



The Combe Yard

Newsletter of the Combe Mill Society



November 2025



Photo by David Knight

Wood Crafts steaming event

Our final steaming event for this season was held on Sunday 19 October in the rain. David Knight organised the exhibitors that included the local Association of Pole Lathe Turners and Green Woodworkers.

David Owen visited from Cambridge to demonstrate hurdle making. Visitors were able to see a variety of wood craft skills including spoon carving demonstrated by Jeff Coles.

Margaret Gruber booked over a dozen market stalls but several cried off because of the bad weather and we welcomed six on the day.



Jeff Coles showing spoon carving



David Knight on the pole lathe

The heavy rain prevented the Charlbury Morris side from performing which was a shame. Despite the bad weather, we had 164 visitors and raised a good income.

Figures for the steaming takings can be viewed on the members' website.



The BBOWT stand



Richard Edwards demonstrates wood turning



Our BBQ on the look out for customers



Doreen Turner on the Meet and Greet table



A wood turner's stall attracting attention

Christmas Hamper

We are planning the star prize at the Winter Fayre to be a fully filled Christmas Hamper. If there are any items you can bring along to fill the hamper it would be appreciated: wine, mince pies, pickles, chocolates, tinned fruit, cheeses, crackers, jellies, custard, vouchers are just a few ideas. Please bring items along to the Gift Shop.

Christmas Raffle

We are also looking for gifts to complete the Raffle. Again items that you feel appropriate, like Christmas cake, crackers, donated vouchers, and toiletries, all gifts greatly received and appreciated.

Margaret

Santa's Grotto and Winter Market

Please do all you can to promote our Winter Fayre so that it is a financial success. Bookings to visit Santa are low at the moment and need a boost.



Waterwheel maintenance

Keith Johnson is gradually replacing the folding oak wedges holding the waterwheel to the axle tree. The wedges have been prepared by Robin Bowls' son and we are very grateful for this assistance.

When last run, noises were heard from the wheel that were not the result of loose wedges. Investigation continues to identify the source.

Half term children's activities

Throughout the month of October we mounted a Halloween Trail and Pumpkin Hunt for children for which prizes were offered. On Wednesday 29 October, we offered our annual pumpkin carving session which was reasonably well supported by visitors. Forty five pumpkins were donated by local suppliers.

Thanks go to Wendy Foster who organised the events and to Carol Hicks, a new volunteer, for helping Wendy to facilitate the pumpkin carving.



Whetstone refurbishment

Stuart Bridger is working to refurbish the whetstone next to the Bradford steam engine. Over the years, oil has got into the water tank below the stone and become absorbed into the stone itself. Refurbishment involves cutting back using the dresser made by Derek Goddard until clean stone is revealed. This is an on-going and long process.



Abingdon Preparatory School visit

Seventeen pupils of Abingdon school visited on Monday 6 October afternoon for story telling and outdoor activities.

Wendy Foster organised the visit with support from Rowan Wynn-Jones of the Evenlode Partnership.

The group was formed into two parties that covered the story telling, tour of the Mill and outdoor activities.

Welcome to new volunteers

David Sullivan has recently joined and is settling in. John Higginson we mentioned last month decided quickly that the Mill was not for him and no longer attends.

Andy and Carol Hicks came to help during our half-term activities and we look forward to see more of them when other duties permit.

Forthcoming events - 2025

Wednesday 12 November - 11.00hrs Extraordinary general meeting followed by general meeting

Thursday 13 November - 2pm - Board Meeting @ Mill

Sunday 30 November - 11.00 - 16.00 hrs Christmas Fayre

Mixed feedback from visitors

When visitors come to the Mill during our lunch breaks they expect to see things working and people to engage with. Below is the worst feedback we have EVER received and it must not happen again.

Name + Date	Comment	Vi
's Oct 2025	Waste of money as nothing is working	

In contrast we received this email from a happy visitor - her comments are self explanatory.

Message Body: I just wanted to say a massive thank you to all the volunteers at Combe Mill. We have been to a few events this year and thoroughly enjoy ourselves each visit. Each and every volunteer we have spoken to is friendly, helpful and informative. I have to say a particular thank you to the ladies doing the pumpkin carving this week and the ladies who do the tombola, my daughter loved the day and had a lot of fun!

A welcome bequest

We were recently advised by the executors of Philip Hawtin that he had remembered us in his will and made a welcome bequest to the Society. We are very grateful for Philip's kind bequest. A bequest from the membership is something to be encouraged as a source of funding.

A busman's holiday

Former Combe volunteer, Charlie Rich, visited the mill recently from Wales and was quickly helping out with the on-going maintenance at the site. The path alongside the work shed sits at the top of the steep embankment above the River Evenlode and needs three sets of gravel-board shuttering to maintain a level pathway. One of the support posts was found to be extremely rotten and the shuttering was on the point of failing. Should this happen, part of the gravel path could have cascaded down onto the embankment making a much bigger job to repair in the future and there was also a risk that the store cupboards could slip down the embankment.



The new retaining wall

Charlie in his own imitable style soon had the gravel dug out, the post replaced and the shuttering strengthened before replacing the path gravel. Job done; on to the next task. It was good to catch up with Charlie and put the world to rights again; we'll have to find another job ready for when he visits next time.

Terry Bailey

Best wishes to Members

We all send out best wishes to various colleagues who are recovering from hospitalisation - Tony Thurlby from his fall and neck injury - and Derek Goddard from a recent heart attack. Also to others in our midst who are dealing with their own health issues.
