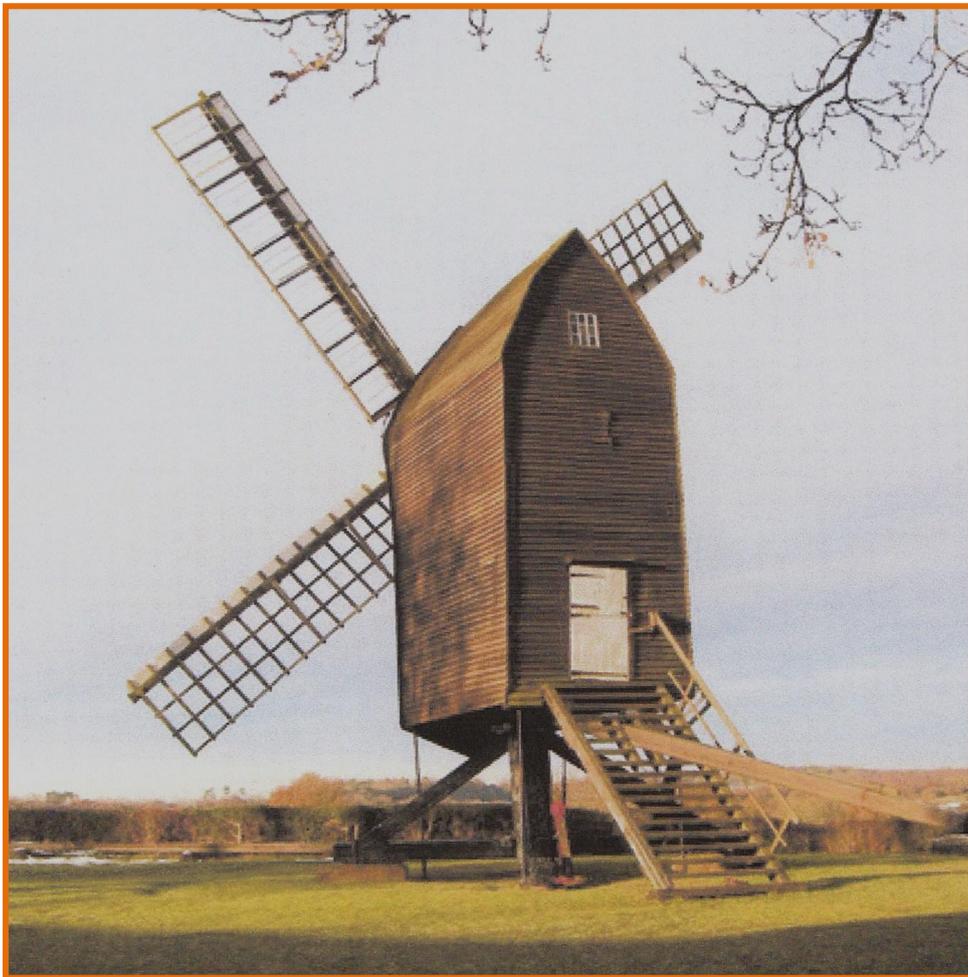


A WINDMILL AT NEWICK, SUSSEX



Would it have looked like this post mill at Nutley in Sussex ?

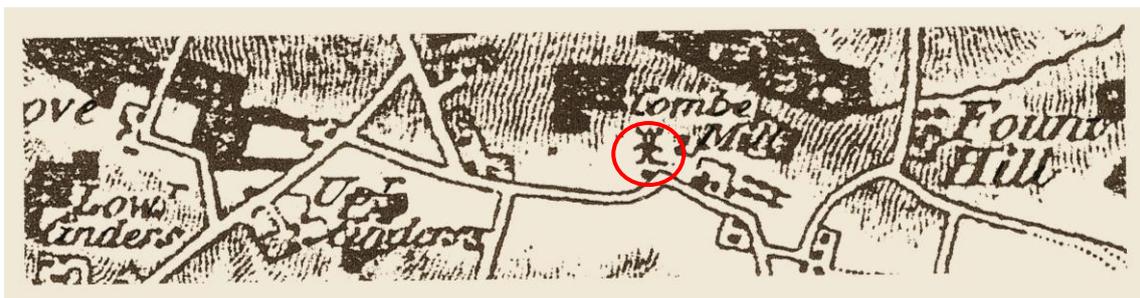
A Windmill at Newick, East Sussex

Coombe Farm, which no longer exists, was located just to the west of the large house 'Beechlands' at Cornwell's Bank, Newick and included a windmill sited on this high ridge of land facing straight towards the winds blowing up from the South Downs. A history of this windmill can be gleaned from old maps, plans, newspapers and documents, particularly those found at the East Sussex Record Office (ESRO). A December 1862 newspaper report suggested that the mill was "the largest post windmill in the County of Sussex".

