent Pargeter*

Director, Vincent Pargeter (Millwright) Ltd.

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