

# Minutes of Directors Board Meeting

Date of Meeting: 12<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Time of Meeting: 1.30pm

Place of Meeting: Combe Mill Tea Room

Purpose of Meeting: Scheduled Board meeting of Combe Mill Society

Distribution: Directors, Noticeboard, Website Members' page

**Present:** Nigel Evans, Margaret Gruber, Peter Trowles, Bob Wheeler, Rose Ralphs  
Lorna Gale (minutes)

## 1 Apologies

Richard Stone. Tony Simmons

## 2 Minutes of previous meetings

Minutes of last meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025 were confirmed as true record of the Meeting.

## 3 Matters arising from previous minutes

3.1 Frank Collingwood from Oxford Bus Museum has cancelled arranged meeting and we await a new date. Meanwhile, PT has rewritten the text of "how to get here..(Combe Mill)" on our website.

3.2 Philip Hawtin's daughter (Jane Shortall) and son (James Hawtin) are coming to the Mill before we open on our April steaming (19<sup>th</sup> April 2026) to present the clock which Philip has given to Combe Mill. Wording on commemorative plaque to be discussed with them on the day, possibly add or re engrave existing plaque in the wheel room.

3.3 Events – PT has written to Wildlife Oxfordshire but they are not in a position to organise out wild life event in July.

We don't know yet whether Alan and Mary will attend with their owls as planned for 2026. MG to contact and ask if they want to become Friends of Combe Mill. **Action MG**

## 4 Correspondence

4.1 Sarah Menary (Museum Accreditation mento) has been in touch to ask if we would like a mentor report to include in our accreditation documentation.

PT to reply accepting this offer.

**Action PT**

4.2 To return Oxford Museums license to continue the loan of the Otmoor clock.

4.3 There has been a request from Thame Museum for help with their safeguarding policy. Wendy Foster wrote the Mill safeguarding policy. There are resources and advice on the NCVO website. NE will phone Thame and explain.

**Action NE**

## **5 Acknowledge reports of DRS, Treasurer, Head of Operations and Activities**

5.1 Safety – see appendix

Richard Newman has offered to take over the fire alarm system.

5.2 Operations report – see appendix

Of note, Richard Edwards and Tony Thurlby may not be back before March, woodturning currently suspended until we know availability of above members.

PT to contact Blenheim regarding trees whose roots have been under water for much of the winter and assess their stability.

**Action PT**

Marquees have taken a battering in 2025 and the decision has been made not to erect the main marquee until April. The Retail shop and Meet and Greet will be housed in the Foreman's Office for the March steaming. MG in agreement and will begin planning.

5.3 Treasurer's report – see appendix

We will be close to breaking even than originally anticipated thanks to the £3000 legacy from Philip Hawtin. This is despite the increased insurance costs (c£4000) and the fire protection system (£9354). Expenditure to date is £40,423 against an income of £39,567; for the whole of last year the figures were £37,898 and £41,580

RS comment re switching to a card reader with a 1.75% service charge (currently it is 1.5%) would increase charges by about £30/yr.

TS questioned where cost of postage for newsletters was recorded, found under Governance – Admin.

## **6 Actions arising from reports**

All reports added as appendices.

## **7 Review of progress on strategic issues**

7.1 Making progress with Museum status.

PT is working on the Collections inventory. We have one year left for our application, consequently the Forward Plan is on hold although the museum accreditation is an integral part of this.

## **8 Review of governance issues**

8.1 We need to mitigate the risk that critical information such as passwords, PIN numbers etc. are held by members at home and are not available to the Board of Directors should that member become unavailable, for whatever reason.

Any member who has information critical to keep the Mill going needs to give this information to Peter Trowles who will co-ordinate this information.

8.2 RShas created a 'Treasurer' directory in the Dropbox and uploaded the PDFs and the reconciled year-to-date accounts for January along with a document that explains how the Excel is used.

