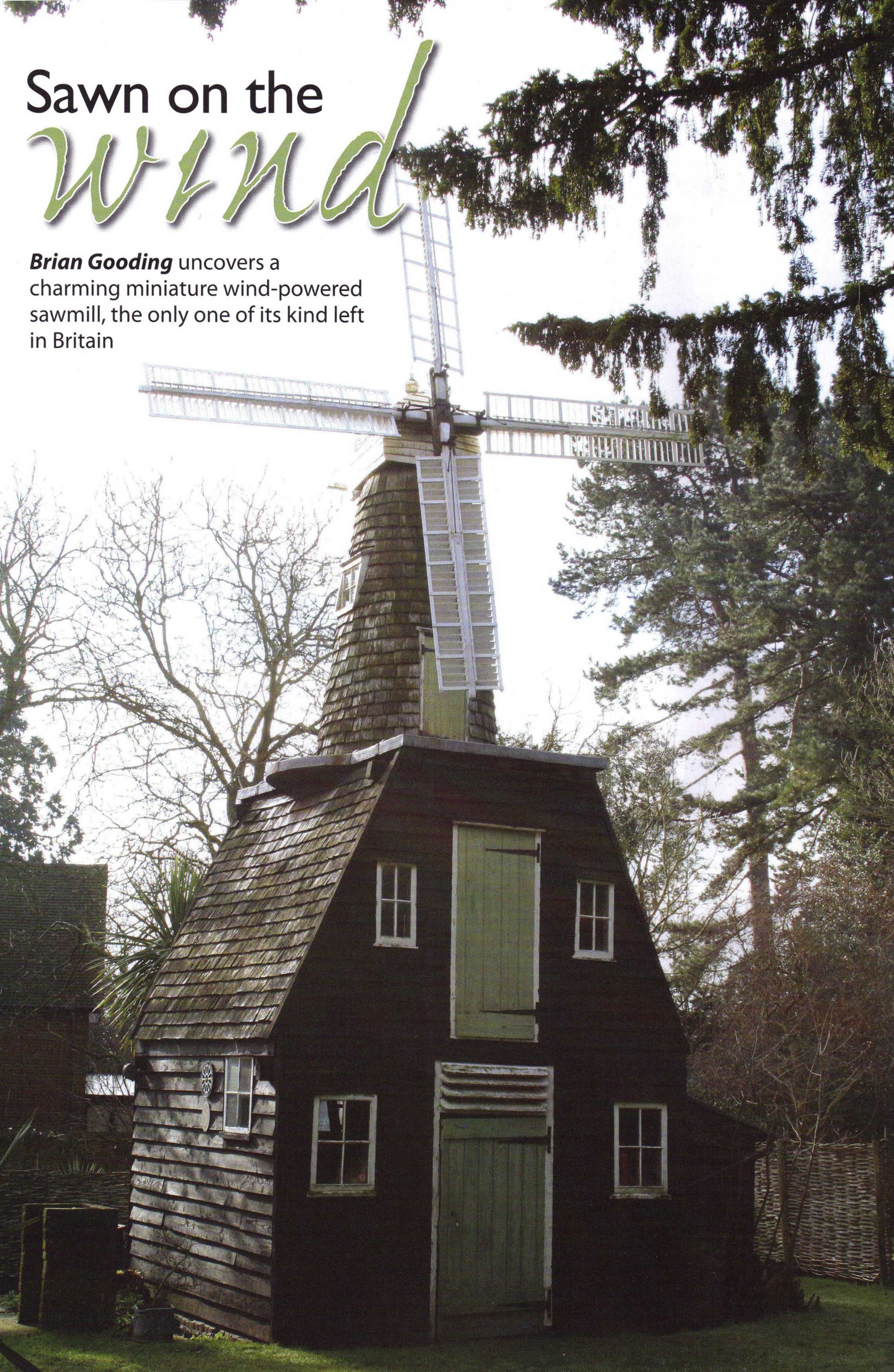


Sawn on the *wind*

Brian Gooding uncovers a charming miniature wind-powered sawmill, the only one of its kind left in Britain



Tucked away down a quiet lane in the pretty Surrey village of Buckland, just off the busy A25 Reigate to Dorking road, is an amazing relic from the local estate's past. Measuring only 12ft square and 38ft high, Buckland Windmill is a diminutive specimen of the breed but is nevertheless unique as the only known survivor. So why is it so special? Because this is no ordinary grinding mill but a wind-powered sawmill. Not many were ever built in Britain, and this is the only one left. Indeed, if it hadn't been for the foresight of the current owner of the adjacent house, Duncan Ferns and his family, this too might have disappeared into oblivion.

