



Windsor Hill House and The Old Mill, Shepton Mallet **A farmhouse and watermill dating back to the 1700s**

The current owners of both Windsor Hill House and The Old Mill temporarily open their gardens during the Snowdrop Festival giving visitors special access to view the exteriors of these historic buildings.

Almost as an echo of the time that James Allen spent here growing up, you will find snowdrops in various places around the two sites, though there is no evidence that the younger James had developed an interest in the plants at this time.

Take a look and enjoy the beautiful setting but be cautious in the area around the stream and pond, particularly if you are coming with young children.

Windsor Hill House is Grade II Listed and was probably built around 1750, though its origins may go back further. This is the house where James Allen was born in 1830 and it was his family home until he married in 1853. The adjoining mill was built about 1800 with further additions during the 19th century.

In 1841 James Allen would have been 11, yet the census lists only his parents, John and Elizabeth, as resident in the house. James was living in the Broad Cross area of Shepton Mallet and his sister Ann at the school in Waterloo Road. His other siblings, John, Joseph and Elizabeth, are at Cockhill in Castle Cary staying with their Aunt and Uncle. Their father died in 1842 of typhoid, so this could have been the reason the children were not living at home in Windsor Hill in 1841.

After his father's death the oldest son, John, aged just 17, had to help his mother run the Mill to grind corn for bread and animal feed. Elizabeth, James' eldest sister, apparently dealt with all the paperwork.

The watermill, now converted and known as 'The Old Mill', stands centre-left on the road, with Windsor Hill House to its right.

During the winter of 1842-43, a time of famine, a mob turned up at the mill brandishing flaming torches, demanding bread and threatening to burn the place down. The story goes that young John coped with this very well. He sent his family and staff to the garret at the top of the house for safety, and then persuaded the rioters to leave on the written promise that if they returned in the morning, they would give flour to those who came from Shepton Mallet. He is also reputed to have put a barrel of beer behind the bar of one of Shepton Mallet's then very numerous public houses. The offer appears to have worked!

But these must have been very hard times for the Allen family and, although things improved, they only remained there for around another ten years.

About the time James married Ellen Burt, in 1853, it appears the whole family moved into the Townsend area of Shepton Mallet, where they ran their business from the building on Park Road now known as 'Old Mill'.

The Allen family were nonconformists and interestingly the 1861 census indicates that Windsor Hill Mill and Farm were occupied at this time by Henry Davis and his family - an independent minister and farmer. Perhaps Mr. Davis was a friend or fellow worshipper with the Allens'.

The mill continued to operate until Shepton Mallet Waterworks purchased the water rights in 1877.

Opening Times

12:00 to 4:00 – Saturday 16 & Sunday 17 February 2019

Refreshments

Tea or coffee with cake is available for £3 with all proceeds in aid of the Festival

Admission

Admission is free but we would encourage a donation towards the Festival funds

Parking

There are a few spaces on the lane, with some limited additional capacity in the grounds of the Windsor Hill House. These will all be signposted.

The Address

Windsor Hill House / The Old Mill
Windsor Hill Lane
Shepton Mallet
Somerset
BA4 4JE

Finding the Properties

The properties are reached from the A37 just over a mile from the northern edge of Shepton Mallet.

Heading south from Bristol - once across the Maesbury / Old Frome Road crossroad, you will start heading down the hill. Take the next right-hand turn, which will be signposted to Mendip Fireplaces. Continue along this road, ignoring the two small roads to your right. The properties are on the left-hand side, just past Mendip Fireplaces.

Heading north out of Shepton Mallet – go up Waterloo Road and under the viaduct. Turn first left into Windsor Hill Lane (by the wooden seat) and follow this lane to the top of the hill (signed to Mendip Fireplaces). Bear right in front of Quarry House. Follow the lane downhill. The properties will be on your right after about 300 yards.

Map

