

SHERBORNE STEAM AND WATERWHEEL CENTRE



Open days 2025

Sunday March 16

Sunday April 27

Sunday May 11

Sunday June 8

Sunday July 20

Sat & Sunday August 9 & 10

Sat & Sunday September 6 & 7

Sunday September 14

Non steaming

Sunday October 19

Trustees

Paul Belliss (Chairman)

Nigel Bartram (Vice Chairman)

John Thompson (Treasurer)

David Wilkins (Secretary)

Geoff Ward

The programme of opening for this year has now been fixed and the dates are shown opposite. As always volunteers are needed to make it all run smoothly. If you would like to volunteer please let one of the Trustees know.

During the closed season most maintenance and improvement jobs were carried out by Mike Briggs and Chris Turner - we currently have very few volunteers able to do the multitude of jobs that arise.

Significant improvements have been implemented in the Display Centre and Kitchen / Café.

Wet weather has been almost continuous which it was feared would have led to further deterioration of the waterwheel pump house due to water ingress. Again, work done by Mike and Chris seems to have reduced the problem but not fully resolved it as yet.

After much effort invested by Chris Turner assisted by Nigel Bartram the new touch screen will be ready for the first Open day.

Preliminary work has commenced on new displays for the pumphouse which are an outstanding part of the S106 Interpretation Project Scope. Giles Harvey has agreed to lead development of the displays. Work has been somewhat on the back burner due to uncertainty relating to water ingress. Repairs to the internal plastering are necessary before new displays could be installed.

Find us on our website or on Facebook

<https://www.sswc.co.uk>



Charity No 1099153

Sturminster Newton Mill

Our chairman Paul and former chairman Geoff Ward recently paid a visit and were impressed by the number of visitors. They have some 4 - 5,000 visitors per year from all over with an entry charge of £5 for adults. The mill is open to the public on 4 days a week for 6 months of the year.



Although it is thought there may have been a mill on this site since Saxon times, the first record is found in the Domesday book. The present building has North and South wings. The South wing was last rebuilt c1650 whilst the North wing which was originally a separate fulling mill dates from 1611. This was demolished in the 18th C and rebuilt in brick. The buildings remained thatched until 1862 when stone tiles were put in place to reduce the fire risk.

Until the turn of the 20th century the mill was powered by two undershot wheels with a combined output of 12 horsepower. In 1904 the mill was upgraded, and the wheels were replaced by a turbine which produced an output of 24 horsepower. This enables extra tasks to be performed such as rolling and crushing for animal feed.

The mill carried on until 1970 after which it was boarded up but it was rescued by the formation of a Mill society. This allowed the mill to be opened to the public.

The mill is well worth a visit. It is a fully working and a wonderful piece of industrial archaeology. The machinery runs every day the Mill is open and every second weekend in the month they produce flour for sale in the shop. However, it is not currently open to visitors due to flooding but is due to reopen on 29 March subject to further flooding, which may hamper preparations.

Worth a visit – Burcott Water Mill, near Wells in Somerset

Barely two miles west of Wells, on the edge of Wookey village and opposite the Burcott Inn is Burcott Mill - one of only 2 working water powered grain mills remaining in Somerset. In the day there would have been hundreds of such mills in most counties.

The mill is powered by an overshot waterwheel fed from the River Axe. A 12 foot diameter metal waterwheel and mill machinery was made by Alfred Bodley of Exeter in 1864 (Graces Guide).



Wheat and spelt flour milled at Burcott and bread made



from the flour can be purchased at the mill.

Dorset Waterwheels

There is a little-known waterwheel at Stalbridge Park. It is now derelict but was originally a farm wheel.



Detail of water wheel shaft and spokes, Park Farm Mill, Stalbridge

The wheel was fed from a spring and was probably used for general farm work.



Part of the drive mechanism, Park Farm Mill, Stalbridge

Whilst the wheel is in a building on private land it may be possible to arrange a visit later in the year especially because the Dorset Diggers Archaeological Group are undertaking an on-going excavation very close by and are uncovering evidence of medieval high status buildings.

Aquifers

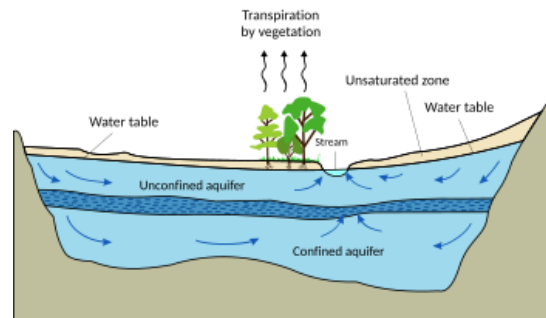
What are they and why do they matter to us.





Sherborne gets its water from an aquifer which can be considered to be like an underground lake although in fact it is not a lake but probably saturated limestone. Bore holes allow pumps to pump the water out.

An aquifer is characterised by being an underground layer of water-bearing material,

consisting of permeable or fractured rock, or of unconsolidated materials (gravel, sand, or silt). Aquifers are quite common as a source for water.

How do they form? Rain water trickles down from the surface through cracks and over a long process of time the cracks widen and interconnect to form a large saturated area.



-  High hydraulic-conductivity aquifer
-  Low hydraulic-conductivity confining unit
-  Very low hydraulic-conductivity bedrock
-  Direction of ground-water flow

The aquifer needs to be carefully managed. If too much water is extracted the ground above the aquifer may become unstable resulting in a collapse. Monitoring is also required to ensure that toxic chemicals and other pollution does not filter down although the action of layers above the aquifer acts as a primary filter.

There are many different types of aquifers which have different characteristics and the study of these is called hydrogeology.

Aquifers occur from near-surface to deeper than 9,000 metres (30,000 ft). Those closer to the surface are not only more likely to be used for water supply and irrigation but are also more likely to be replenished by local rainfall. In our case the current two bore holes used by Wessex water are 53 m (175 ft) and can deliver up to 700,000 gallons per day.

So how large is our aquifer? We don't know but doubtless Wessex Water has studied this but we are not party to the information.

South Wales and West of England Regional Industrial Archaeological Conference

The SWWERIAC 2025 for short is a conference to be held on the 26th April 2025 at Walton Village Hall (near Street). It is day event and looks to have a number of interesting talks as well as some visits. Full details and booking forms can be found at www.sias.me.uk

Volunteers

As always if you know of anyone who would enjoy volunteering with us please don't hesitate to encourage them. They don't have to be steam buffs as there are many tasks needed to keep the Centre running and clean shoes people are very welcome.