Buckland is a village of some 600 people and can trace its roots back to the Domesday Book. The Buckland Estate was sold in 1653 to George Browne and the current owner, Adrian Sanders, can trace his family back to George Browne; the estate has been in the same family for over 350 years and still owns over half the parish. The house in whose garden the windmill stands was built in 1713 and is timber-framed and Grade II listed. It was owned by the estate until 1924 when it was sold to the then tenant, Francis Sanders.

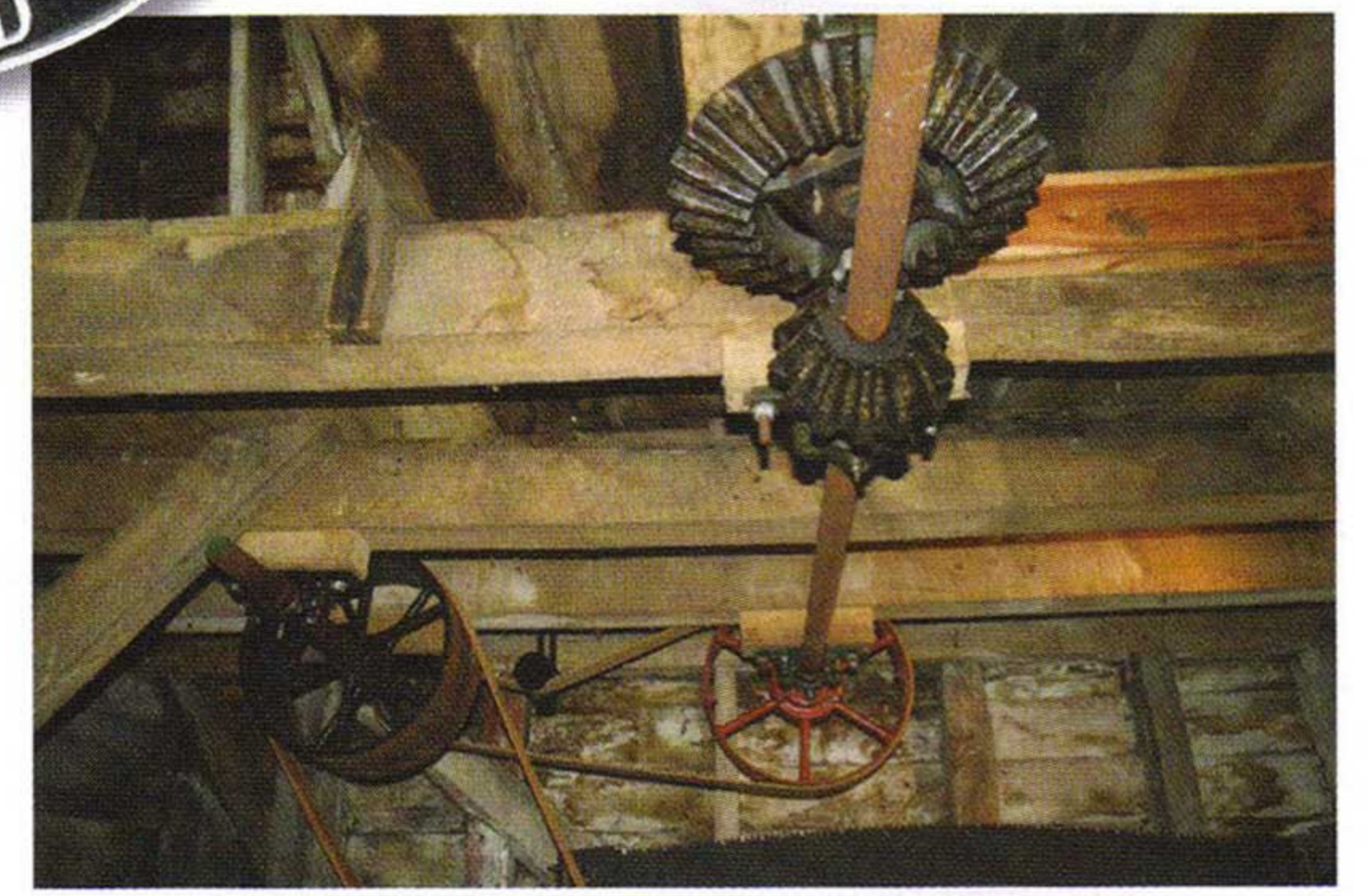
The Sanders family were first recorded as tenants in the 1841 census and five generations occupied the house until 1985. The first four were estate carpenters and it is believed the windmill was erected in the 1860s or early 1870s.