In the *Sussex Archaeological Collections* volume 1 (1848) page 63, is a relevant article written by William Henry Blaauw, who lived at 'Beechlands'. The article is entitled 'Remarks on the Nonae of 1340, as Relating to Sussex' (the 'Nonarum Inquisitiones'). That old document refers to 'two windmills at Newick, tithe 4 shillings'. The location of these two 14th century windmills in Newick is not described but it is highly likely that they would have been sited on this high, windy, south-facing ridge.

There exists a document (ESRO: LCG/3/EW 2) entitled 'Sussex Proceedings of Meetings of Deputy Lieutenancy for the Internal Defence of the Country 1801-1806' listing certain people and goods in Sussex parishes that would be available in the event of war with Napoleon. Comb Mill in Newick is referred to, in the hands of John Snashall. The tithe account book for 1808 and 1809 records John Snashall paying a tithe of £1. 1s. Od. for his mill (ESRO: P 428/16/1). The 1810 land tax forms for Newick show John Snashall as occupying 'Combe' (ESRO: XA 31/20).

An 1813 Ordnance Survey map (extract below) shows the Cornwell's Bank area, including 'Combe Mill', with a symbol of the mill shown here circled in red. Just below the mill symbol is shown what is now called Beechland Farmhouse. To the east of that is shown the house 'Beechland' with an avenue of trees on its eastern side together with the road running alongside the house and then south-eastwards down to the Ridgelands Lane junction (this part of the road was subsequently altered, as explained later).



Ordnance Survey map 1813

It should be added that on a map of 1829 (ESRO: SAS/SH 389) a windmill is shown at the top of Cinder Hill, about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile or so to the west of Combe mill in Chailey parish, but curiously, on the above 1813 map, there is no windmill symbol shown there.

Combe Mill is referred to in an 1823 deed, which states "...Isaac Tompsett of Newick yeoman ...Stephen Sawyer...sell a messuage, barn and land called Combe containing thirty acres with the windmill thereon erected in Newick held of the manor of Northease with Iford..." (ESRO: SAS/FB/539). The land tax forms show that in the 1820's the mill is owned and run by Isaac Tomsett and then, until 1835, by his wife, with Best and Godsmark as occupiers.

An 1834 plan of Beechlands (ESRO: SAS/FB/682 and C/C 44/119) clearly shows a post windmill symbol to the west of Beechlands on "Mr Isaac Tompsetts land - The Mill Fields". The rest of that plan shows the road by the Beechlands house to be closed to the public and a new road provided to the south (ie the straight public highway that now exists). That diversion had been approved by the quarter sessions court much earlier in 1825 (ESRO: QO/EW 48). Presumably, William Thomson, the owner of Beechlands, had wanted more privacy at his house and a larger garden, so chose to re-site the public road further away.

In 1834/1835 William Henry Blaauw comes on the scene, to buy Beechlands from William Thomson and to buy Coombe Farm from Isaac Tompsett. He obtained a valuation of the Beechlands house with its fixtures, furniture and the land (ESRO: SAS/FB/479 and 480) and also a valuation of Isaac Tompsetts 29 acre Coombe Farm with its house and windmill (ESRO: SAS/FB/481). The windmill was described as "old and requires considerable repair". Isaac Tompsett chose to quit the farm and dispose of the stock - hogs, a sow, two cart horses, wagons, ploughs, etc (auction notices in *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* newspapers September and October 1835).

Having purchased Beechlands and Coombe Farm it appears that Blaauw had no wish to keep the old windmill. It was disposed of to Godfrey Guy at the price of £315 (ESRO: SAS/FB/484) with the gear sold separately (ESRO: SAS/FB/483). Godfrey Guy agreed to buy the mill from Blaauw with a clause referring to the mill "to be moved off the premises by the end of May".

