

Chairman's report 2022/23

This is my report on developments at Combe Mill during this year.

I am delighted with the progress we have made with documents and risk assessments and would like to pass on thanks to all those involved in their update and conversion to the new format. Special thanks to Philip for his patience and guidance. In addition to this the Board have spent many hours revising and re-writing our business action plan and this is almost ready to roll out.

The winter projects list has seemed endless but many things have now been completed.

Key events for 22/23

1. This was our first complete season post Covid. During this time we had 5 education visits and 9 visits by community groups with attendees totalling approximately 325. We have recently been in contact with Boun Norton the Education office for Blenheim who is hoping to put together a combined Education programme.
2. Half term and summer holiday activities continued to bring in more families and included Wild Wednesdays and a pumpkin day and also Story with Santa at the Christmas Fayre.
3. We have continued to work with Cotswold National landscape who have assisted in school visits and run other training and Duke of Edinburgh award days.
4. We received the Engineering Heritage award from John Woods who represented the Institute of mechanical engineers.
5. The tea room was redecorated and refurnished and had a tv monitor donated by Everyone's Evenlode to enable links to river cameras.
6. The Sissons and Reader steam engines have been repainted and the small engine area fencing refurbished.
7. The Mill was featured on Countryfile and included an interview with Peter Trowles.
8. The locks on all the Mill doors have been changed and now are code related in a key safe, so security of the mill has been greatly improved. Please note if you have an old key, it will no longer work and should be returned or disposed of.
9. The tinkering area is gradually being reworked with the aim of providing a more child friendly area.
10. A wood turning experience has been introduced.
11. The barn engines have been moved away from the headrace into a revamped area on the other side. Many thanks to Ray and Andrew for their hard work.
12. The gift shop has gone from strength to strength being particularly successful selling blacksmith products.

13. Steaming days have brought in a range of stall holders and the Christmas Fayre was a tremendous success.

14. We employed a new cleaner who is doing an amazing job.

15. A monthly Newsletter has been produced and sent to all members.

Directors

I would like to thank the directors for their hard work and dedication to the Mill. Philip Hawtin and Tony Simmons retire by rotation and are happy to stand for re-election. I will also be standing down as chair due to health concerns, however I am happy to remain on the board while I am able. Tony will be standing down as treasurer and we are still looking for a successor. I would like to thank Tony for his hard work and the many jobs that fall under the title of treasurer.

I would urge members to consider joining the board as this way we will be able to share the load and move forward more quickly.

The Year ahead

The main issue which has arisen is the condition of the forge which now is in need of significant repairs. We are looking into a formal assessment and quotes for the work which must be made a priority.

We also are planning to move our farm machinery collection to improve their display and this will be located on the Mill side of the picnic area next to the tail race.

The Cornmill is being renovated and made ready for display in situ next to the Forge.

Thanks

As Chair, I would like to thank the amazing team of volunteers who keep the Mill running and to the directors who have given me such strong support. Thanks to everyone involved in organising steaming days, especially Margaret and Ray who put in many hours planning, organising and providing the marquees.

Sadly we lost Mervyn Merchant this year and he leaves a great hole in the day to day running of the Mill. We miss his dry humour, his passion for the mill and of course the endless plane shavings which every child loved to go home with!

We also lost Sheila Hallam who had been involved with the Mill for many years alongside Mike and Paula Denmark, our cleaner.

Steve Foster April 2023