When Duncan Ferns purchased the house, in 1994, it came with a "coal and wood store", complete with coal, which was mostly hidden by a 120 year old yew tree whose trunk was only a foot from the building. He discovered many parts of the mill stored in the building and in good condition. At first he did not know whether to demolish the shed or rebuild the mill, so he contacted the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings' (SPAB) Mills Section, which sent down a couple of experts who were amazed at what they saw, having no previous knowledge of its existence! However, because of the condition of the parts, it is unclear whether the mill ever worked. Duncan managed to get the mill Grade II listed to both protect it and to make it easier to obtain restoration grants.

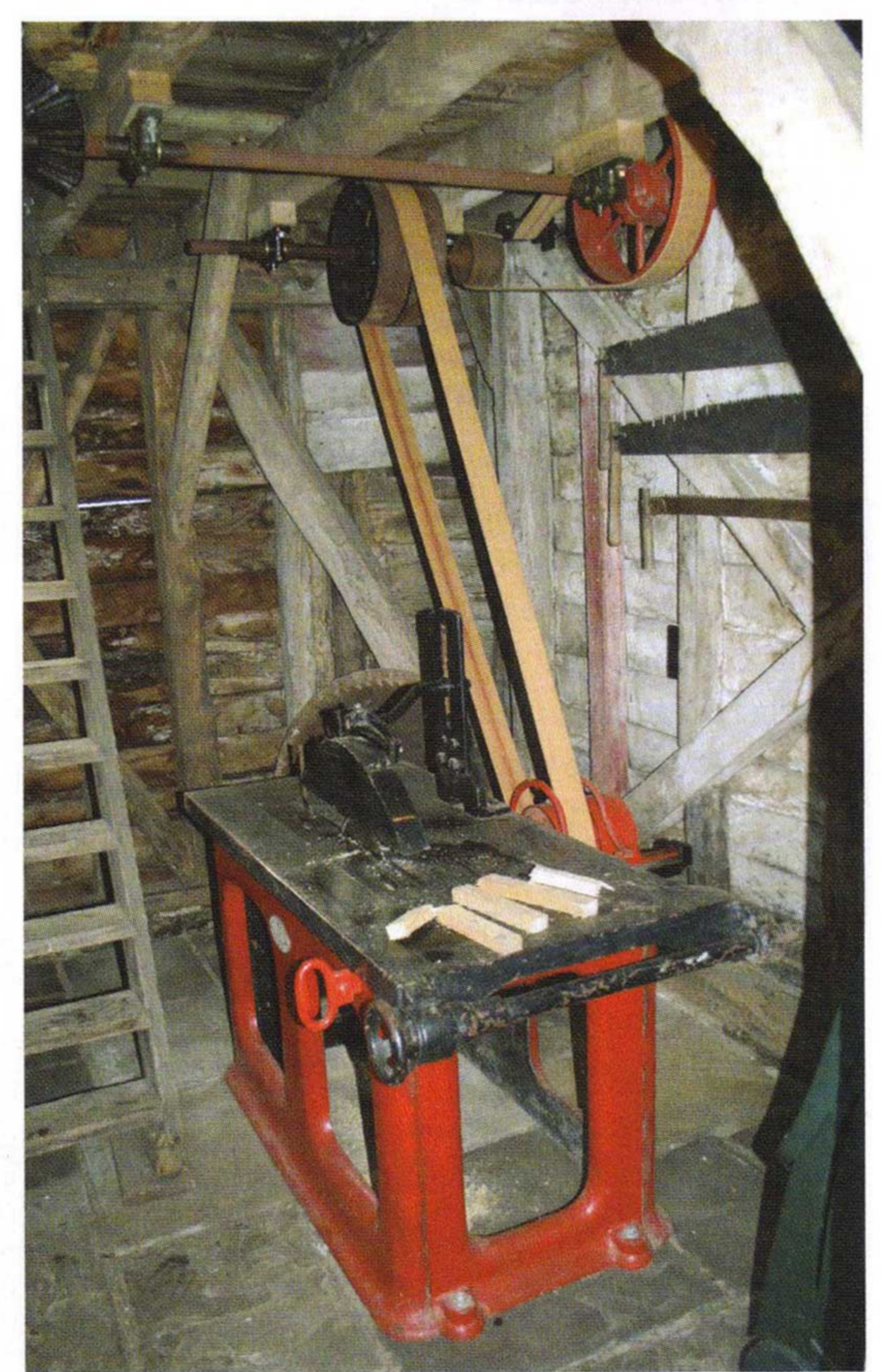
OPPOSITE - Buckland Windmill on a cold but bright February day. The sawbench is on the ground floor.

