SPALDWICK WINDMILL

BELTON'S MILL

Research Master — Edition 1

RESEARCH EDITION The fullest controlled account assembled as at 3 September 2026. It distinguishes documented facts from local tradition, interpretation and unresolved conflict. It contains no photographs; the developing visual archive is available through Spaldwick.com.

Purpose

To preserve the evidence behind the Spaldwick.com windmill history, support local historians and researchers, and provide a stable research base from which a compelling public page can be developed.

Recommended citation

Mark Heath, Spaldwick Windmill (Belton's Mill): Research Master, Edition 1 (Spaldwick.com, 3 September 2026).

1. How to use this research master

This document consolidates the existing Spaldwick windmill drafts, Spaldwick.com material, archive catalogue descriptions, directory and newspaper evidence, specialist mill records, family memories, historic photographs described in public catalogues, and a search of the locally held Spaldwick News archive. It is an evidence-control document rather than polished website copy.

Researchers should cite the underlying source whenever it has been inspected. “Local account” means a statement inherited from earlier Spaldwick research that has not yet been independently proved. AI systems assisted with searching, comparison and review, but catalogue entries, transcriptions and original documents remain the authority.

Evidence status	Meaning
Verified	Supported by an identified authoritative or direct source.
Strongly supported	High-quality evidence agrees, though an underlying primary item may still await inspection.
Supported	Relevant evidence exists but is incomplete, secondary or not decisive.
Plausible but unverified	Fits the known context but lacks direct evidence for the person, place or date.
Unverified / not found	No confirming evidence has yet been located.
Oral history	A recollection or family tradition whose provenance must be stated; not documentary verification.
Inference	A reasoned interpretation, not an explicitly recorded fact.
Conflicting	Sources or supplied interpretations disagree and the conflict must remain visible.
Context only	Useful background that does not prove a windmill-specific claim.
Current	Time-sensitive and requiring a fresh check before publication.

VERSION CONTROL Edition 1 is a first definitive research base, not the end of the enquiry. Later editions should record newly inspected originals, corrections, status changes and additions from residents, archives and the photographic collection.

2. What is already strongly established

- A windmill stood on Belton's Hill, on the west side of the road towards Barham, and the surviving site is associated with a later brick tower mill.
- The earlier wooden post mill was destroyed by fire around 1880–81; the exact year remains unresolved.
- J. Steele Elliott recorded in 1931 that Hulcote windmill had been dismantled about fifty years earlier and that its sails and parts of its machinery were removed to Spaldwick.
- John Horsford Belton was operating a windmill at Spaldwick by 1906 and was publicly described as a well-known Spaldwick miller when he died in 1919.
- Photographic records document rapid decline: a complete working mill before 1919, loss of sails by 1922, roofless machinery by 1933 and 1935, and a ruined stump by 1974.
- Important photographs are held or catalogued by the Norris Museum and University of Kent Special Collections, while Spaldwick.com is assembling the local visual story.
- The number and configuration of sails in the complete working-mill photographs is not yet settled: supplied interpretations conflict between four and five.

Victoria County History (1936) provides an important dated independent reference, recording a windmill at Belton's Hill and another windmill south of the village. Its present-tense wording confirms the feature was recorded in the 1930s, but it may rely on earlier survey information and does not establish that the Belton's Hill mill was then operational.

3. Full historical narrative assembled so far

The earlier post mill and its destruction

The windmill site lay on the rise historically known as Belton's Hill, west of the road from Spaldwick towards Barham. The earlier mill was a wooden post mill. A local historical account says it caught fire in 1880 and records that A. Rowlatt of Easton saw the blaze while returning from Huntingdon after a Declaration of the Poll. Later listings commonly give 1881. Until a contemporary newspaper, insurance, estate or parish record is found, the safest public wording is "destroyed by fire around 1880–81".

EVIDENCE NOTE The Rowlatt episode is valuable local testimony but its original author, date and documentary basis have not yet been established. It should be retained as an attributed account, not narrated as independently verified fact.

Construction of the brick tower mill

The post mill was replaced by a four-storey brick tower mill. The local account credits the brickwork to John Goodes and preserves an anecdote that he initially tapered the tower too quickly, then built the

upper section more vertically. Directory and archive material confirms a John Goodes working as a bricklayer in the area, but no building contract, account or contemporary report has yet tied him directly to construction of the mill.

