



Happy 10th Anniversary to Bunbury Mill

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10 years in the care of the Trust

On 16th April, the Bunbury Watermill Trust will celebrate 10 years of opening to the public for them to visit a working watermill, set in wonderful countryside, and see how wholemeal flour was produced in days gone by. Our millers and guides take you on a tour of the mill and explain and show how the machinery works, together with an insight into the history of the mill.

Bunbury village holds many prominent and long-lasting memorials to Ernest Croley's undaunted determination and commitment to major schemes for its enhancement and preservation. Amongst these is Bunbury Mill, which, twice in his lifetime, he was instrumental in saving from demolition, preserving it for the benefit of future generations. In 1976, a small action group, led by Ernest Croley, pictured here in the 1970s, discovered what was in the old mill buildings, and successfully lobbied the Northwest Water Authority to sponsor a Job Creation Scheme, which, instead of demolishing the derelict mill, successfully restored it to



operational status, and opened it to the public in 1977 as a working heritage museum.



Ernest took up the cudgels again in 2010 when United Utilities (UU), formed when NWWA took over NORWEB, were obliged to terminate their subsidy of the mill. To save the site from development, funds were raised by local donations, and the Bunbury Watermill Trust (photo above) was formally created on 3rd August 2010, with the objectives:

To advance the education of the public in all aspects of the mill, in particular the preservation, restoration, display and operation of Bunbury Watermill as a place of historical interest and by establishing a museum and education centre.

Lengthy negotiations followed over the next eighteen months, during which time members of the Trust and volunteers, including Dennis Buchanan, the last UU warden (now unpaid), worked hard to minimise deterioration to the currently unused equipment and grounds. After many meetings, the mill was sold on 27th March 2012 to the Bunbury Watermill Trust for the princely sum of £1.00. The photo (left) shows Ernest and UU representatives signing the legal documents.



After two weeks of final tidying and preparation, the team officially re-opened the mill to the public on 16 April 2012. Since then, around 1,500 people of all ages have come every year to enjoy, and learn from, their 'step back in time' into the environment of a working 19th century corn mill.




Ernest played many roles in the volunteer force - he was the founder and Chairman of the Bunbury Watermill Trust, he was active in maintenance work around the mill (photo above right), a relentless fund raiser, a well informed and genial tour guide, active in publicising the mill and, above all, leading and coordinating the many diverse activities required of the mill team to ensure the continuation of the mill's active existence. A mind-boggling undertaking, but, undaunted, Ernest continued to lead the team until he retired as chairman in 2015.

Quite simply - but for Ernest there would no longer be a Bunbury Mill. He saved it TWICE! Ernest passed away in May 2016, but we will all remember with affection his work here, and we resolve to continue his good work in preserving Bunbury Mill as a cultural heritage for the foreseeable future in his memory.

As they say, the rest is history! The mill continues to demand tender, loving care from the Trustees and the band of 50+ dedicated volunteers who spend numerous hours keeping the 178 year-old machinery in tip-top condition, working hard to organise and operate the schools' educational day visits and not forgetting the behind the scenes activities of administration and other run-of-the-mill tasks. On our first opening day this year (which, coincidentally, was the same date the mill was signed over to the Trustees – 27th March), over 60 visitors to the mill enjoyed a sunny day in beautiful surroundings, coming from near and far including Stafford, Wrexham and – believe it or not – Dubai!

The Trust continues to be managed by Ken Broster, chairman, who took over from Ernest and has been involved since 2012, along with 2 of the founding trustees - Ann Wall and Michael Thomas and 3 more recent Trustees – Judy Gray, Vanessa Greenbury and Neil Fowkes. Over its long history and different forms, the mill at Bunbury has steadfastly supported the local area by supplying meal, flour and animal feed. Today, it relies on people caring for it and tending to its needs. We rely on visitors' tours and donations to keep the millstones

turning. All income is used to preserve what you see today – a Victorian Water Mill - working as it did in the old days. Here's to the next ten years!

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