



# HOW OLD IS THAT POST-MILL?



Dr Martin Bridge

UCL Institute of Archaeology, London, UK  
and  
Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory

[martin.bridge@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:martin.bridge@ucl.ac.uk)

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ident qtre mont sacouillent la uolee



Flemish 1338-44

In these and other early illustrations, the windshaft appears to be horizontal



C14th

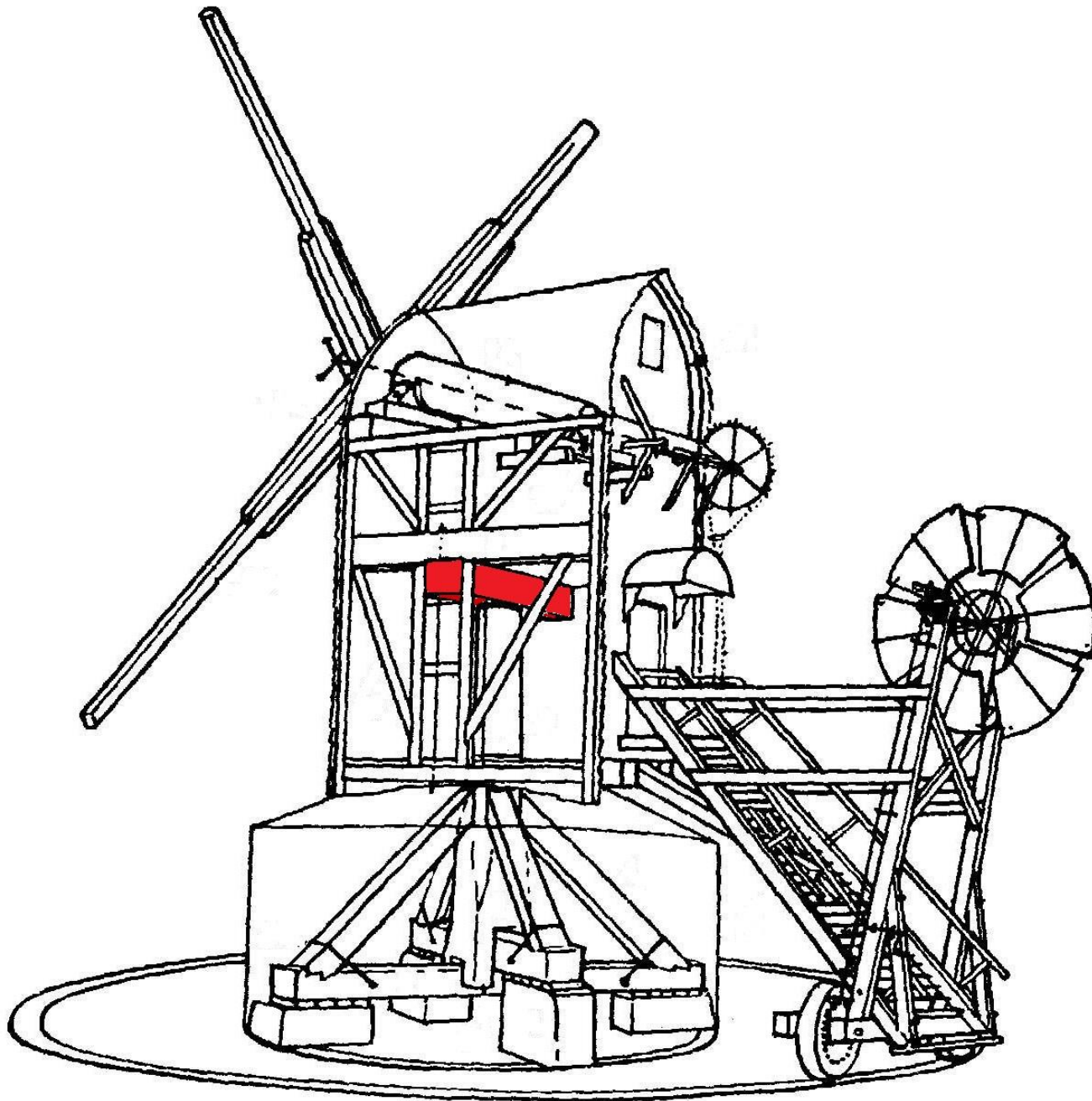
Earliest post mills - were they based on ideas bought back from travel in the Crusades?— as is often put forward – or a local invention where there was no prospect of building a water mill?