8.3 Succession planning – presentation from NE regarding critically low numbers of volunteers now, and in the future. There are not enough members to run steaming Sundays without people having to dodge between different areas to cover. By 2028 NE predicts that we will be at half strength and we will have to make difficult decisions about the operation of the Mill in it's current form.

We need to recruit 20+ members particularly with skills in website, posters and advertising, along with a recruitment officer.

The Board will meet for a brainstorming session next Wednesday (18<sup>th</sup> February 2026) followed by a Members' meeting the following week (25<sup>th</sup> February 2026)

## **9 Review any major operational issues**

9.1 The card reader serving the Tea Room is broken and needs replacing. The Board has been looking at replacing both readers (tea room and ticket office) with a simple system, easy to use by all members if required, plus maybe a terminal for the BBQ and the retail area.

DR and RR have produced a list of options including upgrading existing Zettle, or a new SumUp system. RR to get more information on SumUp system.

Currently Zettle give us Charity discounts, do SumUp offer a similar discount? To be discussed at meeting next Wednesday.

## **10 AOB**

10.1 Should we be changing who we Bank with and look at those free to Charities?

10.2 March steaming posters and Mothers' Day vouchers have been produced by TS.

10.3 Check whether BBQ available for March steaming (likely position on marquee site).

10.4 Jeff Broxholme funeral – TS and Mike Hallam to attend.

RW to edit interview of interview with Jeff Broxholme and make available.

**Action RW**

10.5 AGM will be last Friday of April (24<sup>th</sup>). PT to send out paperwork and work out who is retiring by rotation etc.

**Next meeting:**

**16<sup>th</sup> April 2026 1.30pm Combe Mill**

Minutes Secretary

Lorna Gale

## **Appendices**

### **Safety report**

#### **Safety group**

During this closed period, the safety group has not met since the last board meeting due to unavailability of members, and emphasis on getting the fire alarm fully operational.

#### **Fire alarm**

The new fire alarm system is now fully operational following the exchange of the fire panel that is located in the tearoom.

Richard N had offered to take over the fire alarm system from Terry B and since the installation of the new fire panel, Richard has been testing the system early every Wednesday. The weekly test is a legal requirement and the fire logbook contained in the cabinet next to the panel is being completed each week. To date there are 3 people who are trained to conduct the test and to switch the sensors from smoke to heat mode for days when the forge is lit. A two-page operating procedural document has been written making it easy to train back-up operators in case of Richard's absence.

The additional steam boiler burner cut off point will be connected later this spring when the boiler is back up and running .

ARTSS the alarm installer and supplier, has the contract to maintain the system and will make 2visits in the 2026 season.

#### **Falls**

There has been a fall on the wet mud/grass outside by the east corner of the tearoom decking.

This is a slight slope and used daily during opening hours. This could have been a serious incident and discussions of erecting a temporary barrier on the slope is being considered.

### **Climbing**

The safety group have been made aware of, and witnessed, members using chairs, tables and even handrails in order to climb. This practice is not allowed and there are step ladders available on each floor of the main building and will be emphasised at the next members meeting.

## **Mill Operations**

### **Winter jobs list**

To date, 52 of the jobs identified on the Winter Lists have been addressed and there are 8 jobs that are work-in-progress. Notably, parts of the public area of the forge have been painted and cleaned up with repairs to the floor. There is still more to do in this area. Parts of the steam engines and the Beam engine have also been painted, and steam pipe work gaskets have been replaced, with minor repairs to the steam engines. Extensive activity on the first floor has resulted in the woodworking area looking more managed and not neglected. All items in the attic and the footman's bathroom have been listed so that a structured approach can be instigated to sort out the items which we no longer need. The steam boiler has passed its yearly structural inspection and a steam test with the inspector is still to be completed later this month. The 2 audio visual panels, 1 in by the Cornish boiler and 1 in the wheel room have now been replaced with modern Chromebook screens. Grateful thanks to every member who has been, and still involved, in this work.

