



The Combe Dard

Newsletter of the Combe Mill Society



November 2022

Wood Crafts steaming event

Our last steaming event of the season was a great success with 150 paying visitors. The weather was good and the place was at its best in the sunshine with all the activities and colour.

Charlbury Morris performed in the afternoon with the Wytch Ways side.



The event was organised by David Knight and the sun glinted off the surface of the Evenlode River as members of the Oxfordshire Bodgers and the Oxfordshire Woodcarvers set up in the grounds of Combe Mill for the Woodland Craft-themed Steam Event, the last of the season.

Celebrating green woodworking and woodland crafts is a lovely complement to the traditional woodworking displays in the Mill itself and although the crafts have a lot in common the use of freshly cut green wood requires a key understanding of how wood shrinks as it dries.

So, as our colleague Ed Marsh, in full Elizabethan garb, spun his wonderful bowl lathe, powered by the springiness of a twenty foot sapling, his bowl blank would have no pith in it, the point where wood is likely to split as it dries out.

Eagle-eyed visitors will have noticed that the spindle lathe that complemented Ed's bowl lathe was actually powered by an old bicycle inner tube to drive the reciprocating action of the lathe. Visitors who had a go enjoyed the peaceful and rhythmic action of the pole lathe.

Also on display were some wonderful spoons, bowls and kuksas (Scandinavian style cups) from a green woodworking tradition and the contrasting beauty of the ornamental carvings of the Oxfordshire Woodcarvers, beautifully wrought with gouge and chisel.



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As the Charlbury Morris and Wytch Ways danced on the grass and reminded us of our traditions and heritage it felt as if the old bodgers of the Chiltern Hills, living in the woods all summer and producing prodigious quantities of chair legs to feed the furniture factories of High Wycombe, would have been looking down approvingly.

Margaret had booked six market stalls and the BBOWT Wildlife Trust also attended. The stalls were: Facepainter Nikki, The Witney Men's Shed, Julie Farren with hand knitted items, neighbour Sandra with her jewellery, members Julie Stuart-Thompson with her greeting cards and Edit Oroszne Koliba with her felted items and bags.



As usual Margaret ran the Gift Shop and Ann the tombola. Margaret also displayed some of her sewing machine collection.

The BBQ was staffed by Andy and Linda Binks assisted by Nick Speller and daughter Emily and again provided excellent food.

Visitors spent a lot more than usual in the forge and bought both a boot rack and a log rack. Volunteer Peter Mandeville was a welcome addition to the blacksmithing team.

We are very grateful to the blacksmithing team for their efforts in fundraising through preparing ready-to-sell items and for providing the blacksmithing experiences that have been running all season.



David Knight and Tony Simmons

Tearoom

We will continue to open on Wednesdays throughout the winter serving snacks and cream teas. Our current best seller is our homemade soup and crusty bread or cheese scone.

Many thanks to Lizzy Bishop for running the tearoom while we were on holiday.

We are still looking for more volunteers in the tearoom, especially on steaming days and the Christmas Market. Please contact me on education@combemill.org

Wendy Foster

Duckboard display refurbished



Terry Bailey, Terry May and Alan Dear recently reconstructed the World War I duckboard display which was originally made by Mike Hallam in 2014.

The display commemorates the time when the Mill was commandeered to manufacture duckboards and pit-props for the WWI war effort.



Tony Simmons

Jeff Broxholme at the Mill

It was good to see Jeff Broxholme at our last Steaming Event when he came with his grandson and friend visiting from Bristol.

Readers will know that Jeff's father Leonard was probably the last sawyer at the Mill and that Jeff grew up playing in and around the mill yard.

He has been a prolific source of information regarding the history of the mill and responsible for the content of many of our interpretation boards.

Thank you and good health Jeff.



Tony Simmons

Woodstock Stroke Club visit

Members of the Woodstock Stroke Club visited on Thursday 20 October. Mike Hallam organised the visit and on arrival they gathered in the Foreman's Office to be welcomed by Wendy and Steve with tea/coffee and biscuits. The fourteen heard a talk about the history of the mill by Clive Stayt before moving into the Pattern Shop to talk with members and explore the exhibits.

There followed a staggered lunch in a marquee which kept the rain off and avoided over-crowding the Tea Room.

After lunch visitors took turns to see work in the forge, small engines and beam engine areas and view the waterwheel and gear room. Nigel Evans and Richard Newman were the afternoon tour guides.