The mill was moved, presumably by the May 1836 date, to a new site $\frac{1}{2}$ mile away to the north, closer to Newick village. Four years later, the 1840 tithe map for Newick (ESRO:TD/E 42/1) therefore shows no mill at Combe Farm - but does the tithe map give clues as to exactly where the mill had stood on this holding up until 1836? There is a schedule (the 'apportionments') which accompanies this tithe map. The map and apportionments show the house Beechland as number 362 with the pleasure grounds as 363. The new straight section of road is shown. 366 is the farmhouse. 365 is the Coombe Farm farmyard with two farm buildings shown. The field 369 was pasture named as 'The Mill North Field' and 321 was

pasture named 'The Mill House Field'. A reasonable proposition is that the windmill stood in the circular parcel numbered 368. That position would tie up with the position shown on the earlier maps of 1813 and 1834. An extract from the tithe map is shown below, with north being in the top right corner, and the probable position of the mill being circled in red.



Extract from the 1840 Newick tithe map (East Sussex Record Office: TD/E 42/1)

There is a line, in an old poem, that there was 'no vestige' left of a mill hereabouts, which may refer to the mill on this Combe Farm site. The poem, written in 1850 by 'The Uckfield Poet' Thomas Pentecost, who had earlier lived in Newick, was entitled 'On sweeping away the cottage and grubbing of Mitchell Wood, Newick, Sussex'. Mitchell Wood was not far from the Coombe Farm windmill. The poem included the words "...Aye, where's the mill so wont to cheer, as it around did play; I've counted off' its circuit here, Yes, fifty times a day... 'Tis gone - no vestige left behind! ..."

The new site for the mill, in 1836, on a ridge $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to the north, was shown on the 1840 Newick tithe map; building 261 being 'The Mill' and parcel 262 as 'The Mill Field', owned and

occupied by Godfrey and Thomas Guy. This was to the north of where Millfield Close now lies, off the north side of Allington Road. An extract from the tithe map is shown below, north being in the top right hand corner, with the mill circled in blue. The mill was run by Thomas and Godfrey Guy until 1852 when George Norman then became the occupier, followed in later years by Robert Wood and then Thomas Jewell and others.



Extract from the 1840 Newick tithe map (East Sussex Record Office: TD/E 42/1)

Godfrey Guy died in November 1862 so the ownership of the mill then passed to his daughter Miss Guy - but only days after his death, disaster struck. The mill caught fire. The mill grinder, George Eastland, and nearby villagers assembled quickly after the alarm but were unable to stop the flames. A horse in a nearby stable was saved by George Eastland but the mill was completely burnt to the ground. Quantities of corn and four carts were also destroyed. George's young nephew Frank Brooks, who sometimes slept at the mill after working late, was luckily not there at the time. The mill was insured but the carts and some of the corn, belonging to James Holmes, were not. The Newick vestry minutes of January 1863 refer to "...the windmill having been destroyed by fire it was resolved that the land and buildings remaining be assessed at the sum of £3..." (ESRO: PAR 428/14/2/1).

