

# Moulin de Lansac: making the millstones turn again!

Par Tim Saturday, January 26, 2013 4 commentaires



The Moulin de Lansac is a restored windmill that is perched on a 69-metre-high mound known as Le Grand Puy, in Lansac, a few kilometres to the east of Bourg-en-Gironde in Côtes-de-Bourg wine-growing territory.

Little is known about the history of the windmill except that it and its unrestored twin were definitely in operation in the 19th century... but may even reportedly date back as far as 1598, not long after the first millers began operating in Gironde (which was in 1556 according to a Gironde departmental archives document). The year 1820 is prominently inscribed on one stone but it is thought that this was added during a rebuilding phase.



The twin mill on the left has not been restored, making for a readymade "before and after" shot. Top right, the miller's home and bottom right, the lever that can be used to rotate the roof so that the sails face into the wind.

What appears to be more easily established is that the windmill ceased operations in 1865 - the final miller was one Guillaume Gombaude. Then nothing much changed for well over a hundred years until, in 1996, the municipal council of Lansac acquired much of the land on Le Grand Puy. A little later, in 2001, incoming mayor Michel Manciet unveiled his plans to restore one of the disused mills.

The following year, a non-profit association - *Association des Amis du Moulin du Grand Puy* - was set up to make the project reality, with town councillor Jean Menaud at the helm of proceedings. A small army of volunteers set to work on site, cutting back the overgrown vegetation, cleaning the property and tending to the little of what remained of the mill. As the restoration project took shape, funding was sought and obtained from a host of institutions. In all, subsidies financed around 80% of the overall project.



Left, an inside view of the roof and the hopper, the wooden funnel that stores the grain and then feeds it down into the stones. Centre, the brake wheel and wallower, transferring energy from the horizontal windshaft to the vertical upright shaft to drive the millstones (right).

The mill-specific design and carpentry were handled by the 1850-founded *Entreprise Croix* (based in central France), one of just a handful of companies specialised in the restoration of windmills. They were behind the expert use of no less than six different types of wood, drawing on the respective qualities of each for various parts of the structure and machinery: the roofing is made out of chestnut wood; poplar was used for the roofing battens and for components that come into contact with grain and flour (such as the hopper, pictured above); the main frame and beams of the structure are made of oak; the pegs holding everything together are made of acacia wood; ash was used for the brake wheel and millstone casing; the cogs and wallower are made of sorbus wood.

In terms of the surrounding infrastructure, a sealed road leading up to the mill was constructed, parking and picnic facilities were added and, on October 1st 2005, the 12-ton wooden roof was gently eased into position. The following May, volunteers from the association began operating the windmill once again, grinding wheat, corn, rye, buckwheat and lentils down into flour for the delight of visitors.

A little further down the line, the neighbouring miller's house was also overhauled. Parts of the building date from 1832 while an extension was added in 1859, shortly before the first-generation windmill fell into disuse. Since 2010, the building has been home to a small museum exhibiting various windmill-related items and documents retracing the restoration of the Moulin de Lansac. It also forms an occasional backdrop for miscellaneous artistic and cultural events.



A nautical theme for the weather vane.

The windmill itself is arguably one of the greatest unsung gems of the area. It is open to the public on a daily basis, a permanent member of the municipal team on hand to provide information. Every Sunday enthusiastic volunteer staff from the *Association des Amis du Moulin du Grand Puy* are also present on site to provide visitors with an access-all-areas tour and demonstration of the mill in operation.

With the sails turning through the power of electricity rather than wind (relying on wind power alone would mean constantly repositioning the sails, thus rendering the windmill less accessible for the general public), the volunteers explain the flour production process, while the huge millstones grind out flour – which can then of course be purchased on site!