HOW OLD IS THAT POST-MILL?

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In these and other early illustrations, the windshaft appears to be horizontal.
Earliest post mills - were they based on ideas bought back from travel in the Crusades?– as is often put forward – or a local invention where there was no prospect of building a water mill?

Earth-fast posts, large heavy body supported high on a post:  rot and rocking the main problems, but also storm damage and fire (combustible dust)
The Trestle consists of the main post, cross-trees and quarter bars

NB Main post does not rest on the cross-trees, but is supported about 25mm above by the quarter bars
Crown-tree

Adapted from a drawing in Freese, S. 1957 (3rd ed 1971)
Many post mills were renovated or built in C19th, but evidence of older mills is fairly common.
Main post winter 1586/7, two re-used jowelled posts 1543-73
I now think the cross-tree has outside ring giving felling 1661/2 (new data)
Nutley – side girt felled 1738-70, but again the main post 1533-65
PITSTONE, BUCKS  
(National Trust)  

MAIN POST after 1545 (no sap, but probably in C16th)  

Framing  Winter 1595/6 and Spring 1597  

Crown-tree  Spring 1670  

Cross-tree and quarter bars  1824-48
This mill has long been thought to date to the late 17th-century, with one carved beam bearing the truncated inscription -68-, thought to relate to a date in the 1680s.
Meal beam oldest

Crown-tree and side girts next

Main post, sheer and frame youngest (of those dated)
Little (Great) Chishill, Cambs.
A re-used front diagonal brace – 1696-1728, rest from 1817/18
This timber is a sail whip, re-used as a stud in Little Chishill mill, Cambs. (1690-1722)
Listing suggests oldest of its type in the country!!

Great Gransden, Cambridgeshire
Main Post  1631-64

Right Sheer  1771-1804
Buck – early C19th
Windshaft  1845-77
BOURN MILL
Cambs.

Long thought to be the ‘oldest mill’, but known that the cross-trees and quarter bars are C19th. Recorded in 1636

Main post – after 1515 sheers spring 1703 and spring 1707, storm 1741 – known destruction (killed miller) – but perhaps 1703 storm too
Cromer, Herts – Main post 1678
1831, 1840-85

Ian Tyers

Madingley (Cambs.), moved from Ellington, Huntingdonshire

Main post after 1540, some late C16th, late C18th, early C19th

(info from Neil Loader)
Kibworth, Leics

13 timbers, all 1773 – mill not as old as expected (Nottingham TRDL)

Herstmonceux, Sussex
1814 – older timbers suspected, [e.g. race knife assembly marks] but not dated (elm or too few rings).
Yet again, dendrochronology has totally changed our knowledge of these structures.

More studies may give clues about life-expectancy of various components, or frequency of disaster (fire, storm etc.)