RIGHT - Looking up into the tower showing the windshaft and the vertical shaft that takes the drive to the sawbench.

In 2004, Buckland Windmill was given an award for its restoration by the Surrey Industrial History Group.



RIGHT - The bottom of the vertical shaft drives line shafting through bevel gears.



RIGHT - Looking through the door at the sawbench, a replacement for the original which is long gone.

BELOW - Duncan Ferns demonstrating the sawbench.





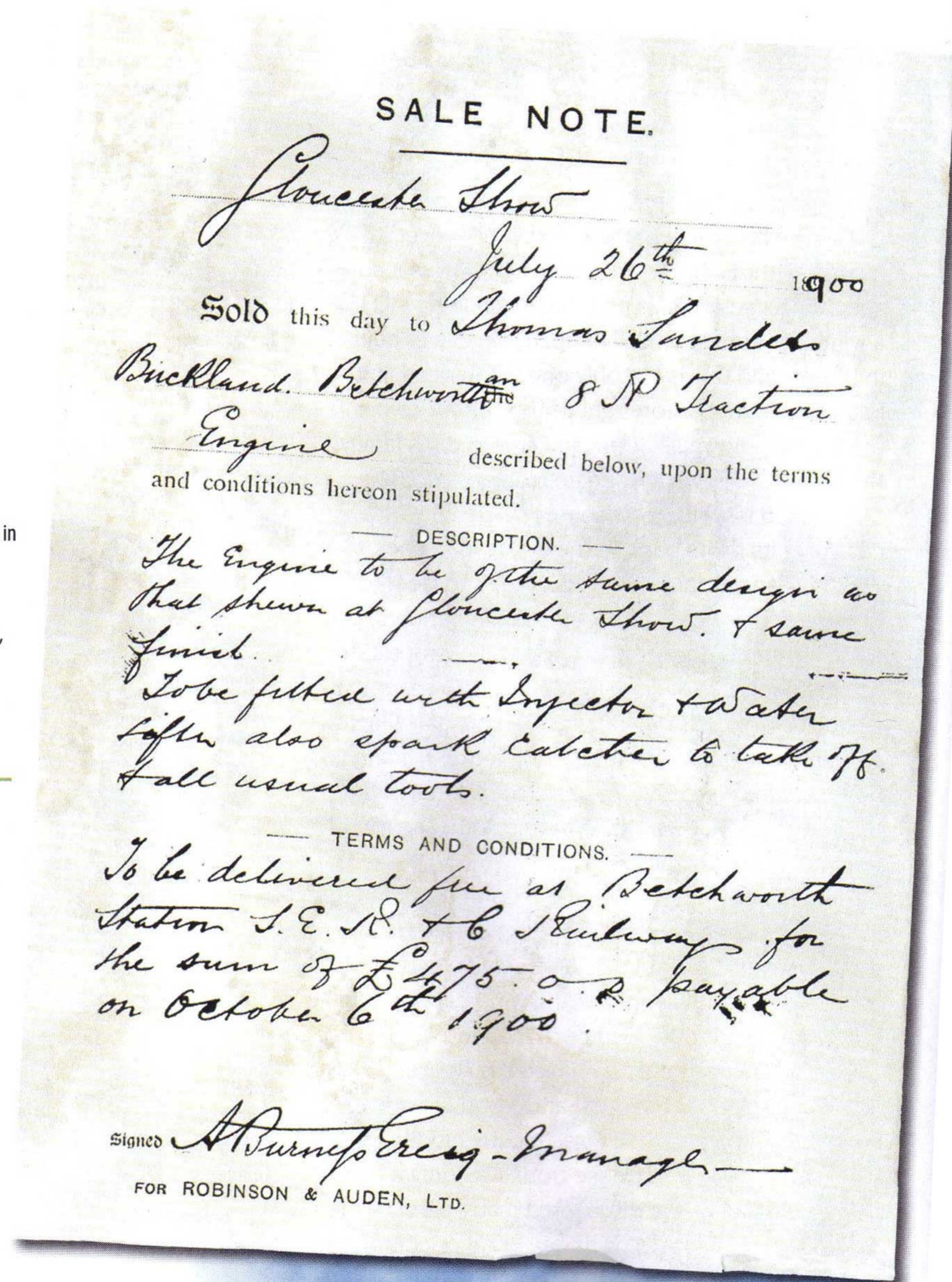
ABOVE - The sawmill also had a Robinson & Auden portable, No. 1038 of 1893, now in Germany. *Courtesy Duncan Ferns*

