



The Combe Yard

Newsletter of the Combe Mill Society



July 2020

Reopening of the Mill

It is now 3 months since I had to announce that for the first time in its history the Mill had had to close for reasons not under our control. The government has announced that museums such as us can reopen provided that they meet stringent safety requirements. All members clearly recognise that, if the Mill is to have a future, we will need to get back to a full programme of activities as soon as practicable. The harsh fact is that a potential shortage of cash is the Mill's immediate problem.

Earlier this year we were fortunate to be thrown a life line of £10,000 by West Oxfordshire District Council. The life line is allowing us to move from a position of high risk to one of lower risk from which we can launch a recovery operation. It is not in itself a long term solution.

The present position is that the Mill is closed to visitors until the end of August. In an ideal world a vaccine will be found from which we all will benefit. Until then we need to put in place arrangements that allow us to share our knowledge with visitors in a safe environment.

The board's current view is that, before opening the Mill for events involving the steaming of machinery, experience with the running of non-steaming events is essential. A preliminary assessment suggests that, with modest changes to the ways we operate, compliant safe visitor access to the Mill for non-steaming events is practicable.

We are a body run entirely by volunteers. Most of our members fall into a group whom the government continue to urge to take additional precautions to avoid infection. What these might be is left to the individual. At this critical stage the board needs to supplement its own thoughts and the informal comments it has already received, with the thoughts of members who hopefully will be 'holding the fort' on the day. Please take the time to tell us the measures that you would expect to be in place if you are to help the Mill staff its Open Days.

Your views are very important. Through your responses we can build up a knowledge bank as to what is and is not acceptable to members.

I look forward to receiving your views - e-mail philip.hawtin36@gmail.com or telephone 01865 862691.

Many thanks for your help.

Philip Hawtin

Cowell Sensitive Drilling Machine now a working Exhibit in Metal Working Area

We have displayed this well-made bench drill since 2013.

Designed by the well-honoured engineer Mr ET Westbury, it was featured in *Model Engineer* magazine in March 1950. You can still make your own today, on a 3 1/2in lathe, with castings and drawings from GLR Kennions Ltd.

It has three vee pulleys which can be arranged to give theoretical speeds up to 9880 rpm at the drill chuck, from a 1430 rpm motor.

Now it works, driven by a motor which came as a gift with the Drummond Round Bed lathe. This motor is by British Thompson-Houston and is an AC commutator-start, induction-run design, which is a type no longer made. It was advertised in 1935 as the motor for general applications.





The control switches, chuck guard and pulley came from a worn out Wickes bench drill. The table clamps use the Mill stock of Whitworth square headed nuts. The pulley cords are 1/4in round calves leather, often used to drive sewing machines.

The guards are made from 1in square steel mesh usually used to keep chickens safe! They have to protect from the high speed parts and be easily removed to maintain and re-tension the belts.

It is indeed a sensitive drill as we have successfully drilled a neat 0.5mm diameter hole in steel.

We now have to get electrical approval from our resident volunteer electrical engineer Peter, who hopefully will give it a PAT certificate, after thorough testing of this old motor with modern wiring.

Derek Goddard

On-going maintenance

One of the tasks that was just about to commence before the Coronavirus lockdown, was to repair the fencing alongside the tail race. Most of the fencing comprises rope and post and had been replaced several years ago. However that near the waterwheel used wooden rails, being more substantial because of the drop into the tail race. On investigation, some posts were found to be rotten and several rails would not have tolerated anyone leaning against them.

Any job at the mill generally generates more work than planned and this one was no exception. On clearing the undergrowth we found more pieces of marble fire surround and some heavy bits of cast iron buried in the soil. This all had to be dug out and moved away before work could start on clearing the old tree stump of creeper, elder and wire netting. After all that, replacing the fencing was quite straightforward.



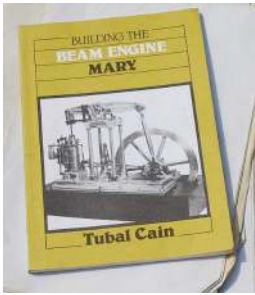
Charlie R laboured heroically in what was the hottest day of the year so far, while Alan D, Richard N and I struggled to keep up with his efforts. And I for one, managed to get the calculations wrong, so we had to have an enforced break while two more pieces of wood were quickly purchased. Fortunately, Barlows Woodyard is only next door.