Earth-fast posts, large heavy body supported high on a post: rot and rocking the main problems, but also storm damage and fire (combustible dust)



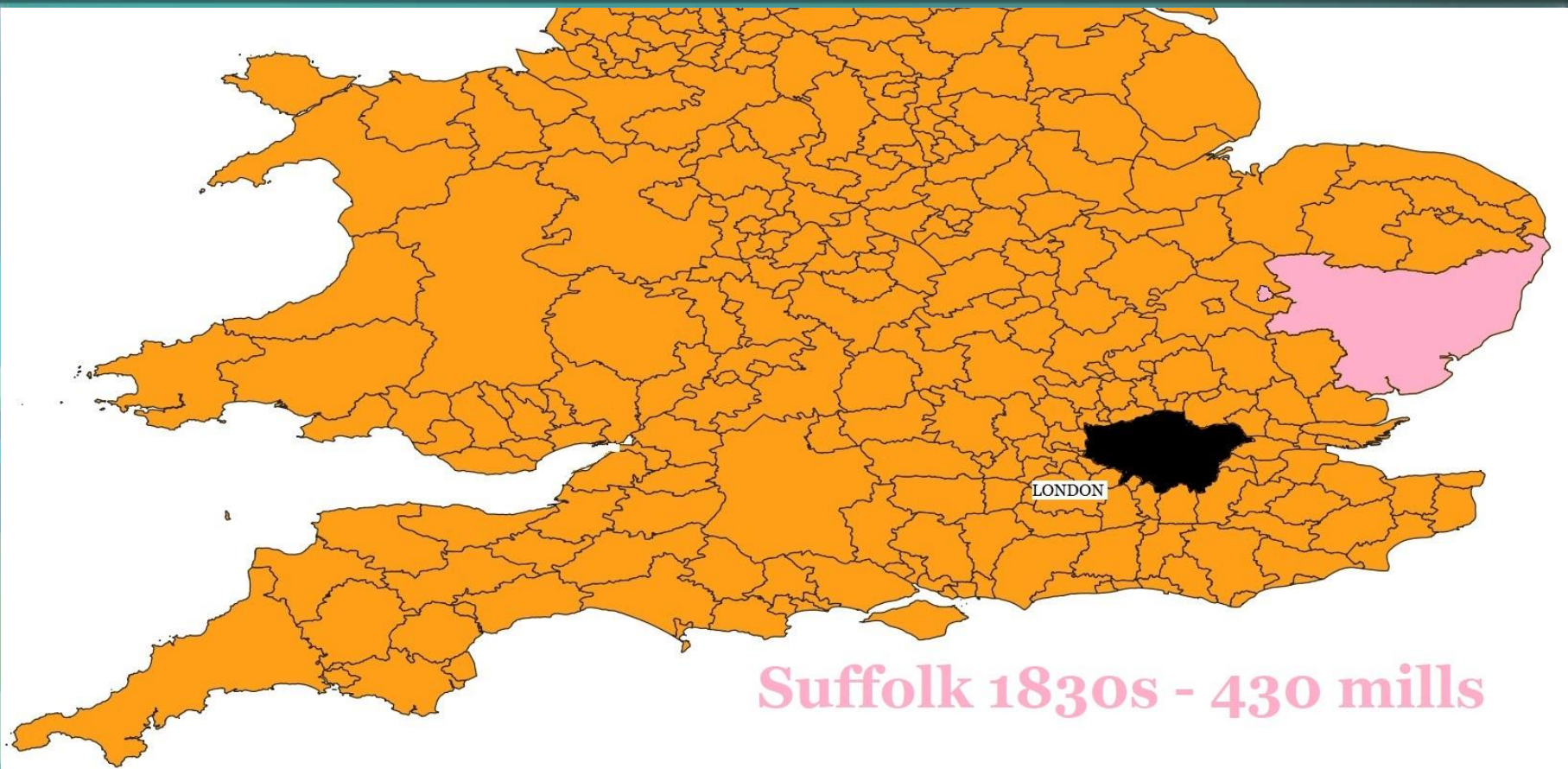
The Trestle consists of the main post, cross-trees and quarter bars

NB Main post does not rest on the cross-trees, but is supported about 25mm above by the quarter bars



# Crown-tree

Adapted from a  
drawing in Freese,  
S. 1957  
(3<sup>rd</sup> ed 1971)



Many post mills were renovated or built in C19th,  
but evidence of older mills is fairly common



Drinkstone, Suffolk

Escaped major  
rebuild in the  
C19th / C20th, so  
thought old, and  
carved date of  
1689

Main post winter **1586/7**,  
two re-used jowelled posts **1543-73**

I now think the cross-tree has outside ring giving felling  
**1661/2** (new data)

**Nutley** – side girt felled 1738-70, but again the main post 1533-65







PITSTONE, BUCKS  
(National Trust)

MAIN POST **after 1545** (no sap, but probably in C16th)

