



The Combe Yard

Newsletter of the Combe Mill Society



February 2025

Communications meeting

Members who regularly attend the Mill on Wednesdays met in the Foreman's Office on 12 February to hear Nigel Evans present an overview of what is going on at the Mill.

Nigel spoke about the variety of projects instigated by Heads of Technical Areas to improve their areas. He reminded us all to step back and have a good look at how a visitor might perceive us and to put away extraneous items and tools where necessary.

Wendy Foster told members of the forthcoming school visits and the need for volunteers to support the activities.

Lorna Gale appealed for more members to sign up to take a turn in the Ticket Office. The roster list is next to the signing-in book in the Tea Room.

With the first steaming event fast approaching, Nigel asked members to supply items to represent advances in technology over the past 25 years. The display has already started with Nigel's old slide rules and cameras - he suggested several other strands that we could show. Please bring your items to the Foreman's Office from now on.

Nigel mentioned our plans for a recruitment day on Saturday 22 March and how we are particularly seeking those with 'soft skills', such as marketing and archiving, as well as engineering skills.

To celebrate our 50th anniversary volunteers are needed to devise a display for the Blenheim Palace stable block and to arrange a celebration social for members at the Mill.

Foreman's Office progress

Rose Ralphs and her helpers have made great progress in fitting out the Foreman's Office with the donated cupboards.

The contents of the archive storage boxes have been transferred into the cupboards and each part of the storage now carries a nameplate to indicate its contents.



Particularly successful is the way the foreman's desk looks perfectly in place in front of the furniture.

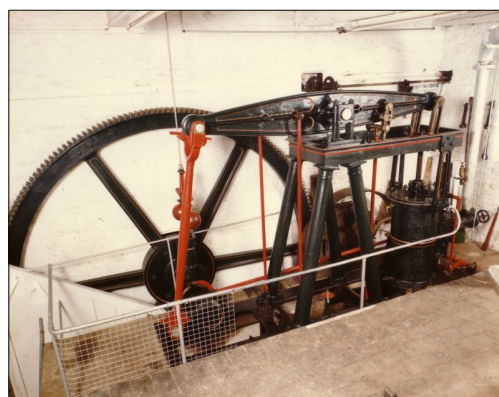
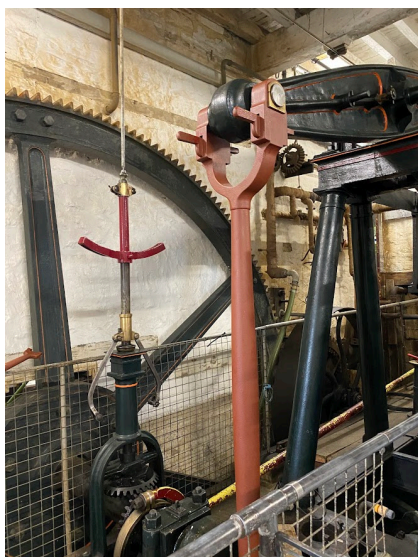
After refurbishment the mill model has been returned and sits well on the worktop.

Beam Engine makeover

New volunteer Stuart Bridger has spent his first weeks with us on thoroughly degreasing the beam engine and has now begun to re-do the red paintwork. You will see how much better the engine is starting to look and in due course it will again look like it once did when first photographed back in the 1970s.



Stuart at work refreshing the red paintwork



Beam engine postcard from the 1970s

Boiler inspections

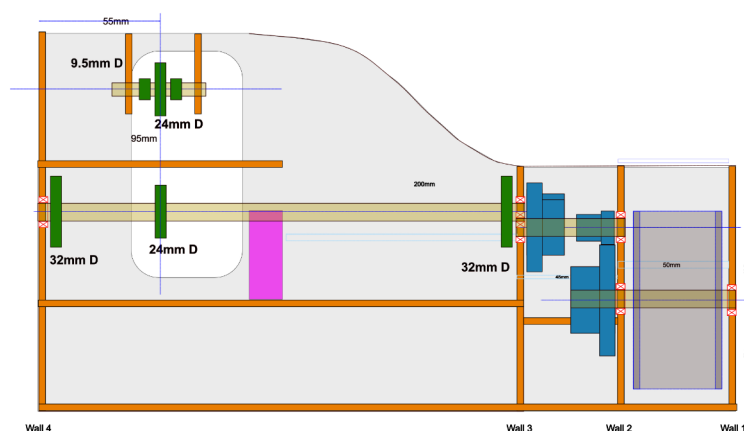
After Richard Newman and Peter Trowles dismantled the boiler, our boiler inspector visited to perform physical checks of its condition which it successfully passed. Now the boiler has been re-assembled it is ready for its pressure test later this month.

Gift Shop

Margaret has received new stock of embroidered fleece jackets which are now available.

Will anyone who has recently collected a fleece jacket please check with Margaret to let her know what form of payment was used so she can reconcile her records.

Thanks



New lineshaft model

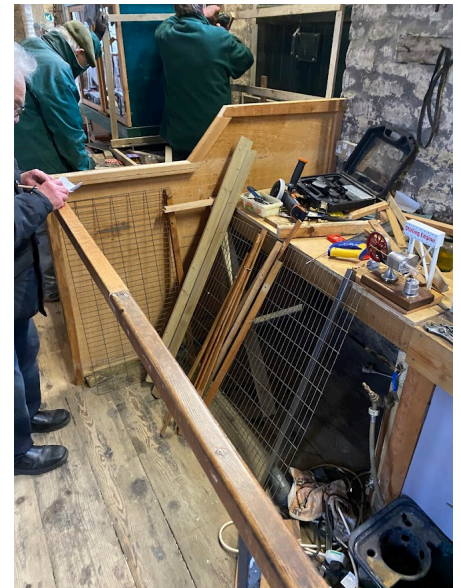
Tony Simmons is working on the design of a new model of the line shafting. This will be more robust than the previous foam board model, be constructed of 3mm plywood and contain metal gears and pulley running on ball races. Parts have been received and construction is about to start once I have found my tools in a cluttered shed!