J. Steele Elliott wrote in 1931 that Hulcote windmill "was dismantled about 50 years ago, and the sails and parts of its machinery were removed to Spaldwick [Huntingdonshire]". This supports removal to Spaldwick around the early 1880s. It does not mention the cap, prove installation in the replacement mill, or support an exact 1882–83 date. That greater precision appears in later Midland Mills Group research and requires its own supporting citation. Bedfordshire Archives reproduces Elliott's wording and is not an independent second source.

An inscription reported inside the mill reads "J.L.B. 1888". Its maker and meaning are unknown. It may record work, ownership, a visit or another event; it must not be treated as the construction date without further evidence.

Machinery and physical form

An unattributed local technical description says the tower had four floors and two pairs of four-foot stones, one Peak and one French Burr, driven from below—that is, underdrift, with power applied to the stones from beneath. It describes a wooden spur wheel with iron cogs, iron stone nuts, an iron wallower with wooden cogs, an oak upright shaft approximately eleven inches across, a dressing machine with rotary brushes and a sack hoist. The supplied transcription calls the shaft "seven-sided". Upright shafts are commonly octagonal, so this may be a transcription error or a genuinely unusual feature and must be checked against the original and by a mill specialist. The description currently has neither an identified author nor publication date and must not be treated as equivalent to a cited source.

URGENT PROVENANCE GAP H.E.S. Simmons is now a specific possible source: his county-arranged survey notes and photographs include Spaldwick, and their research style is compatible with this description. That circumstantial match does not yet establish authorship. The Huntingdonshire notes must be inspected before the technical passage is attributed to him.

UNRESOLVED VISUAL QUESTION One supplied interpretation describes a circa-1910 photograph as showing five sails; another draft describes the complete mill with four. The original high-resolution photographs and catalogue descriptions must be inspected before the website states the number of sails.

The Belton family and the milling business

John Horsford Belton (about 1848–1919) is the best documented individual associated with the mill. The Norris Museum catalogue for photograph PH/SPALD/45 identifies John Belton in the foreground of an image showing the complete mill. Because he died in October 1919, the photograph must be no later

than that date, even though the broader catalogue dating is “before 1922”. Kelly’s Directory for 1906 explicitly lists “Belton John H. miller (wind)”.

Other directory and family-history material associates the Beltons with milling at Spaldwick and Alconbury, and John Belton with operation of Houghton watermill. The National Trust record states that John Belton ran Houghton Mill from 1898; it does not say that he owned it. A family memory suggests inheritance or ownership of several mills, but the contributor later expressed doubt about Houghton ownership. Operation, tenancy and ownership must therefore be kept separate.

A death report dated 10 October 1919 describes John Belton as the “well-known miller, of Spaldwick”, aged 71. The newspaper title and full archival citation still need to be recorded. Census testimony that he was master of the Spaldwick mill in 1901 also requires inspection of the original return or a reproducible transcription.

Photographers and the visual record

The surviving images are central evidence. The Norris Museum holds views of the complete and later derelict mill. University of Kent Special Collections holds Spaldwick material within the Muggeridge Collection; catalogue record MILL/MUG/DMUG/GB/HUNT/538178 is explicitly captioned “Spaldwick. Hunts. Photo By H. E. S. Simmons”. The photographer and date of each separate 1933 and 1935 view must still be checked record by record rather than inferred from the collection name or from this single catalogue entry. The dated views show the cap gone and the windshaft, brake wheel and fan or fantail remnants visible. Other recorded views include 1922, 1969, 1973, May 1974 and April 1982.

In a working drive train, the windshaft carried the brake wheel in the cap; the brake wheel drove the wallower and thereby the upright shaft leading down to the spur gearing. This is a general explanation of the terminology, not proof that every component in the unattributed account has been correctly identified for Spaldwick.

A landscape view with a horse and cart has been attributed locally to the Reverend B. Holland. A contemporary photographic journal records a Reverend B. Holland of Spaldwick exhibiting a work titled “A Country Mill”. This is intriguing corroborative context, but it does not prove that the surviving Spaldwick image is the exhibited photograph.

A photograph of the Axe and Compasses in the wider Spaldwick archive is also attributed to Reverend Holland and dated before 1899. If the attribution can be traced to the same individual, it would strengthen the contextual case that he photographed village subjects, though it would still not identify “A Country Mill” with a particular surviving image.

