



The Combe Dard

Newsletter of the Combe Mill Society



February 2022

It's winter and the mill is quiet - Oh no it isn't

Now that the mill is closed for the winter, it gives the volunteers the space to undertake some of those maintenance tasks not readily possible when there are members of the public visiting the mill.



On walking around the building on a recent Wednesday, numerous volunteers were refreshing various parts to prepare the mill for re-opening in March. Alongside the forge, there were Nigel E and Colin B working on the Sissons engine and nearby, Ray P and Andrew D were similarly working on renovating the barn engines and their pumps for display at the headrace.



Also on the ground floor, Bob K and Robin B were stripping down and refurbishing the pair of bellows and associated frames used on the forges, while in the beam engine room, Terry M and I were preparing some of the woodwork for further painting.

Meanwhile, around the beam engine, Derek G and Peter H were involved with putting a new stop valve into the steam pipes. This is an added safety feature to allow steam to be readily vented from the pipes when required and will also be utilised at the end of a steaming day to assist with closing down the beam engine.



Outside in the cold, Richard N and Keith J were getting the standby pumping engine ready in case it is needed, as the main river pump is still away for overhaul. Some preparatory work has been done for our annual boiler service, but the Covid pandemic has delayed the schedule. The stripping down of the boiler and cleaning the tubes is normally done before Christmas, but this year Richard has it scheduled for the beginning of February, after which the cold and hot boiler inspections will be carried out.

Things were much quieter on the first floor, Margaret G was finishing the stock take for our sales stand and preparing for when we re-open for business again, one task being to put the inserts into our flyers ready for distribution. This year we are restricting to only sending them out to local B&B's and campsites, as this is where many of our visitors are staying, and the cost of producing and posting large numbers of leaflets is prohibitive.

And finally, in the foreman's office, Colin M and Clifford M continue photographing and recording the mill artefacts as part of working towards our accreditation process. At present, they are recording all the artefacts held in the woodworking area in the pattern shop. In parallel with this, Peter T and Barry H have been cataloguing the contents of the fuel store which is used to continued page 2



..... retain all those artefacts for which there is not sufficient space to display.

This is only a snapshot of what was taking place on that one day, and I haven't mentioned the tearoom, which is still open on Wednesdays, with Wendy F and Steve F providing refreshments for the volunteers and some of the other workers from the local offices. Wendy was also in discussions with Derek in planning the STEM steaming day in April.

Behind the scenes, there are other activities that must go on in order to fulfil our obligations when operating a museum that is open to the public. Many of these are to fulfil legal requirements, but they all take time and money to undertake every year. One is the boiler service, already mentioned, which must be carried out on behalf of our insurers, but others include annual services on the air source heat pump, emergency lighting system, fire alarm system and passenger lift, not to mention the fire extinguishers and ladders, which must also be checked for safe operation every year. Although not this week, another regular activity required by law is the PAT testing of all our electrical devices. Peter H manages the process and undertakes this onerous task throughout the year.

As you can now see, the mill is not quiet, but a veritable hive of activity as the volunteers go about the business of ensuring that everything is in good order for when the public return. I hope this gives you a taste of what goes on at the mill, it doesn't cover every discipline, such as the clocks, model engines and woodworking, but only those tasks taking place when I walked around. If you would like to get more involved, please feel free to come along and give it a try.

Terry Bailey

Forge bellows

Our blacksmiths have been busy maintaining the two forge bellows.

First to be refurbished was the Allday and Onions round bellows that came from the forge of Ted Brain in 1980. Here it can be seen in situ when it was collected by Mill volunteers.



The latest to be worked on is the original main bellows, again by Alldays and Onions and proudly marked with various prestigious award badges on its face.

Scaffold was used to reach the bellows and once on the ground it was treated with Neatsfoot oil before being put back.



Meanwhile the metal supports were cleaned up and re-painted.

