



The Combe Yard

Newsletter of the Combe Mill Society



July 2021

Our season is well underway and this issue has plenty of interest for our readers.

We welcome our new member (Eileen Cleaver) and volunteers (Nigel Evans and Barry Horn) and look forward to enjoying the Mill with you.

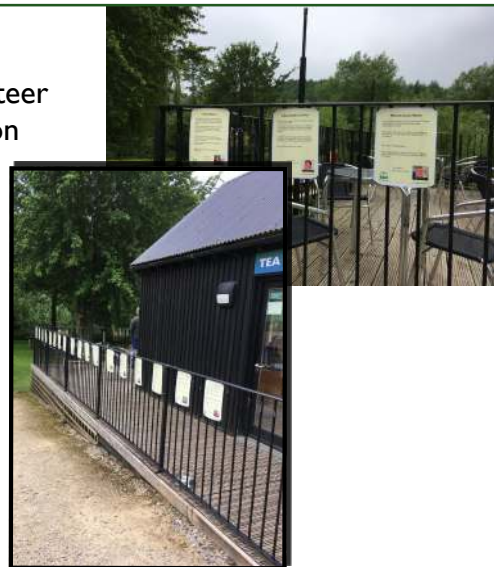
Volunteering Event

On Sunday 27 June we raised steam and ran all machinery for a Volunteer recruitment event. Around fifteen people visited and a high proportion were interested in volunteering.

Tony Simmons prepared sheets that described the various roles we are seeking to fill and these were laminated and displayed on the tea room railings. We signed up two definites and another person who is retiring before long is serious about joining.

Gillian Oldfield and Debbie Harris provided catering and being in steam also afforded the opportunity to train several existing members on operating machinery.

Well done everyone.



Beam Engine spray valve unjammed

When we first raised steam on a Wednesday for training purposes, Peter Hirst discovered that the beam engine condensate spray valve was jammed and could not be adjusted to produce a vacuum.

After much exertion Peter and helpers decided that work was needed from inside the cold well and that most of the members were too large to fit.

Photo Peter Trowles



Ron working inside the cold well

Enter super-hero Ron Winfield who was sufficiently nimble to get inside the cold well and contrive to knock the stuck taper plug from beneath to release it.

No dismantling was needed and the plug was lubricated with silicon spray before being refitted..

The beam engine worked fine for Volunteering day.



Spray valve adjuster



View of spray valve in the cold well

Photo Peter Hirst

Well done to everyone involved and to Ron for knowing where to hit it!!

Tony Simmons

Gift Shop

Ann and I have very successfully started a Gift Shop on Wednesdays throughout June and Sunday's Volunteer day. Due to its success we plan to continue through July, and on from there.

On Steaming Sundays we plan to have the Gift Shop under the marquee where we can manage it along with the tombola and my sewing machines display.

We held four Wednesdays during June, and raised £287.80. We displayed some of the blacksmiths-made items (the hearts were very popular made from 6 inch nails) which raised £40 50.

Volunteers Sunday alone raised £175.65 a very rewarding day.

Ice creams will be available from the Gift Shop on both Wednesdays and Sunday steaming days.

There is lots of stock to familiarise ourselves with, we are slowly going through and working out ways to display, and simplify ways to pack all in the trolley. We have also found the Gift Shop banner which was eased out of its roller and erected, this completes our display.

Margaret Gruber

Pump display in place at head race



You will have read in past issues about the work that Derek Goddard has led to make a working display of the chain slurry pump and a 'village' water pump.



The work was completed during the COVID lock-down and involved input from Mervyn Merchant and the forge team.

Several more people were involved in moving the frame into its correct position. First some of the head race fence rails had to be removed before the Lion water pump could be moved to its new location on the right of the head race. It was amazing how many people a stuck wood screw could attract!

The display looks great so many thanks to Derk for creating it and to our anonymous donor for funding the cost.

Tony Simmons

John and Helen Sylvester

Prior to the coming of the COVID pandemic, John and Helena Sylvester were responsible for Combe Mill's merchandising activities. John also joined the team studying the water chemistry of Combe Mill's boiler; making significant contributions. Sadly John became ill and last November gave up his post as a director. The team subsequently went on to use his information to underpin a revamp of the boiler's operation.

