



# Herne Bay Historical Records Society

## Report of Meeting October 15th 2015

### 200 Years at The Black Windmill Whitstable

At our last meeting Carol Leith gave members a very interesting talk on her researches into the history of the Black Mill at Borstal Hill Whitstable including the house next door and the family associated with it.

She said that it was thought that there had probably been a mill on the same site for 400 years although the current building, a smock mill, dated from 1815. It had originally been painted white but was tarred black in 1885 and had always been used as a corn mill employing three mill stones. The last working miller up until its closure in 1905 was George Dawkings who also operated Feakin's Mill in Whitstable town (situated near junction of Belmont Road and the railway). The mill was bought by the son of famous actor Sir Henry Irving, H.B. Irving and his wife Dorothea as holiday home and in 1928 his son Laurence Irving built the house next to the mill and converted the mill tower into an art studio.

Carol has been collecting family information and photographs on the Irving family when they lived in the house and gave an interesting biography of Laurence as an artist and also of his career in the RAF during the Second World War.

After the mill and house were sold in the 1980's it became a motel and many of the original art deco features were taken out. Since her purchase in 2007 Carol has been busy restoring it and she finished her talk by showing some examples of what she and her family have achieved so far.