Air intake flaps - a number was found stamped into the edge of the nearest air vent



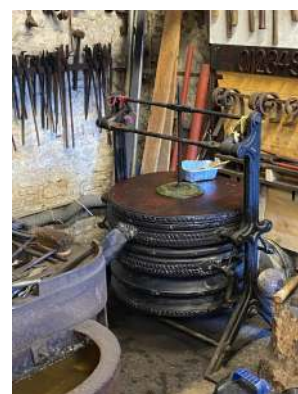
Ray, Andrew, Robin and Bob replacing the bellows



Job done - now for a cuppa



Ted Brain's bellows



Some of the maker's markings

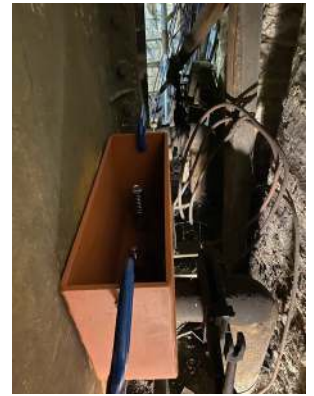
New bosh made

Keith Johnson has recently finished making and installing a replacement water tank for the right hand hearth in the forge.

This tank is called a 'bosh' and it holds the water used to cool the 'tuyere' which admits the combustion air into the hearth.



The last time the tuyere and bosh were remade was in June 2010 by Nick Washington - see photo on left.



New tank behind the hearth

Tony Simmons

New cooperation

Thames Water's River Evenlode Smarter Catchment plan aims to develop a programme of activities to show the relevance of the river and its catchment within the community.

We have been approached by Ros Marsden, their Education Officer, to work with them to engage with selected local schools, to help inspire younger generations to connect with their local stretch of river, learn about healthy river environments and nature, and act to take positive action to care for and ecologically improve the River Evenlode.

The Everyone's Evenlode project team members are: Rosalind Marsden (Education Officer), Ruth Rudwick (Community Outreach Officer), and Rowan Wynne-Jones (Community Outreach and Education Officer).

Various activities are being planned to suit different age groups.



Ruth Rudwick, Rosalind Marsden and Rowan Wynne-Jones

Photo: Russell Sach

Tony Simmons

Winter projects

Many readers will already be involved with our winter maintenance work. Our front page article covers many of the various tasks already underway.

Evidence of other work is sometimes hard to see. For instance we have had the fire alarm system serviced and failed sensors replaced. We are due soon to have remedial electrical work done.

We are having to buy a new submersible river pump after it proved impossible to repair the old red pump. Three months were lost before we were faced with this decision and we hope we can have the waterwheel turning again as soon as possible.

To improve the visitor experience we plan to give the Tea Room a make over. The wall hanging paintings are being relocated and will be replaced with prints of old views of the Mill. New tables and chairs are also being sourced.

So, much has to be done before we re-open and members are working hard behind the scenes.

Tony Simmons

Forthcoming events

Monday 7 February - 18.00hrs ZOOM Board Meeting
Sunday 20 March - Volunteer Recruitment Day - Steaming Event
Wednesday 23 March - First Non-steaming Open Day
Sunday 17 April - STEM - Steaming Event
Sunday 15 May - Barn Engines - Steaming Event
Sunday 19 June - Wheels - Steaming Event
Sunday 17 July - Birds, Bees, Bats and Badgers - Steaming Event
Sunday 21 August - Models and Collections - Steaming Event
Sunday 18 September - Crafts and Skills - Steaming Event
Sunday 16 October - Wood Crafts - Steaming Events
Wednesday 26 October - Final Non-steaming Open Day
Sunday 04 December - Christmas Market - not in steam

Steam raising boiler ready for inspection

Richard Newman and his assistants have spent recent Wednesdays stripping down and cleaning the boiler so that our inspector can get access to the various areas that need checking.

Once the physical inspection has been completed on 17 February, the boiler will be re-assembled ready for pressure testing due next month.

Tony Simmons



PLEASE NOTE

The roster for Wednesday stewarding will soon be issued. All members sign up to act as a steward from time to time. If there are any dates you are not available or any preference for only a half-day session, please tell us **NOW** - just email to events@combemill.org

The signing-in book and the lunch order sheet are now located in the Foreman's Office and not the Tea Room.

Member news

We send our best wishes to Philip Hawtin who is recovering from a fall and to Tony Thurlby who is getting over COVID picked up in hospital. To other members who may be unwell, we send our thoughts.

Membership renewals

Many thanks for those of you who have already paid your subs for 2022. For those who have yet to do so, please either send a cheque made payable to Combe Mill Society or else by bank transfer to sort code 30-19-83 and account no. 00213458. To remind you, fees are individual £8, family £12 and for friends, we request a minimum of £20. If you would like to receive a paper copy of the monthly newsletter posted to your home address, please add £10 to cover packing & postage. Thanking you in advance.

Membership Secretary Terry Bailey