Ever willing to help out John and Helena remained in post, whilst the Mill put in place a new merchandising team. The new team is now fully operational and the Sylvester team has formally retired.

The Society is indebted to them for their efforts and it is my pleasure to be able to thank them, on behalf of the Society.

In a recent telephone conversation Helena told the Society that, as the pandemic eases, they have recommissioned their motor home and are making short trips. We hope they include visiting Combe Mill on their bucket list.

Thank you John and Helena for your support over the years.

Philip Hawtin

Retail management

Wendy Foster has recently been in regular contact with Helena to arrange the smooth takeover of retail management.

Non-steaming Sunday

We are opening to visitors on the first Sundays of the month from July until October.

Our first was on 4 July and despite the rain showers was well supported by members so that potential visitors had plenty to see in action.

Steve Page who was one of the stewards took time out to investigate why our rivercam stopped transmitting on YouTube from early last year. It transpired that they had changed the rules and we needed to alter our configuration to compensate. We are on line again but would be improved by cutting back some of the river bank growth and perhaps pointing the camera in an interesting direction. Thanks Steve.

Bob Wheeler and Peter Hirst worked on the tea room hot water machine but a little more work is still needed to replace a recently fitted heater element that is faulty as supplied.

We welcomed three visitors and hope more will come along in future.

Tony Simmons

Wychwood Forest Fair

The Wychwood Forest Fair is taking place on Sunday 22 August this year and is located in Foxburrow Community Wood on the edge of Witney.

We will be taking one of our gazebos and Robin Long has kindly agreed to make sure we take all the right bits to show off Combe Mill.

Please try to help by letting Robin know when you can come along and whether you can transport items to and from the show.



Tony Simmons

Richard Brown visit

From the 1970s until late 2007 Richard was a staunch member of the Society and instrumental in many projects. These included connecting the beam engine to drive the line shafting, restoration of the Weir boiler feed water pump that he has subsequently allowed us to keep on permanent loan, and installing the head race oak retaining wall.



In the forge in 1975

In identifying objects in the Mill we recently wondered about the pedigree of the floor-standing, belt-driven,



Pillar drill first stood against far wall of forge area



Richard Brown (left) with Peter Trowles

pedestal drill that sits on the left of the forge. Inspecting the original mill log book we noticed that on 18 June 1976 the names of Richard Brown and Gordon Lord were recorded as having 'brought a pillar drill' to the mill.



Plinth of outrigger pulley bearing

Gordon has no recollection of this and suggested we spoke with Richard.

Richard recalls it was offered to the Mill by an acquaintance but he cannot remember how it was transported or manipulated into position. Richard has a photo with him that shows the drill sited alongside the small engines area.

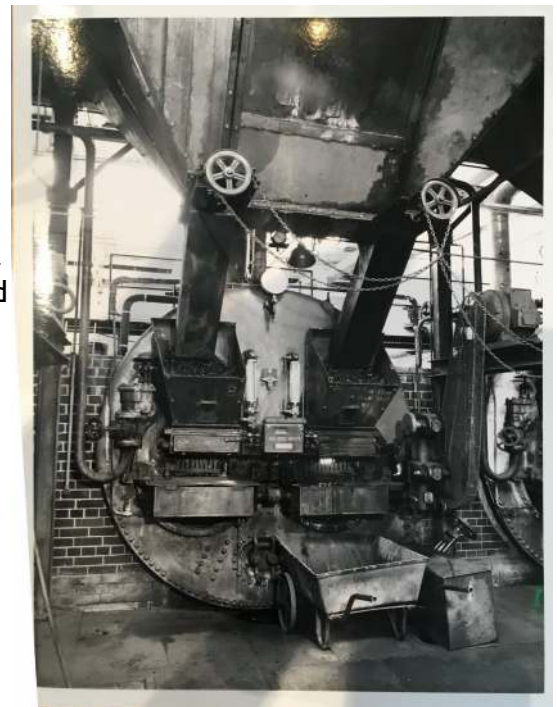
During his tour of the Mill Richard shared with Peter Trowles and Tony Simmons several anecdotes about items we passed. For instance:

1) The old GWR map that was once on the wall of the Foreman's Office was rescued by Richard and donated to the Didcot museum.