Model engine area expansion

Bob Wheeler and Ron Winfield have been busy enlarging the area occupied by the model engines to enable better presentation of all they have to display. Work is well advanced and Keith Johnson has been coopted to weld the frames for the mesh fencing.



The green woodworking display in front of the double loading doors is being re-displayed by Richard Edwards and Tony Thurlby.



Still flooded?

At the time of writing the river is back within its banks but the photo on the right, taken only two weeks ago, shows it almost into the wheel room.



Richard Stone and George Farmer have made a start at erecting a folding cover for the barn engines next to the head race. Meanwhile, Derek Goddard has begun working to overhaul all the pumps and clean up the jungle of valves surrounding their pipework.



Historic lathe and bandsaw

This season we want to show visitors our 'old original' machinery in action.

Marc Richmond has offered to demonstrate the belt drive wood turning lathe at future steaming events.

Ron Winfield is improving the safety guard around the band saw so that this, too, can be demonstrated.



PAT progress

We are required to carry out Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) on all relevant electrical items in the Mill. This applies to every electrical device that has a 3-pin plug. Alan Burch and Colin Boyles have now completed testing of all qualifying items (as far as they know).

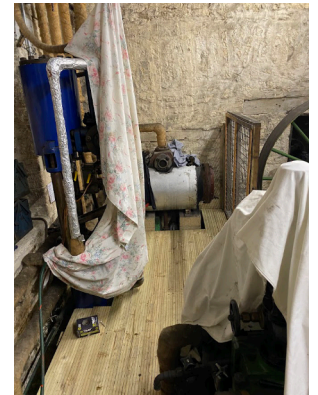
The testing does not confirm how well the item works (if at all), it merely confirms that it is electrically safe. If people bring in their own tools to work in the Mill, these should be tested too.

Similarly, items that are donated to the Mill should be tested before they are used or sold on.

Alan and Colin may not have found everything so, if you find an electrical item that does not have a current green “pass” sticker, please let Alan or Colin know.

Small engines area

Colin Boyles has almost completed replacing the timber staging behind the small steam engines. The various levels had presented a trip hazard and the condition of the timber meant that renewal was overdue.



Brochure distribution

Every year we send out to selected destinations copies of our glossy brochure with its insert showing this season's event calendar.

Thanks to Eileen Cleaver these are now ready for posting.

History unveiled

Chris Maycock was recently handed a family photo which she immediately recognised was taken at the same spot as the one on the Tea Room wall. The photo shows a group of workmen sitting on a stack of timber in Combe Yard. The original photo was taken by Archie Dunkerly who was Clerk of Works between 1905 and 1918 and also a keen photographer.

Great Uncle George MERRY

Great-Grandpa BERRY



Archie Dunkerly photograph

Mr Berry was Christine's grandfather

Perhaps other local families hold similar information that could add other names to this image.

Please arrange any swaps yourself

Non-steaming Wednesdays

Date	Ticket Office Clerk	School Hol
March		
Wed 19 March	Cliff M	
Wed 26 March		
April		
Wed 02 April	Rose R	
Wed 09 April	Tony S	
Wed 16 April	Derek G	
Wed 23 April	Peter T	
Wed 30 April		
May		
Wed 07 May	Rose	
Wed 14 May		
Wed 21 May	Peter T	
Wed 28 May		
June		
Wed 04 June	Rose	
Wed 11 June	Derek G	
Wed 18 June		
Wed 25 June		
July		
Wed 02 July	Tony S	
Wed 09 July	Derek G	
Wed 16 July		
Wed 23 July		
Wed 30 July		
August		
Wed 06 Aug		
Wed 13 Aug		
Wed 20 Aug		
Wed 27 Aug		
September		
Wed 03 Sept		
Wed 10 Sept		
Wed 17 Sept		
Wed 24 Sept		
October		
Wed 01 Oct	Cliff M	
Wed 08 Oct		
Wed 15 Oct		
Wed 22 Oct		
Wed 29 Oct		

Forthcoming events - 2025

Monday 10 March - 2pm - Board Meeting @ Mill
Saturday 22 March - 11am - Volunteer recruitment session
Mon/Tue 24/25 March - Europa School visits - year 8
Mon/Tue 31/01 March/April - Europa School visits - year 7
Friday 25 April - Annual General Meeting
Thursday 1 May - 11.30am - Classic car club visit
Monday 2 June - 11.30am - Oxford Rotary Club visit
Wednesday 16 July - 1pm - Vintage Motor Cycle Club visit

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

Hello to Terry May

We have not seen Terry at the Mill recently as he has been waiting for an appointment for a cardiac procedure. Unfortunately for Terry, he recently suffered an emergency that required the fitting of a heart pacemaker. He is now at home recovering and all his friends wish him a speed recovery.

Membership Fees for 2025 - LAST REMINDER

Fees are £10 for a Member and £15 for a Family. The fee for Friends is a minimum of £25.

Members wishing to receive a paper copy by post need to add £14 to their payment.

Fees are payable from 1 January.

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!