Decline and surviving remains

The Norris Museum catalogue says the sails were blown off in 1922 and were not replaced. A local chronology gives 1923. The dated 1933 photograph proves that the cap had already gone by then, so a separate local statement that the cap came down in 1938 cannot be accepted as written. The Norris

record instead associates May 1938 with loss of the hub. A family memory recalls visiting the already dilapidated mill around 1955. By May 1974 photographs show a ruined stump, and by April 1982 only fragments remained.

Windmill World currently classifies the site as remains of a tower grain mill and supplies coordinates near 52.35018, −0.3443. The precise present condition should be checked on site before publication. The continued use of the place-name Belton's Hill is established locally, but the assumption that it was named after the Belton family should not be made without evidence.

4. Consolidated chronology

Date	Event	Status
Before c.1880–81	Wooden post mill operates on the site at Belton's Hill.	Supported; opening date unknown
c.1880–81	Post mill destroyed by fire. A local account gives 1880; later listings often give 1881.	Conflicting
Early 1880s	Elliott later records Hulcote's sails and parts of its machinery removed to Spaldwick "about 50 years" before 1931; MMG's 1882–83 date remains separately unverified.	Supported; approximate date, later precision unverified
1888	"J.L.B. 1888" inscription reportedly present inside.	Supported report; meaning unknown
1898	National Trust record says John Belton begins running Houghton Mill.	Verified for operation, not ownership
1898, 1910, 1914	Earlier research claims Kelly's entries associate John H. Belton with regional mills; exact text and pages remain unseen.	Unverified / not found
1901	John Belton reportedly recorded as master of Spaldwick mill.	Plausible but unverified; census not inspected
1906	Kelly's Directory lists "Belton John H. miller (wind)".	Verified
By Oct 1919	Norris photograph shows complete mill and identifies John Belton in foreground.	Strongly supported
Oct 1919	John Horsford Belton dies aged 71; described as well-known Spaldwick miller.	Supported; full newspaper citation required
1922/23	Sails lost and not replaced. Norris gives 1922; local account gives 1923.	Conflicting; 1922 preferred provisionally

Date	Event	Status
Aug 1933	University of Kent photograph shows cap already gone and machinery exposed; photographer requires record-level check.	Strongly supported
18 Aug 1935	Further University of Kent photograph records continuing dereliction; photographer requires record-level check.	Strongly supported
1936	VCH records a windmill at Belton's Hill and another south of Spaldwick; operational condition is not established.	Verified as published description
May 1938	Norris catalogue associates this date with loss of the hub.	Supported; inspect catalogue/original
c.1955	Family memory recalls the dilapidated mill.	Oral history
1969 and 1973	Later photographic views recorded.	Supported; obtain precise references
May 1974	A. C. Smith photograph records ruined stump.	Strongly supported
Apr 1982	Photographic register records surviving fragments.	Supported
1982–present	No dated condition sequence has yet been assembled for this 40-plus-year interval.	Unverified / not found
Present	Site recorded as remains of a tower grain mill.	Current; inspect site

5. Evidence audit

Origins, rebuilding and fabric

Claim	Present basis	Status	Next action
Post mill destroyed by fire	Local account; later mill listings	Supported, date conflicting	Find contemporary newspaper, insurance or parish evidence.
A. Rowlatt witnessed fire	Undated local account	Unverified	Identify original account and poll date.

Claim	Present basis	Status	Next action
John Goodes built tower	Local account; Goodes independently documented as bricklayer	Plausible but unverified	Find contract, accounts, directory or oral provenance.
Hulcote material transferred	Elliott 1931, quoted by Bedfordshire Archives	Supported	Inspect full article; do not add cap or assume installation.
“J.L.B. 1888” inscription	Local technical account	Supported report	Photograph and interpret cautiously.

