

In brief

Brush up your French speaking

CANTERBURY: You can improve your French speaking skills by taking a course at The Beaney up until October 18.

French intermediate is for students who have a basic knowledge of the language (equivalent to 100 hours of study) and want to improve and consolidate the skills acquired to help them cope with a variety of social situations.

The course costs £56 and booking is essential as places are limited. Call 0845 606 5606 to reserve your place.

Dark age light

CANTERBURY: You can learn about the Anglo-Saxon age at The Beaney in the city throughout next month.

On October 5, 12, 19 between 2.30pm and 4.30pm, you can have the chance to look at copies of illuminated manuscripts, primary documents, poetry, prose and archaeological finds over a course of five sessions, you will explore the world of the so-called Dark Ages.

The cost is £64 and booking is essential as places are limited. Call 0845 606 5606 to book your spot.

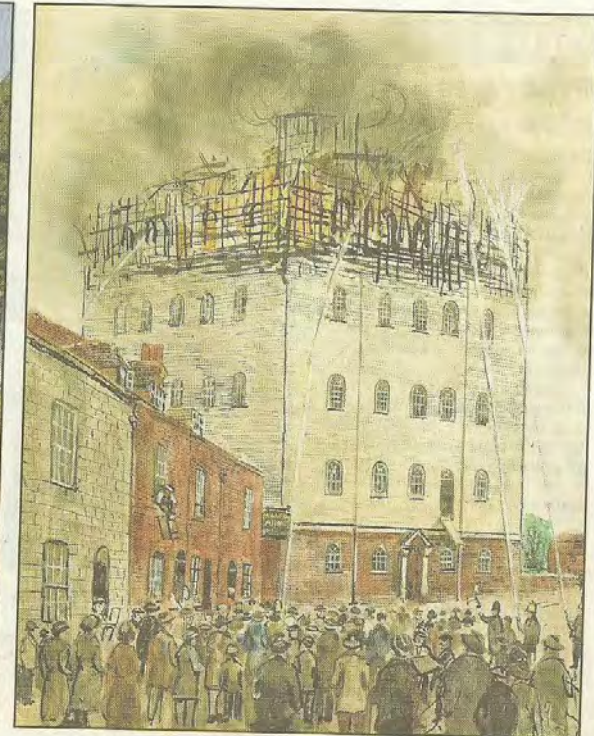


For more fascinating tales from the city's past visit canterburytimes.co.uk

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TODAY: Two pillars and a spindle can be seen on the site of Abbot's Mill before it was destroyed by fire



IMPRESSION: Local artist Toby Nash painted this picture of the fire

Mill left marks which can be seen on the river today

TIMES

Travel

UNDISCOVERED ITALY

Way we were



David Lewis Canterbury Historical and Archaeological Society





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...can be seen on the river today

TIMES

Travel

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Way we were

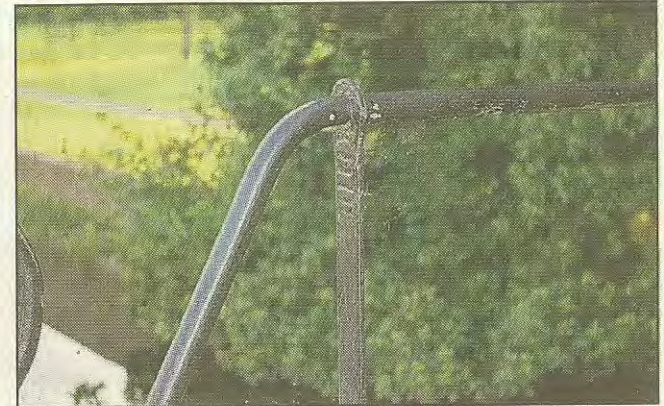


David Lewis
Canterbury
Historical and
Archaeological
Society

EIGHTY years ago this month a massive fire reduced the second largest building in the city to rubble. The date was October 17, 1933, and the building was the 100 feet high six-storey Abbot's Mill, which had stood by Radigund bridge facing the Miller's Arms for more than 140 years. The only larger building was of course the cathedral. The story of the mill fire has been told many times but this week we'll concentrate on just four minor features that have survived but which you may have overlooked when walking through to the Marlowe Theatre or enjoying your picnic on the grass.

First, look for the water height stone placed in the bank near the Miller's Arms. These height stones made sure that no city mill – there were as many as eight operating mills across the city's waterways over the centuries – was allowed to take too much or too little water in a way that would disadvantage the neighbouring mills.

See if you can make out the text carved on the horizontal and vertical sides of the stone. This Abbot's Mill stone is still in use with an equivalent modern role. Serco staff now operate the weir paddles on behalf of the city council. If river levels fall below this stone, those running tourist boat trips find their craft scrape on the bottom of the water channel, and ask for reduced water flows through the sluices to keep the levels up. If levels rise above the stone, Environment Agency staff, who are concerned about threats of flooding, ask for an increase in the flow of water through the weir. Secondly, look for the small horizontal stones set in



JUST THE SHAPE: Blacksmith's fullering marks seen on the weir



PRECISE: The head of the water markers, just right for all river users

one of the mill water races. These apparently offer resting places for otters making their way up stream. To my knowledge, these otters have not yet turned up on this city stretch of the river, but when they do there will be resting places ready for them!

The adjacent vertical slats make it easier for fish migrating up river. Thirdly, look for the distinctive horizontal marks which have been beaten into the metal of the weir upright struts. These are known as 'fullering' marks, made by the blacksmith who fitted them 184 years ago.

Fullering involved beating hot metal with a shaped hammer to

spread it and get it just the right length. How can we be so precise about the age? Look for the fourth feature, a date plaque of 1829 on the side of the weir. We know the mill was erected in 1792, so the existing sluice gates must have been renewed when they were less than 40 years old.

For more on this fascinating site, including the involvement of John Smeaton (of Eddystone lighthouse fame) and James Simmons (who has a Blue plaque at Eastbridge), and also the disputed role of local artist Sidney Cooper, go to the CHAS web site - www.canterbury-archaeology.org.uk/