

My great uncle was George Foster, miller of North Leverton Windmill, Nottinghamshire, he did his millwright apprenticeship with Longbottoms of Tuxford before the Great War.

His indentures are on display within nearby Bassetlaw museum, Retford and make very interesting reading from what I can recall, forbidding him from frequenting ale houses, gambling etc and also having to attend church on Sundays.

He instilled my interest in Mills when I worked with him as a child, later in life I returned to help maintain and mill at North Leverton, then got involved with Bromham watermill, Bedford and finally 30 years involvement with returning to full working order Stotfold watermill in Bedfordshire.

So his enthusiasm and his training paid dividends to the future of milling by being passed on.

His father had to pay Longbottoms for his millwright training which was I believe 5 years then 2 years as a journeyman, George was a very early recipient of an award by Rex Wailes on behalf of the SPAB for his work in keeping the only one of two windmills running at that time in 1954, this was due to his training as he made new sails for the mill and added an oat roller as well as maintaining the Mill in full working order.

He at first refused the award on the grounds that he was only doing his job as it was a subscription mill but he had to find other work to be able to support his family.

He was persuaded to receive the award by his wife who said if he didn't do so then she would shame him by receiving it in his place.

Mr Grey a local farmer who sat alongside his bed on the windy night when George died, he told me that he was peaceful laying there when he suddenly arose in the early hours and went to the window of the cottage to look at the mill then returned to his bed and promptly died satisfied that the mill was not being tail-winded by the storm, such was his devotion to the mill.

The photo is in your archive.

Strange how history repeats itself as I was in the same position in 2010, having also done a 6 year engineering apprenticeship in the early 60's.

Stotfold mill had received the SPAB award in 2006, only the 5th to be awarded to a watermill at that time.

Yours Ron Roper