

## GSIA Grant: Restoration of Gunns Mill

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April 2024

GSIA has followed the story of Gunns Mill for many years, from earlier times when the entire structure looked to be at significant risk, through more recent repairs and restoration. Several members have delved into aspects of its history – for instance, in GSIA Journals: *Gunns Mill as a Paper Mill* by F. J. T. Harris (1974), and *Gunn's Mills, Abenhall* by Brian Cave (1981).

Dating from around 1682, Gunns Mill has long been acknowledged as an industrial site of national importance, considered to be the best-preserved charcoal blast furnace in Britain. The Forest of Dean Buildings Preservation Trust (FoDBPT) took ownership of the mill in 2013 and has since undertaken numerous repairs with support and funding from Historic England. A grant of £84,000 in 2020 was used to repair the waterwheel pit, and in 2022, a further grant of £95,000 enabled stabilisation works to be completed successfully. More recently, Historic England awarded a grant of £163,812 for the repair of the bridge house, originally used to protect charcoal and iron ore.

Despite all the work so far undertaken, FoDBPT still needs more money to continue its sterling efforts to ensure the mill's future. One of GSIA's objectives enshrined in our constitution is:

*To support the rescue, restoration, preservation, and conservation of industrial archaeological sites within the county.*

As part of this, we are pleased to announce that GSIA is providing a grant of £5000 towards the project. Our grant will contribute towards safeguarding the future of this fascinating and important site, helping ensure its long-term survival.



**Left:** A drone shot from the day that the old cladding was removed and before the new netting was installed. The mill has never been seen naked like this before. 25 years ago, before the scaffolding went up, the roof was obscured by the slates (courtesy FoDBPT).

**Right:** A roof truss being prepared to be jacked up to its original position. The wall on which it was seated has been rebuilt to the vertical and a wall plate is being added as bearing for the trusses (courtesy FoDBPT).



*The present arrangement - new banners in place and the trusses and rafters visible behind the netting.*



*The Mill before recent restoration began*



*Gunns Mill c1900*

Sinclair Johnston, Chairman of the FoDBPT, has commented on GSIA's grant:

*I hope this helps to explain how, by way of your generous grant, the GSIA is making its contribution to the recovery of this unique historic element of Industrial Archaeology.*