2) The timber plinth that supports the bearing for the out-rigger pulley that drives the line shaft drive belt was originally the window sill where the door to the engine room now is.



Old GWR timetable once on Foreman's Office wall.



Front of old Lancashire boiler showing sight glasses

3) The level glass on the front of the Cornish Boiler was removed from one of the last Lancashire boilers that has provided hot water for Morris Motors Cowley works from 1934 until scrapped in 1974 after being condemned by Richard in his then role as safety officer.

Richard was interested in the changes made to the Mill since he was last here and noted the simplified piping that serves the small engines area. A very interesting visit.

Tony Simmons

Steward Roster

These tables show the assigned stewards for the rest of the 2021 season.

There are still dates - shown in yellow - for which no-one has volunteered. Please consider standing in for these dates if you possibly can.

Many thanks to you if you have volunteered. There are a few who have chosen not to respond to our call for help.

Non-steaming Sundays

Date	1 st Steward	2 nd Steward
Sun 4 July	Steve Page	Clive Brimson
Sun 1 Aug	Brian Layt-Williams	Clive Brimson
Sun 5 Sept	Doreen Turner	Clive Brimson / Julie S-T
Sun 3 Oct	Doreen Turner	Clive Brimson

Non-steaming Wednesdays

Date	Steward
July	
Wed 7 July	Bob Wheeler/ Julie S-T
Wed 14 July	Gordon Lord
Wed 21 July	Derek Goddard / Julie S-T
Wed 28 July	Gordon Lord
August	
Wed 4 Aug	
Wed 11 Aug	Derek Goddard
Wed 18 Aug	Clive Stayt / David Knight
Wed 25 Aug	Bob Wheeler
September	
Wed 1 Sept	Clive Stayt
Wed 8 Sept	
Wed 15 Sept	Brian Layt-Williams
Wed 22 Sept	Derek Goddard
Wed 29 Sept	David Knight
October	
Wed 6 October	
Wed 13 October	Brian Layt-Williams
Wed 20 October	Bob Wheeler
Wed 27 October	Derek Goddard

Annual General Meeting

Please note that our AGM will be held on Friday 30 July at the Mill.

You will be receiving detailed information in due course.

Forthcoming events

Wednesdays - Open Days - 10.30 until 16.30hrs

Monday 05 July - 18:00hrs ZOOM Board meeting

Sunday 18 July - Steaming Event - Machinery in Steam - ticket only

Friday 30 July - 7.30pm - Annual General Meeting

Monday 9 August - 18.00hrs ZOOM Board Meeting

Sunday 15 August - Steaming Event - Models and Collections

Sunday 22 August - All day - Wychwood Forest Fair display - Foxburrow Community Wood

Sunday 19 September - Steaming Event - Country Crafts

Sunday 17 October - Steaming Event - Wood Crafts

Tea room now also open on Thursdays

We are pleased to let you know that Tilia Foods is now opening our Tea Room every week on Thursdays.

Run by Laura Snook and Becky Tyrrell of Combe, who are long time friends of the Mill, the aim is to provide high quality and tasty food throughout the day.

They serve from 9am until late afternoon. Their bacon sourdough toasties smell very appetising if you happen to be venting the steam boiler, and their cream teas look delicious.



They are attracting new footfall to the Mill and we wish them well.



Tony Simmons

Curryer's steamup day

We'll be holding our annual open afternoon/evening on Thursday 8 July this year. Due to the current situation it'll be a little less grand, but there'll still be plenty to see and to muck in with if you feel so inclined.

You all know the format, and as usual sunshine has been ordered for the day, so please feel free to come and share it with us (in a sensible socially acceptable manner!).

Officially it's from about 5pm, but I know some of you would like arrive earlier and make a day of it, so we'll be opening the gates about noon.

Cheers

Joe & Darren

Pre-booking required

For our 18 July Machinery in Steam event we are requiring visitors to pre-book. Fifteen people will be admitted each hour during the day. Will members and friends who are not regular demonstrators or operators please **let us know on arrival** at the ticket office so that we can manage numbers.

Those of us inside the Mill need to cooperate in stopping groups of more than six visitors from congregating and by controlling the entrance to the forge to slow admission.