Our visitors reportedly thoroughly enjoyed the visit and congratulated the organisers.

Tony Simmons

Abingdon Preparatory School Visit

Eleven year-2 boys from Abingdon Prep school visited on 6 October. Their day was centred on the story of "The Wheel that Jack built" and included visiting the blacksmiths to learn about changing materials and an explanation and demonstration of water power. In the afternoon they made willow bird feeders and took part in the Pumpkin trail after which they went for a walk up into the woods.

Many thanks to all of the volunteers who helped to make the day a success and to Rowan Wynne Jones from the Everyone's Evenlode project who led the outdoor activities.

Wendy Foster

Pumpkin Day

Wednesday 26 October was Pumpkin Day. We were lucky to receive donations of 15 pumpkins each from Peachcroft Farm, Abingdon, Millets Farm, Frilford and Asda, Wheatley. This provided 45 pumpkins for carving and lots of pumpkin soup for the day! The event was very well attended and we ran out of pumpkins by early afternoon. Fortunately, several other activities were on offer including Marshmallow roasting run by North Leigh Guides, our Pumpkin Trail, a tombola run by Anne and story telling with Angela Mills who is a bat expert and read her book about Bobby the brown-eared bat which went down very well with children and adults!



Thanks again to the volunteers who helped to make the day a success and to Ray and Andrew for managing the parking.

We are grateful to Nigel for the pumpkin tree decorations.

Wendy and Tony

Blacksmiths complete another house name

The photograph shows Keith Johnson holding the latest house name completed in the forge. Keith had done the final welding once the various shapes and letters had been fabricated.

Another great product.



Tony Simmons

Gift Shop

Another rewarding 2022 season in the Gift Shop, monies raised total £1155.45 with blacksmith's products totalling £395.00 - another great season.

Blacksmiths have trialled different ideas which have proved very popular with the public as always. A recent one was small horseshoes which I will thread a ribbon through to hang in the display cabinet - a lovely all year round gift.



Mike Stockbridge is making wooden dibbers and toy soldiers.

Tony Thurlby is making wooden snowmen and painted Christmas trees. I still have snowmen which Mervyn Merchant made. Thank you to all who made a purchase.

A big thank you to the volunteers who assist with setting up and taking down of the cabinets, tables and chairs. Without these volunteers the gift shop would never be the success it is.

In July I started what I call my 'donation table'. It's a table where volunteers bring items to sell for a donation in the tin from the public. I started with one table, now increased to two. Monies raised to date are £145.70 (since July) - another rewarding venture, thank you to all who made a donation.

Margaret Gruber

Prizes for Grand Raffle please

As an annual event at the Christmas Market we organise a Grand Raffle with some fabulous prizes, full list to be circulated when available. We already have £25 cash prize, tour of Hook Norton Brewery, vouchers for Birdland Bourton on the Water, Fairytale Farm near Chipping Norton, Annual pass to Blenheim Palace, hamper with fruit and veg. Cotswold Motor Museum admission ticket, pack from Little Ox Brewery (other vouchers have been promised). Updated prize list can be viewed, please ask Margaret.

We welcome all donations as a raffle prize. If you have something to donate bring it along. You might know a local business that will donate a prize. What about your 'local', will they donate a 'meal for two'? All donors will be named on advertising. All donations gratefully received by Margaret.



Raffle Tickets

Plenty of raffle tickets are available (please ask Margaret). If you belong to a club, go down to your local, and your friends, please offer them tickets (even if its only one, it doesn't need to be a full book). If you feel you can sell to your family, friends, neighbours, visitors, that will be great.

Please bring all stubs to Margaret along with the monies. At the time of writing we have £95.00. In 2021 we raised nearly £600 so let's see if we can raise this and more for 2022.

Thank you to everyone for bringing donations, selling raffle tickets and participating in the event.

Margaret Gruber

Christmas Hamper Raffle

Peter Hirst has kindly donated a hamper and we are asking for donations to fill the hamper to Raffle at the Christmas Market.

Suggestions are:- Christmas pudding, cake, box of chocolates, cheese biscuits, cranberry sauce, pickled onions, Turkish delight, truffles, Christmas chutney, tin salmon, nuts, jelly, custard, tinned fruit, shortbread biscuits or any other seasonal treats to help fill the hamper.



