



The Combe Yard

Newsletter of the Combe Mill Society



May 2020

Welcome to your lockdown version of our newsletter. Since there is little news of Mill activities, this issue includes stories of what some of our members have been doing in the past month.

Newly discovered photograph of Combe Mill

Local Long Hanborough resident Janet Witcom recently unearthed this image and set about trying to identify where it was taken. Among others, Steve Page was quick to realise it was of Combe Mill.

It is the only image we have that shows the head race and must have been taken pre-1924 because in July that year the chimney was demolished at a cost of £9-0s-4d.

The person with the horse is only likely to be Edward Nash if it was taken before 1905 when he retired. After that Archie Dunkley was Clerk of Works.

The bell turret was probably there but hidden behind the chimney. In the attached photo taken in 2012 from the same viewpoint the turret is barely visible behind the chimney.

Note that the original chimney was twice as tall as the present one and the dormer windows now removed.

Steve now has the print which measures 20cm x 13cm and we will get it framed to hang in the Mill.



Helping the NHS

Bob Wheeler has printed fifteen face shields and given them to his local surgery where they were much appreciated.



Bob has also been producing models, such as the Vulcan below, for friends.



The mill slumbers, but some life must go on

As you all know, we closed the mill to visitors and events from mid-March until further notice. However, it was recognised that any site, especially one with an old building, would need to be monitored in case of any unforeseen circumstances. Therefore some volunteers agreed that on occasional Wednesdays, a couple would turn up to check that all was well and see to any issues that might have arisen.

Fortunately, things have gone well and various features have been switched off as the risk of frost recedes, thereby saving on electric usage. We also had to clear the fridges and food cupboards to remove items that would be past their expiry date before the mill re-opened. Now that spring is well upon us, the grass has started growing, so Alan Dear has been doing the honours with the lawnmower.

Things do tend to fail on a fairly regular basis at the mill, and more often than not, they do appear to involve water. We've had rain leaking through the flat roof above the foreman's office; a valve failing in the tearoom toilet cistern, and now the tap water heater valve in the tearoom has allowed hot water to drain away continuously. Charlie Rich has stopped the water wastage and is investigating the best solution to repair the heater.

And finally, other areas of essential maintenance, including checking the fire alarm system is OK and turning the waterwheel on a regular basis, all need to be undertaken to ensure the mill stays safe for the future.

Terry Bailey

Turning skill not totally rusty!

Although I am still making mistakes, I think my tool skills and confidence are improving, other than the dibbers and a few bud vases for the Mill merchandising I have done virtually no turning for about 20 years.



Some of the designs have evolved as I progressed with the turning and perhaps those with a better artistic eye than me could offer some advice on the outcome.

Richard Newman

Traction Engine model

I have made full use of the lockdown to complete a project begun almost twenty years ago. I built the card model on the right in my teens and was proud to have won a prize in the 1959 Kent Cooperative Education Committee Arts and Crafts Exhibition!

The design was featured in the magazine *Model Maker* and since then I always wanted to build a better and bigger model still using basic card and re-purposed materials to encourage others to use their hands.



In the last decade I began by producing the design and had some card parts for the wheels laser cut (left). Ron Rutherford made the jigs on which the wheels were fabricated and four wheels were made and a start made on the bodywork (right).



And there things stayed for almost a decade during which time Mill paperwork consumed most of my spare time.

However last Christmas I bought myself a 3D printer and suddenly it was the case that if it can be designed it can be made.



Traction Engine design



Work in progress



Finished model

Printed plastic parts are a lot easier to contemplate than having to fabricate everything from oddments and scraps. The finished model contains over 175 parts of which 160 are of printed PLA.

The traction engine is powered by a small electric motor and has just one speed - slow! The batteries are inside the boiler tube.

The next model is a steam road roller and it is taking about four days of solid printing before assembly can begin.

Tony Simmons

Progress in the Metalworking Area

With Terry Bailey at a distance doing essential maintenance, I have completed the new hand-tool displays and a little painting for the new hand pumps display frame, on hold during the pandemic.

In the meantime at home I am completing the Cowells High Speed Precision Bench Drill by adding a drive motor.



This British Thompson-Houston AC commutator electric motor is being renovated, with switches in a new terminal box, pulley and belts.



Derek Goddard

Another Repair Shop?

Colin Morris intends to develop this story for publicising the Mill on social media....

Over the winter it had become apparent that the handle of my garden roller had had it. This roller had been my grandmother's and had been in the family probably from new.

Luckily I volunteer at Combe Mill museum and the very helpful Tony Thurlby in the woodwork dept said bring in the old handle and will turn you a new one in keeping with your existing one.



So as you can see Combe Mill saves gran's roller and many thanks to Tony and Combe Mill museum.



When we get back to normal you should check out Combe Mill and as they have woodworking and metalworking facilities with a forge. You may find they can help you with a problem too?

Colin Morris

Swifts

Swifts return to the UK and are with us for just three months each summer bringing spectacular action and excitement to our skies... according to Swift Conservation.

These amazing birds have shared our buildings ever since the Romans came to Britain. They still breed in our eaves and gables, but not for much longer, as modern and renovated buildings exclude them. We have lost over half of our Swifts in just the past twenty years. Unless we help them, swifts will vanish from the UK.

Peter Trowles supports this cause as a member of the Oxfordshire (Cherwell District) branch and provided the information for this article.

If you have the opportunity to look out for swifts from your windows or on your walks, please let Peter know of your swift sightings - particularly of groups of screaming birds and especially of nest sites (most commonly seen under roof eaves, fascia boards or guttering) and he will pass them on to the appropriate contact.

Their annual report includes mention of the large colony of Swifts that nests in Combe village.

Those of you with school-aged children to occupy might find that they can be persuaded to deploy their sharp eyes in the enjoyable activity of swift spotting!

Tony Simmons



To cheer us up!

Although we cannot enjoy any visits and events this May, let's cheer ourselves up by enjoying some photos from May 21019.



Forthcoming events

Sunday 10 May 2020 - MG Car Club Y-Register event - POSTPONED until 2021

Thursday 14 May - Board Meeting - TBA

Sunday 17 May - Barn Engines and Horticultural Machinery - CANCELLED

Saturday 13 June 2020 - Music and Beer Festival - CANCELLED

Sunday 21 June 2020 - Machinery in Steam - CANCELLED

Thursday 16 July - Board Meeting - TBA

Friday 17 July - Proposed AGM - TBA

Sunday 19 July 2020 - Machinery in Steam and Oxford Ukulele Big Band - TBA

Sunday 16 August 2020 - Model Engineering at the Mill - TBA

Sunday 20 September 2020 Country Crafts and Skills with Charlbury Morris - TBA

Thursday 8 October - Board Meeting - TBA

Sunday 18 October 2020 - Wood Crafts at Combe with Morris Side - TBA

Sunday 29 November 2020 - Winter Market - TBA

Gift Aid Refund

You will be pleased to learn that we have received a refund of £1044.76 from the HMRC for the last financial year.

This is money reclaimed at 25p in the pound from donations made under the Gift Aid scheme.

The amount included the refund associated with unspecified receipts of £358 received via donation boxes.

It also included £545 membership subscriptions made under Gift Aid. Unfortunately we could not claim for a further £232 for which no Gift Aid form has been received.

The refund was boosted by Gift Aided annual pass sales amounting to £2127.

Tony Simmons

Finally

Please keep in touch with one another during the lockdown period. It is always good to hear a friendly voice especially those living on their own. Also think about jotting down your story of how you have occupied your time while not being able to visit the Mill.

Most important, stay safe.