Framing **Winter 1595/6** and **Spring 1597**

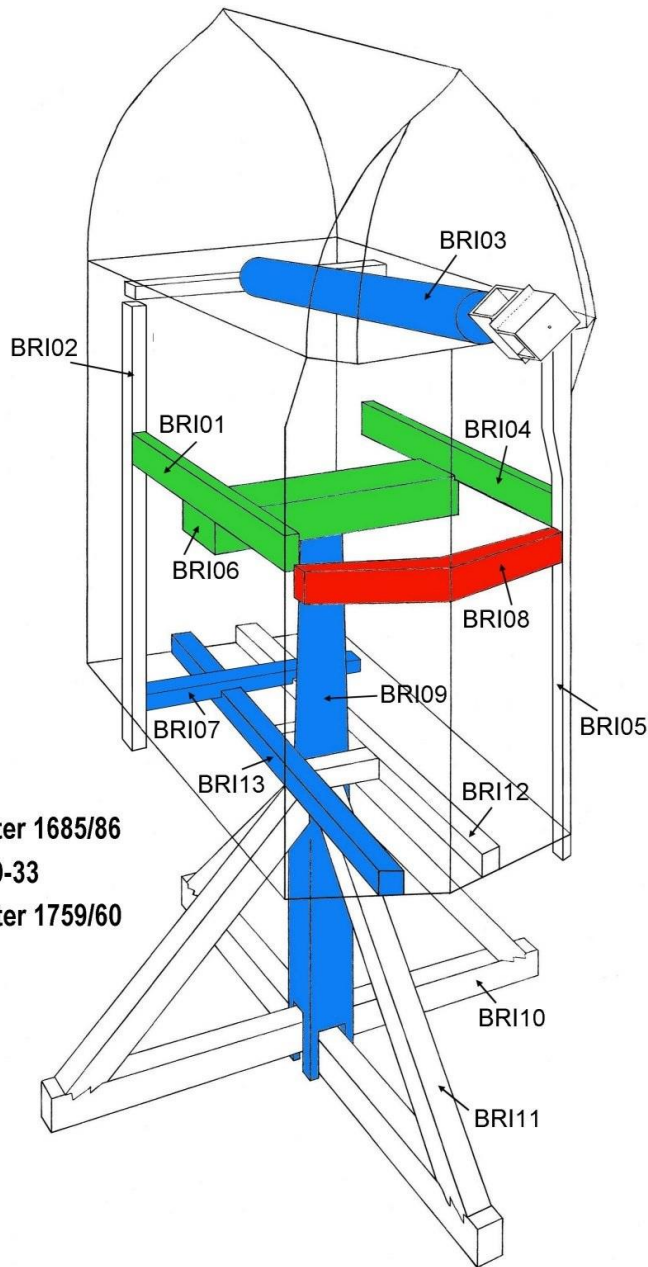
Crown-tree **Spring 1670**

Cross-tree and quarter bars **1824-48**



This mill has long been thought to date to the late 17<sup>th</sup>-century, with one carved beam bearing the truncated inscription -68-, thought to relate to a date in the 1680s.





Felling dates:

PHASE 1 Winter 1685/86

PHASE 2 1719-33

PHASE 3 Winter 1759/60

Meal beam oldest

Crown-tree and side  
girts next

Main post, sheer  
and frame youngest  
(of those dated)



Little (Great) Chishill, Cambs.

A re-used front diagonal brace – 1696-1728, rest from  
1817/18



This timber is a sail whip, re-used as a stud in Little Chishill mill, Cambs. (1690-1722)

Listing suggests oldest of its type in the country!!

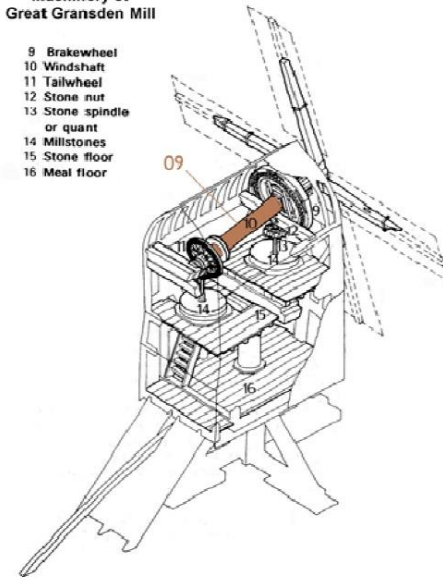


Great Gransden, Cambridgeshire  
Main Post 1631-64

Right Sheer 1771-1804  
Buck – early C19th  
Windshaft 1845-77

Machinery of  
Great Gransden Mill

- 9 Brakewheel
- 10 Windshaft
- 11 Tailwheel
- 12 Stone nut
- 13 Stone spindle  
or quant
- 14 Millstones
- 15 Stone floor
- 16 Meal floor





## BOURN MILL Cambs.

Long thought to be the 'oldest mill', but known that the cross-trees and quarter bars are C19th. Recorded in 1636

**Main post – after 1515  
sheers spring 1703  
and spring 1707,  
storm 1741 – known  
destruction (killed  
miller) – but perhaps  
1703 storm too**



Cromer, Herts – Main post 1678  
1831, 1840-85

Ian Tyers



Madingley (Cambs.), moved from  
Ellington, Huntingdonshire

Main post after 1540, some late  
C16th, late C18th, early C19th

(info from Neil Loader)





## Kibworth, Leics

13 timbers, all 1773 – mill not as old as expected (Nottingham TRDL)



## Herstmonceux, Sussex

1814 – older timbers suspected, [e.g. race knife assembly marks] but not dated (elm or too few rings).

Yet again, dendrochronology has totally changed our knowledge of these structures.

More studies may give clues about life-expectancy of various components, or frequency of disaster (fire, storm etc.)