Terry Bailey



Bob Wheeler takes on 'MARY'

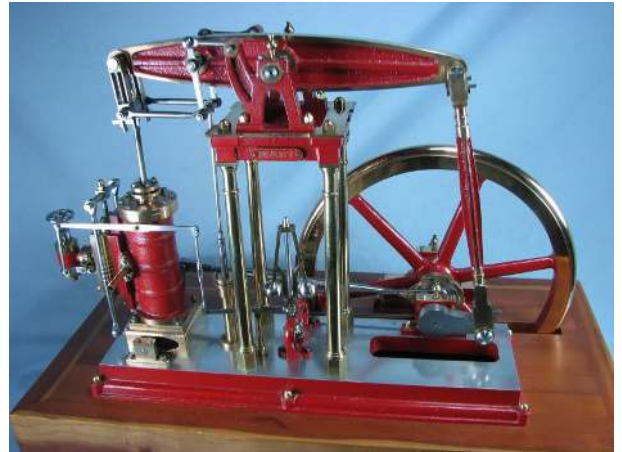
On the look out for his next project, Bob recently picked up a heavily reduced price deal of a set of un-machined castings for a beam engine 'Mary'.



'Mary' was designed by well known modeller Tubal Cain in the 1980s and makes up to the finished model shown on the right.

Non-machinists take one look at the box of castings and walk away but people like Bob, Derek Goddard, Ron Winfield and several other members,

leap at the chance of turning these blanks into a piece of precision moving machinery.



Bob will be using his lathe, milling machine and CNC router to machine the parts.

We admire such skill and wish you well, Bob.



Tony Simmons

Partly machined casting

From Jan Stride

Hello everyone.

I hope this finds you all safe and well and keeping yourselves busy during lockdown.

As some of you know I eventually managed to move back to Kent on 3 June. A somewhat eventful start to the day with news that a new grandson, Monty, had been born in Australia a week early. The move itself went like clockwork and by 3pm I was in my new home in Lamberhurst.

Thank you to those who have kept in touch with your news and good wishes. Please continue to do so as I enjoy hearing from you. I think I said to some of you just before we closed the doors in March that of all the things I had been involved with during my 9 years in Combe, the last 5 or 6 with the Mill have been the most enjoyable and I will miss your friendship and banter and, of course, being in such a lovely setting.

Hopefully, when life returns to some normality, I will return to see everyone as my exit was an incredibly swift and unsociable affair. I'll make sure I bring a cake, too!! I expect it will be a while, but until then take care and thank you, again for putting up with me.

(If any of you ever venture to Kent in the future please visit. Lamberhurst doesn't have a mill but it does have oast houses, a vineyard and 4 pubs. Spot the theme!! Bob W. and Tony S. have the contact details.)

Jan Stride

Forthcoming events

Friday 17 July - Proposed AGM - POSTPONED

Monday 20 July - Zoom Board Meeting - 17.30hrs

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

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

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

Thursday 8 October - Board Meeting - TBA

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

Sunday 29 November 2020 - Winter Market - CANCELLED

Plastic pipe to showman's engine wheels

Moving on from making a basic traction engine and then a road roller, Tony is now working on a showman's engine. The wheels for past models have been made from card and Tony decided to try using slices of PVC pipe to form the outer rims with 3D printed spokes etc.

His first attempt at cutting a parallel slice of 125mm pipe was a failure and Derek Goddard kindly offered to use his lathe to part off the required lengths of pipe some of which can be seen in the photograph on the right.



The composition of a rear wheel is shown in the design from Fusion 360 above. There are eight parts including the PVC rim.

Tony Simmons

Finally

During these unusual times it is not easy to fill a newsletter and I am grateful to those of you who are happy to share your news with our membership.

Combe Mill Society will press on with taking care of the Mill and planning for the day when we can safely re-open to the public. In the meantime members are welcome to come to the Mill on Wednesdays to undertake projects or maintenance jobs.

Please let Philip have your feedback so that we can assess your views when deciding on our next moves.

Tony Simmons