The sale note, dated 26th July 1900, for Robinson & Auden traction engine No. 1389, "to be delivered to Betchworth Station for the sum of £475." By the time it arrived, the firm had changed its name to the Wantage Engineering Co. Ltd. *Courtesy Duncan Ferns*

Within the grounds of the house, an outdoor commercial steam sawmill worked from 1892 to 1950, Francis Sanders being described as a 'Steam Sawyer'. Power for the sawbench was provided by a rare beast – Wantage traction engine No. 1389, known today as *Constance*, and one of only two of the make to survive. The engine was purchased in 1900 for £475, being delivered by rail to Betchworth Station. Prior to this, records show that another engine was owned by the Sanders, an 1893 Robinson & Auden portable, No. 1038, now residing in a museum in Germany. Clearly the Sanders family was satisfied with the products of Robinson & Auden as both engines came from this company, which became the Wantage Engineering Co. Ltd in 1900. Today the woodyard, once to the rear of the house, has been built on and there is no evidence of its existence. It is lucky that both engines survive.

The mill building is of wooden construction and stands on a shallow brick base – two courses only. The two storey building has a flat roof from which rises a two section tower, 9ft high, with a 3ft cap that contains the windshaft. The shuttered sails are each 9ft long.

Restoration began in 1995 when an architect with mill restoration experience, Howard Jones, produced drawings that pieced the jigsaw together. First, rotten timbers were replaced, a rebuilt tower was made and other work carried out. From 1999, a new working cap frame was made which involved casting cogs and fittings and refitting the sails. Dorothea Restorations was involved in these activities. From 2003 onwards, work and adjustments were completed, including finding and installing a cast iron sawbench (found only a few miles away) and a small



SALE NOTE.
Gloucester Show
 July 26th 1900
 Sold this day to *Thomas Sanders*
Buckland, Betchworth & P Traction
 Engine described below, upon the terms
 and conditions hereon stipulated.