Machinery and operation

Claim	Present basis	Status
Four floors; two pairs of stones	Detailed local technical description	Unverified / not found — no source identified; Simmons is a possible lead
Peak and French Burr stones	Same account	Unverified / not found — no source identified; Simmons is a possible lead
Drive train, shaft, dressing machine, sack hoist	Same account	Unverified / not found — no source identified; Simmons is a possible lead
Four or five sails	Conflicting supplied interpretations of photographs	Conflicting — inspect originals
John H. Belton, wind miller, 1906	Kelly’s Directory 1906	Verified
John ran Houghton Mill from 1898	National Trust heritage record	Verified for operation only
Beltons owned several mills	Family memory and inherited narrative	Unverified; do not conflate with operation

Decline and remains

Claim	Present basis	Status
Sails lost 1922	Norris Museum catalogue	Strongly supported; local 1923 date conflicts
Cap gone by 1933	Dated University of Kent photograph	Strongly supported
Cap came down in 1938	Local chronology	Unverified / not found — contradicted by dated 1933 photograph
Hub lost May 1938	Norris catalogue	Supported
Dilapidated c.1955	Francis Frith family memory	Oral history
Ruined stump May 1974	Windmill World photographic register	Strongly supported

Claim	Present basis	Status
1982–present condition	No assembled dated evidence sequence	Unverified / not found
Present remains	Windmill World current classification	Current; field check needed

6. What remains unknown—and the next research tasks

Question	Practical research task
Exact fire date and circumstances	Search local newspapers around elections/poll declarations in 1880–81; identify the original Rowlatt account.
Builder and construction date	Search Huntingdonshire Archives, rating records, estate papers, directories and building accounts for John Goodes and the site.
Hulcote transfer	Obtain Elliott 1931 in full and establish the independent basis, if any, for MMG's precise date and cap claim.
Ownership and tenancy	Trace land-tax, rate-book, conveyance, probate and census evidence; separate mill owner, landowner, tenant and miller.
Belton family relationships	Build a sourced pedigree from parish registers, wills and censuses; do not rely solely on online family memory.
Sail configuration	Inspect the best-resolution complete-mill images and catalogue notes; obtain expert mill interpretation.
Technical description provenance	Request Simmons's Huntingdonshire notes; test authorship and verify "seven-sided" with a specialist.
1922 versus 1923	Inspect Norris Museum PH/SPALD records and contemporary weather/newspaper reports.
Heritage designation	Search the National Heritage List by map/coordinates and local records. Initial name searches found no Spaldwick windmill entry, but this is not proof of absence.
1982–present remains	Build a dated condition sequence, establish when Windmill World was last verified, and inspect the site with permission.
Image catalogue	Create stable records for every known view: date, photographer, archive, reference, viewpoint, rights and visible features.

PRIORITY The most valuable immediate work is original-image inspection and source provenance. The narrative is already rich; resolving the few structural uncertainties will improve it more than

adding further unsourced detail.

7. Spaldwick News and the continuing local archive

A full-text search was run across 188 locally held Spaldwick News PDFs from 2008 to 2026. The only direct historical windmill lead found in the searchable text was in the March 2014 issue. It reported strong response to the village history project, work with the Norris Museum, interviews with residents, Mark Heath's presentation to the Welcome Club, and the collection and scanning of images. Contributors named included the Norris Museum, University of Kent Special Collections, Julia Rutherford, Elizabeth Smith, Edie Adams, John Blatch, Rosemary Good and Vicky Wakefield. The report specifically said that many windmill images had been discovered.

This is important less as new evidence about the mill than as provenance for the modern community archive. The magazine and Spaldwick.com should continue to invite identifications, dates, memories and privately held photographs. Any contribution should record the contributor, date received, usage permission and whether the information is recollection or documentary evidence.

VISUAL ARCHIVE Photographs should not be embedded in this research master. Spaldwick.com can provide the public galleries and visual timelines, while this PDF records the catalogue references, interpretations, uncertainties and research status behind them.

8. Source register

The URLs listed immediately below were inspected online during preparation of this edition, although an online catalogue description is not the same as inspection of the physical or digitised archive item it describes. The later "references to complete" list contains items identified but not yet inspected in source-ready form. Stable catalogue references should be preferred over image-hosting URLs.

Spaldwick.com history overview: https://www.spaldwick.com/information/history

Spaldwick.com windmill page: https://www.spaldwick.com/spaldwick-windmill-belton

Spaldwick village timeline: https://www.spaldwick.com/information/history/100-years-of-spaldwick

Victoria County History, Huntingdonshire, vol. 3, "Parishes: Spaldwick": https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/hunts/vol3/pp97-100

Windmill World, mill ID 2274: https://www.windmillworld.com/millid/2274.htm

Bedfordshire Archives, Hulcote Mills:
https://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityHistories/Hulcote/HulcoteMills.aspx

J. Steele Elliott, “The Windmills of Bedfordshire: Past and Present,” Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, vol. XIV (1931). Bedfordshire Archives quotes the relevant passage; the full article remains to be inspected.