We already have the donation of Christmas cake, biscuits and tin of ham. Any more donations please bring along to the Mill for Margaret - all donations will be most welcome. It doesn't need to be expensive. Don't forget to come along on the 4 December and buy a ticket, you might just win the hamper. Last year the hamper raffle raised £80.00 - that's a challenge for this year.

Thank you for participating, we will have an excellent hamper to be won.

Margaret Gruber

Mill locks are changing

So many members have been issued with keys to the Mill over past years and not returned them that action is needed to maintain security.

The locks to the four doors to the Mill are being changed during the next few weeks.

A key safe is being installed within the ground floor corridor to the lift. You will be told the key combination needed to retrieve a key to the Mill which you can use to unlock the required doors of the Mill. The key must be returned to the safe straight away after use.

Your present key will no longer work so please hand it back to Terry Bailey.

Thank you Nigel for doing this work for us.

Tony Simmons

Memories

At the October steaming the brother-in-law of David, age 12 in 1993, gave me a photograph of David making a poker on the forge. He was very proud of his work as seen in the photograph.



This is David today age 41 still looking proud of his poker.

Robin Long

Thank you

A big thank you to all the volunteers that have made the Mill's openings this season such a success.

I look forward to seeing the Christmas Market take place and I am sure all the hard work will make it a day to remember.

I would like to invite you to join us for a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie on the Wednesday 21 December in the Tea Room at 2.30.

Steve Foster

We need lights

Can we borrow your colour fairy lights to decorate the pattern shop for the Xmas Market? Please speak with Wendy.

All volunteers

To 'lost' volunteers - if you signed up to volunteer a year ago but have not been able to come to the Mill much since we'd love to have your help at the Christmas Market and to get to know you again. Please get in touch with Wendy to say you are coming.

Mervyn Merchant

We were greatly saddened to learn that our dear friend Mervyn had died on Friday 28 October of heart failure.



Batch of snowmen that Mervyn made in 2017

Mervyn's daughter Jo reported his passing in a phone message to Steve Page.

His full name was Mathew M. Merchant – we did not find out what the second M was for – and he was born in 1937 within a few weeks of his closest friend at the Mill, Tony Thurlby.



Somehow Mervyn must have felt his end was near. On his last Wednesday at the Mill he made several comments suggesting this. To Robin Long in the forge he said "I shall miss the smell in here" and later as he left to go home at the same time as Tony Thurlby, he made a point of going over and saying "I shall miss you Tony, I just wish I had met you years sooner".

Mervyn joined Combe Mill in 2010 and had been poorly for some time. He was very knowledgeable about various timbers and delighted visitors by demonstrating the making of curly wood shavings with his sharp plane.

Mervyn loved to make bird and bat boxes which he sold at the Mill. At Christmas he made Father Christmas and Snowmen ornaments which proved very popular.

We will all miss Mervyn very much and send our condolences to his family.

Once funeral arrangements have been made we will let members know.

Tony Simmons

Forthcoming events

Wednesday 02 November - 3pm Briefing at the Mill for Christmas Market

Wednesday 16 November - 2pm - Board Meeting at Mill - Business Planning

Monday 28 November - Board Meeting 7pm ZOOM

Sunday 04 December - 11am to 4pm - Christmas Market - not in steam

Wednesday 21 December - 2.30 Mulled wine and mince pies in Tea Toom

Increased membership fees

Everyone is experiencing increased costs and we are no exception. Our membership fees have remained unchanged since 2013 and we are now increasing them - **Full membership is now £10, Family membership is £15 and Friends are invited to donate at least £25.**

Please remember to amend your Standing Order if you have used this method of payment.

Tony Simmons

Events for 2023

Date		Event	Organiser
19 March		STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths.) - "Spring is sprung"	Derek/Wendy
16 April		Military Vehicles /Armed Forces Day?	Margaret/Ray
21 May		Barn Engines and Horticulture	Ray /Andrew
18 June (Father's day)		Wheels past and present	Ray/Andrew
16 July		Wildlife – title TBC	Wendy
20 August		Models and Collections	Ron/Ann/ Andrew
17 September		Crafts and Skills	Margaret
15 October		Woodcraft	David Knight
03 December		Christmas Fayre	Margaret/ Wendy

Event titles are subject to change

Ticket Office roster for 2023

The roster for manning the ticket office next season will be published in the new year.

fees. Many thanks to everyone who played their part this year - we collected £2,195 in admission fees.