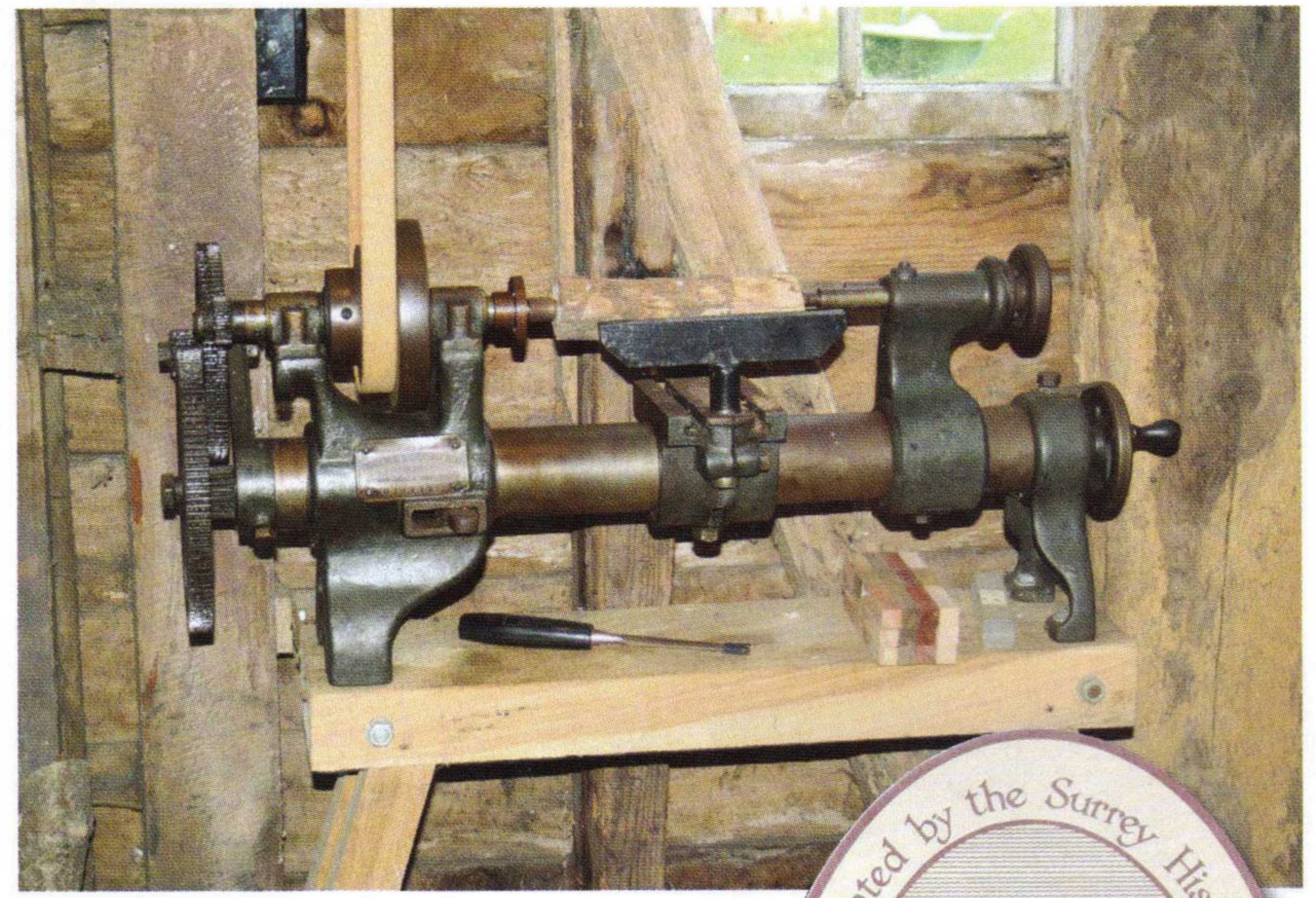
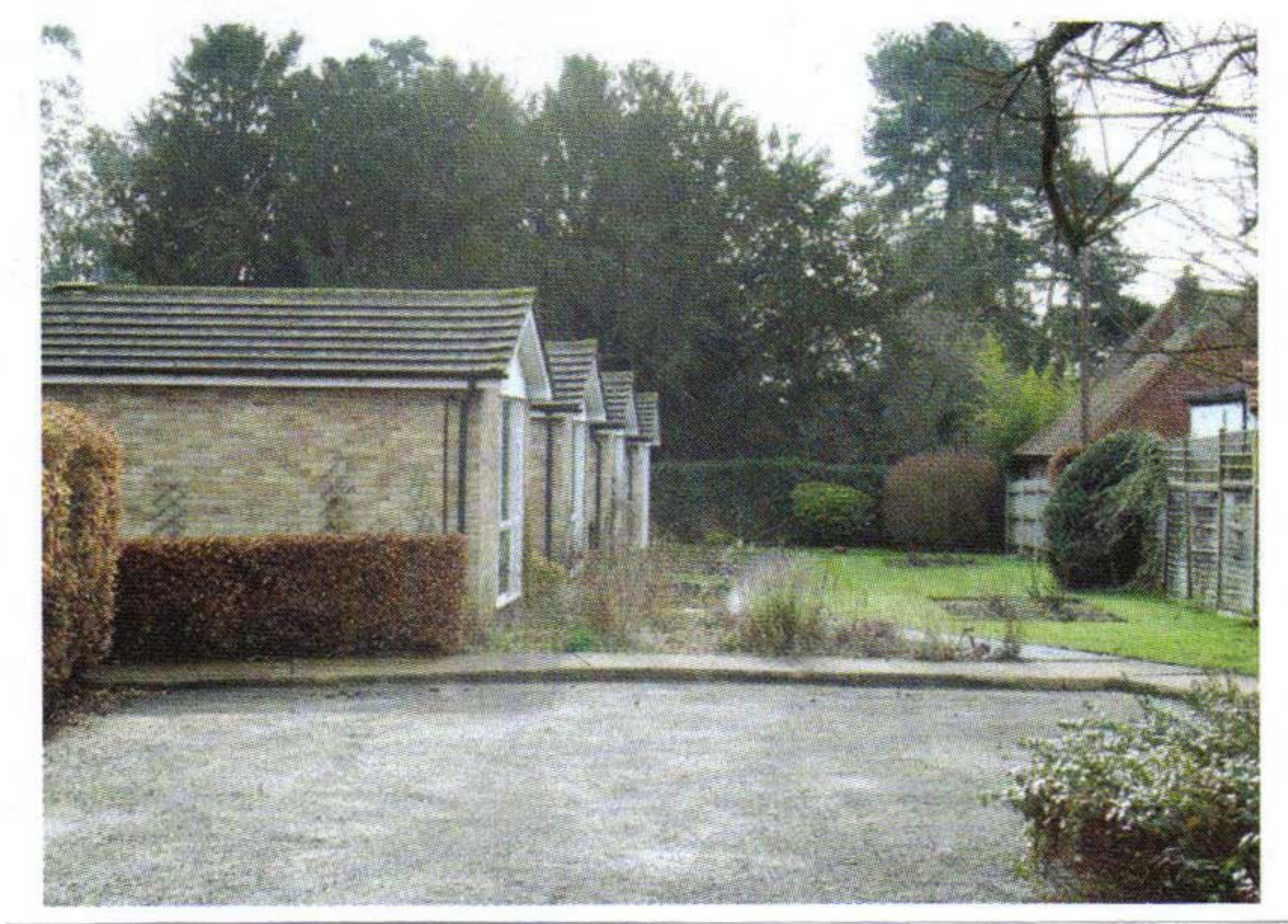
DESCRIPTION.
 The engine to be of the same design as
 that shown at Gloucester Show. & same
 finish.
 To be fitted with Injector & Water
 lifter also spark Catcher to take off
 Fall usual tools.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS.
 To be delivered free at Betchworth
 Station S.E. R. & C. Railway for
 the sum of £475. 0/0 payable
 on October 6th 1900.

Signed *A Burns Esq - Manager*
 FOR ROBINSON & AUDEN, LTD.

lathe, and the installation of an electric motor for demonstration purposes. (Although this can drive the lineshafting and bench, it is too slow to be useful for sawing.) The restored mill has won two awards, one in 2004 from the Surrey Industrial History Group, the other from the Surrey Historic Buildings Trust.

Buckland Windmill is an interesting relic and a classic example of Victorian ingenuity even though there is no evidence that it ever actually worked in anger. However, others of the 15 to 20 small wind-powered sawmills around the country did; sadly, probably because of their fairly lightweight wooden construction, no other survives. Buckland truly is unique. For more, visit: www.bucklandsurrey.net. Duncan Ferns is happy to show visitors around but only by appointment please.



ABOVE - This little lathe was built not many miles away by Drummond Brothers of Guildford.

LEFT - This row of cottages in the village has been built on the old estate woodyard. The windmill is beyond the trees.



Another award, this time in 2003, was made by the Surrey Historic Buildings Trust.



The rear of the windmill, showing the fantail and the wooden shingles that keep the weather out of the tower.