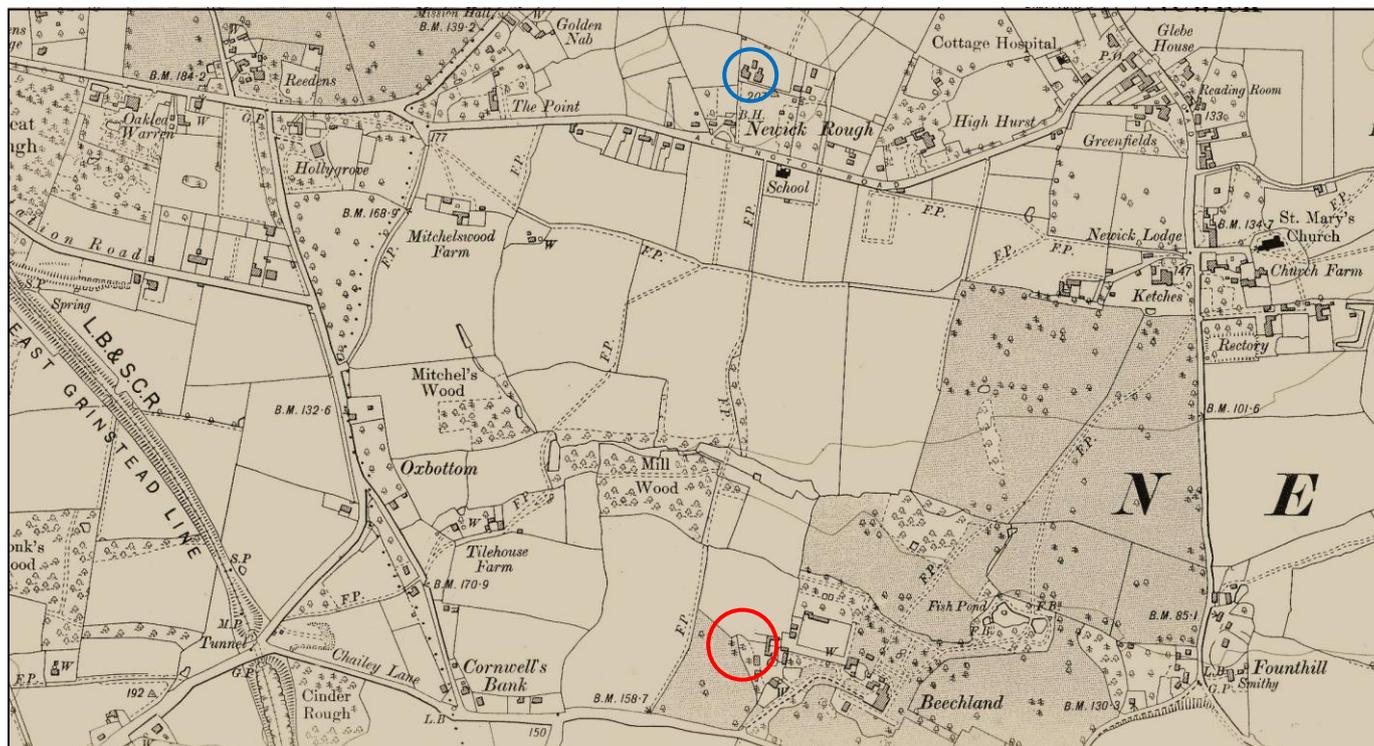
What happened to the millstones from the mill? There is an old millstone set in the ground at the front gate to Millstone Cottage, Cornwell's Bank, only about 330 metres to the west of the original site of the old mill. Its siting here at the cottage is referred to in the memories of Arthur E Oldaker, writing in the 1950's (ESRO: AMS 5785/4). The stone, now worn very smooth, may well have been from the mill when it was moved in 1836. There is another millstone which was found in the grounds of 'Tower House' off Allington Road. This was the revised site of the old mill, where Tower House was built towards the end of the

nineteenth century. The heavy millstone was found half buried and incomplete and was moved by the owner John Goodwin, with some difficulty, to the front garden of the house where it still remains proudly on display against the house wall. The photographs below show these two millstones.



Millstones at Millstone Cottage, Cornwells Bank and at Tower House, off Allington Road

Below is a 1911 Ordnance Survey map showing, with red and blue circles, the location of the two sites of the windmill.



1911 Ordnance Survey map showing the two locations of the mill

No windmills now exist in Newick parish, but clearly there is the interesting history of the mill that did once stand here.

Information sources:

The East Sussex Record Office documents as referred to in the text; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* newspapers September-November 1835; *Brighton Gazette* newspaper 1st October 1835; *Sussex Archaeological Society Collections* volume 1 (1848) page 63; national population census 1841, 1851 and 1861; *Harp of Aeolus* Thomas Pentecost 1856; in Newick churchyard are the gravestones of John Snashall's young son John (1801) and of Godfrey Guy (1862); *Sussex Express* newspaper 9th December 1862; Ordnance Survey maps; *Newick - The Story of a Sussex Village* Joyce Lindsey (1983) pages 6 and 29; *Newick Retold* Tony Mayes 2002 pages 143 and 155; information from Sarah Crichton (nee Goodwin) regarding the millstone at Tower House; photographs by author.