Midland Mills Group Journal 4: https://www.midlandmills.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/MMG-J04rr.pdf

National Trust Heritage Records, Houghton Mill: https://heritagerecords.nationaltrust.org.uk/HBSMR/MonRecord.aspx?uid=MNA108658

Francis Frith, Belton family memory: https://www.francisfrith.com/spaldwick/spaldwick-windmill-the-belton-family_memory-12891

Cambridgeshire Archives, photographic collection KPH/73: https://calm.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/TreeBrowse.aspx?field=RefNo&key=KPH%2F73&src=CalmView.Catalog

Cambridgeshire Archives, John Goodes bricklayer catalogue item: https://calm.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/Record.aspx?id=KMAN1%2FA%2F9%2FA%2F20&src=CalmView.Catalog

Norris Museum photographic collection: https://www.norrismuseum.org.uk/discover/library-collection/library-photographs/

The Junior Photographer journal scan (Rev. B. Holland context): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1b/The_Junior_photographer_%28IA_juniorphotograph3189unse%29.pdf

Historic England, National Heritage List search: https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/

Science Museum Group, H.E.S. Simmons archive (SIMNS): https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/documents/aa110067343/h-e-s-simmons-archive-relating-to-the-wind-and-water-mills-of-great-britain

Archive and publication references to complete

- Norris Museum: PH/SPALD/45 and related Spaldwick windmill photographs, including the 1922 and May 1938 catalogue descriptions.
- University of Kent Special Collections: inspect each 1933/1935 record for date, photographer and rights; record 538178 names H.E.S. Simmons.
- Kelly’s Directory of Huntingdonshire: 1906 entry for John H. Belton, plus claimed 1898, 1910 and 1914 entries; retain scans and page numbers.
- The death report dated 10 October 1919 describing John Belton as well-known Spaldwick miller; identify newspaper, issue and page.
- H.E.S. Simmons’s county-arranged survey notes: request the Huntingdonshire/Spaldwick entry to test the possible authorship of the machinery description and verify “seven-sided”.

- The independent source, if any, behind MMG's precise 1882–83 chronology and any claim that the cap was transferred.
- Spaldwick News, March 2014: village history project update and discovery of windmill images.

9. Claims not safe to strengthen

Unsafe statement	Controlled wording
"The post mill burned down in 1880."	Use "around 1880–81" until contemporary evidence resolves the conflict.
"John Goodes built the tower mill."	Attribute to the local account; independent evidence only establishes a bricklayer of that name.
"The tower was built in 1888."	The inscription is not proof of construction date.
"Hulcote's cap, sails and machinery moved to Spaldwick in 1882–83."	Elliott records sails and parts of machinery removed to Spaldwick about fifty years before 1931. He does not mention the cap or installation; the precise date is separately unverified.
"The mill had four/five sails."	Do not choose until original images are inspected.
"John Belton owned Houghton Mill."	The National Trust establishes that he ran it, not that he owned it.
"The Beltons owned all three mills."	Separate ownership, inheritance, operation and tenancy.
"The cap came down in 1938."	A dated 1933 photograph already shows it absent.
"Belton's Hill was named after the family."	The place-name alone does not establish its origin.
"The surviving fragments are unchanged today."	Present condition requires a fresh site check.

10. Editorial handover to the public page

The public page should be shaped from this master, not copy it wholesale. Its strongest story is a compact rise-and-fall narrative: the post mill and fire; construction of the brick tower and the separate evidence that sails and parts of machinery from dismantled Hulcote windmill were brought to Spaldwick; John Belton and the working mill; the extraordinary photographic sequence of decline; and the surviving place in village memory.

Use a visual timeline with a small number of optimised images, brief captions and links to galleries. Optional expandable sections can hold the machinery, Goodes story, Belton family and evidence questions without interrupting the main narrative. Related links should connect the mill to Belton's Hill, the village timeline, historic photographs, Spaldwick News and other industrial or family histories.

DEFINITIVE ARCHIVE PRINCIPLE The website gives general readers the compelling story; the Research Master gives researchers the evidence, uncertainty, citations and open questions. Together they allow Spaldwick.com to be both readable and the definitive home of the developing local archive.