### **Woodturning**

Wood turning experiences have been currently suspended until we fully understand the availability of the two woodturners, Tony and Richard. Both are reportedly making good recoveries. Radical decisions will have to be made in March if neither Tony or Richard continue to be unavailable.

### **Picnic area**

An area for concern is the extent of the flooding damage to the picnic area. The flood waters have taken away large parts of our fencing, and we will need an assessment of the stability of some of the trees which have been underwater for most, if not all, of this year.

### **Marquees**

The marquee fabric, especially the main marquee took a battering from the extremes of weather in 2025. Having a marquee erected from early March to mid-December, the fabric has had to withstand snow and ice loading, then extremes of heat and rain, and in between, 50mph winds. The current plan is to erect the main marquee on 4 March. We should explore the idea of running the retail shop and meet and greet from the foreman's office for March only and erect the marquee in April.

### **Duke of Edinburgh's Award**

Roman, a pupil from Woodstock School will be volunteering from March in order to gain the Silver award. He is starting on our first steaming day and will come every Wednesday straight from school for our final hour. This is a great opportunity, however small, to encourage the younger generations in keeping the mill operational.

## Treasurer's Report

| COMBE MILL SOCIETY            |                           |             |     |             |            |            |             |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|-----|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Receipts and Payments Account |                           |             |     |             |            |            |             |
|                               |                           | 03/02/2026  |     |             | Y/e 2025   |            |             |
| Balance at 1 April            |                           |             | B/F | £ 48,343.82 |            | B/F        | £ 44,963.56 |
| Lloyds Bank                   |                           |             | £   | 12,867.29   |            | £          | 29,377.22   |
| Savings Reserve               |                           |             | £   | 35,000.00   |            | £          | 15,000.00   |
| Petty Cash                    |                           |             | £   | 476.53      |            | £          | 586.34      |
| Receipts                      |                           |             |     |             |            |            |             |
| Fund Generation               |                           |             |     |             |            |            |             |
|                               | Tea Room & BBQ            | £ 14,734.27 |     |             | £15,166.43 |            |             |
|                               | Retail Sales              | £ 1,826.69  |     |             | £1,798.51  |            |             |
|                               | Other Sales               | £ 118.51    |     |             | £435.00    |            |             |
|                               | Market proceeds           | £ 695.00    |     |             | £950.00    |            |             |
|                               | Grand Draw receipts       | £ 1,199.00  |     |             | £384.00    |            |             |
|                               | Hire of Rooms + Equipment | £ 1,025.00  |     |             | £2,094.00  |            |             |
|                               | Experience Vouchers       | £ 3,722.33  |     |             | £3,464.00  |            |             |
|                               |                           | -----       |     |             | -----      |            |             |
|                               |                           |             | £   | 23,320.80   |            | £24,291.94 |             |
| Charitable Activity Income    |                           |             |     |             |            |            |             |
|                               | Admissions                | £ 10,036.14 |     |             | £11,574.30 |            |             |
|                               | Forge Sales               | £ 812.50    |     |             | £891.00    |            |             |
|                               |                           | -----       |     |             | -----      |            |             |
|                               |                           |             | £   | 10,848.64   |            | £          | 12,465.30   |
| Other receipts                |                           |             |     |             |            |            |             |
|                               | Sundry receipts           | £ 6.00      |     |             | £518.05    |            |             |
|                               | Refunds on Purchases      | £-          |     |             | £424.30    |            |             |
|                               | Easy Fundraising + Smile  | £ 218.92    |     |             | £91.84     |            |             |
|                               |                           | -----       |     |             | -----      |            |             |
|                               |                           |             | £   | 224.92      |            | £          | 1,034.19    |
| Voluntary Income              |                           |             |     |             |            |            |             |
|                               | Member Subscriptions      | £ 833.00    |     |             | £1,100.50  |            |             |
|                               | Donations                 | £ 3,369.20  |     |             | £1,030.55  |            |             |
|                               | Grants Received           | £-          |     |             |            |            |             |
|                               |                           | -----       |     |             | -----      |            |             |
|                               |                           |             | £   | 4,202.20    |            | £          | 2,131.05    |
| Tax Rebates                   |                           |             |     |             |            |            |             |
|                               | Gift Aid Refund           | £ 970.48    |     |             | £975.97    |            |             |
|                               |                           | -----       |     |             | -----      |            |             |
|                               |                           |             | £   | 970.48      |            | £          | 975.97      |
| Loans received                |                           |             |     |             |            |            |             |
|                               | Loans from supporters     | £-          |     |             | £-         |            |             |
|                               |                           | -----       |     |             | -----      |            |             |
|                               |                           |             | £-  |             |            | £-         |             |
| Interest Received             |                           |             |     |             |            |            |             |
|                               | Savings Reserve account   | £-          |     |             | £ 682.16   |            |             |
|                               |                           |             |     |             | -----      |            |             |
|                               |                           |             | £-  |             |            | £          | 682.16      |

