



December 2024



Shambles in gear room



Water subsiding



Picnic area on Tuesday as levels began to fall

Serious flooding at the Mill

Storm Bert dumped a lot of rain from Friday 22 November and afterwards. Fields and road were flooded and access to the Mill was impossible on Monday 25. By Tuesday access was possible and the task of assessing the damage could begin. On Wednesday 27 members could begin the cleanup. We were lucky the Tea Room escaped damage because only another 100mm could have hurt us badly. As it was, the riverside shed had at least 100mm inside as did the forge and engine room. The waterwheel room was even deeper underwater and the gear room filled with any item of timber that floated.



Waiting for an audience!

Chairs and tables from the waterwheel room were pressure washed and set out to dry in one of the marquees. The visitors' book was soaked through and will take ages to dry out.



Damaged welding machine

A welding machine was underwater and now being dried out hopefully without sustaining long-term damage.

Everyone put in a lot of work to ensure the Christmas Fayre could go ahead as planned.



Soggy visitors' book



Preparing for Santa

During the last couple of November Wednesdays, members prepared the Foreman's Office to become Santa's Grotto and put up lights around the Mill.



Meanwhile Rose Ralphs had begun work on clearing out the 'junk' from the office ready to receive different cupboards.

The Mill had more decorations than ever thanks to members who donated or lent lighting. Even the Beam Engine flywheel was adorned with lights.



Christmas Fayre on 1 December

Despite the flooding we were able to go ahead with the Christmas Fayre and, on the day, the weather was kind. Nigel Evans organised the fayre with Wendy Foster supervising Santa's Grotto and Margaret the market traders.

Fifty children visited Santa and enjoyed hearing a story from our chief elf (Wendy Foster) and receiving a present from Santa (Cliff Manyon).

The Mill was busy all day with probably two adults with every child visiting Santa.

We welcomed at least 250 visitors on the day and market traders were happy with attendance.





Margaret Gruber had booked fifteen traders including Copper Pot Catering's Myrtle trailer which provided hot food.



Photos provided by Bob Wheeler and Tony Simmons

The blacksmiths' forge was very popular especially because those leaving Santa's Grotto were routed downstairs via the engine room. Several youngsters had a go at making something.





The ladies in the Tea Room were kept very busy all day and sold 25 cakes, 40 mince pies and almost 30 gingerbread men. All of which had been home-made by the team.



Chris, Lorna and Margaret



Eileen folding ticket stubs

Eileen Cleaver managed this year's Grand Draw Raffle ticket sales and raffle prizes which went very well. She took £350.

Ann Winfield made £163 from the Tombola stall.

Peter Trowles passed the red bucket round several of the visitors to draw the tickets. The first person chosen managed to pull out his own ticket and won the large hamper to his surprise and delight.



Blenheim provided the Christmas tree as usual.





The raffle stall with prizes



Ann Winfield on the Tombola stall



Christmas decorations made by members

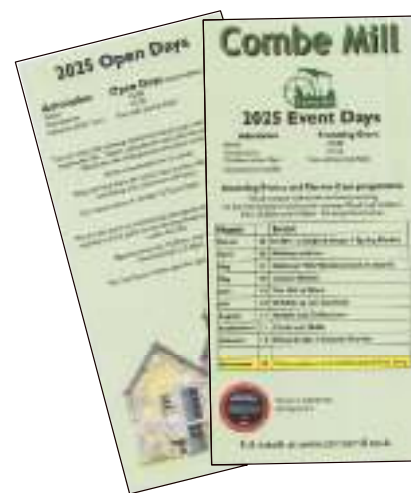
Thank you everyone who made the event a great success. Special thanks to Santa and Elf who were busy all day as were the tearoom ladies and to Eileen who managed the raffle.

The provisional profit figure is £1,590 - a very respectable sum.

Leaflet stuffing time again

Once Christmas is over we can make a start at putting the event calendar inserts into the brown glossy brochures ready for sending out.

Two thousand copies have been printed as a start.



Freeland and Hanborough Scouts at Mill

As many as twenty scouts were at the Mill on Friday 29 November and again on Friday 6 December to enjoy making items in the forge. This time, instead of making poker, they chose to make coat hooks. Thanks to our blacksmiths for making this possible.

Forthcoming events - 2025

Friday 10 January - 1pm Board Meeting @ Mill

Date	Title
16 Mar	STEM - Change & Adapt + Spring Market
20 Apr	Military Vehicles incl Easter Egg trail
11 May *	National Mills Weekend
18 May	Classic Wheels
15 June	The Mill at Work
20 July	Wildlife by the Evenlode
17 Aug	Models & Collections
21 Sep	Crafts & Skills
19 Oct	Woodcrafts + Autumn market
30 Nov	Christmas Fayre

* Not in steam

Ruston descendant from Freeland

Pauline Holgate from Freeland visited us on Wednesday 4 December to give us documents relating to Ruston and Hornsby. Pauline is a descendant of the Ruston family, who founded the Ruston and Hornsby Engineering Co. in Lincoln.

When she visited Combe mill recently she noticed that we have a Ruston and Hornsby petrol engine and offered to give us a *Stationary Engine* magazine containing an article about the Ruston and Hornsby engine restoration.

Pauline came with her husband, a retired engineering professor. They had not previously known about our volunteer group and we might see more of them in future.

Membership Fees for 2025

Our membership fees have remained unchanged since 2023 and before that were held steady for nine years. You will be pleased to learn therefore that the Board has decided to hold fees the same for another year at £10 for a Member and £15 for a Family. The fee for Friends is a minimum of £25.

Fees are payable from 1 January each year.

Please make payments electronically to Combe Mill Society, **sort code 30-19-83 account number 00213458** or by cheque payable to Combe Mill Society and addressed to The Treasurer, Combe Mill, Blenheim Palace Sawmills, Combe, Oxfordshire, OX29 8ET. Cash is also acceptable!

A Happy Christmas to everyone