|                         |                                 |                              |               |             |           |             |             |  |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|--|
|                         | Operating Receipts              |                              |               | £ 39,567.04 |           |             | £ 41,580.61 |  |
|                         |                                 |                              |               | -----       |           |             | -----       |  |
|                         |                                 |                              |               | £ 87,910.86 |           |             | £ 86,544.17 |  |
|                         |                                 |                              |               | =====       |           |             | =====       |  |
| Payments                |                                 |                              |               |             |           |             |             |  |
| Voluntary Income Costs  |                                 |                              |               |             |           |             |             |  |
|                         | Voluntary Income Costs          | £ -                          |               |             | £471.41   |             |             |  |
|                         |                                 | -----                        |               |             | -----     |             |             |  |
|                         |                                 |                              | £ -           |             |           | £ 471.41    |             |  |
| Fundraising Sales Costs |                                 |                              |               |             |           |             |             |  |
|                         | Food Supplies                   | £ 7,942.92                   |               |             | £7,854.62 |             |             |  |
|                         | Retail Supplies                 | £ 410.85                     |               |             | £396.73   |             |             |  |
|                         | Advertising                     | £ 298.90                     |               |             | £2,966.89 |             |             |  |
|                         | Payment for visiting attractio  | n£ 580.00                    |               |             | £60.00    |             |             |  |
|                         | Market Costs                    | £ 67.17                      |               |             | £247.08   |             |             |  |
|                         | Web Site hosting and suppor     | t £ 1,036.18                 |               |             | £904.06   |             |             |  |
|                         | Return of booking deposit       | £ -                          |               |             | £ -       |             |             |  |
|                         |                                 | -----                        |               |             | -----     |             |             |  |
|                         |                                 |                              | £ 10,336.02   |             |           | £ 12,429.38 |             |  |
| Governance - Upkeep     |                                 |                              |               |             |           |             |             |  |
|                         |                                 | Phone, Broadband, Zoom       | £ 883.34      |             |           | £1,091.25   |             |  |
|                         |                                 | Rent, Rates, Water           | £ 386.38      |             |           | £485.49     |             |  |
|                         |                                 | Electricity                  | £ 3,672.00    |             |           | £4,484.00   |             |  |
|                         |                                 | Maintenance Contracts        | £ 285.29      |             |           | £ 560.21    |             |  |
|                         |                                 | Cleaning and Waste           | £ 1,407.49    |             |           | £1,621.06   |             |  |
|                         |                                 |                              | -----         |             |           | -----       |             |  |
|                         |                                 |                              |               | £ 6,634.50  |           |             | £ 8,242.01  |  |
| Charitable Activities   |                                 |                              |               |             |           |             |             |  |
|                         |                                 | Boiler                       | £ 1,581.75    |             |           | £1,788.15   |             |  |
|                         |                                 | Consumables for Forge        | £ 1,063.45    |             |           | £1,358.87   |             |  |
|                         |                                 | Maintenance of Premises      | £ 10,874.69   |             |           | £4,766.95   |             |  |
|                         |                                 | Maintenance of Displays      | £ 927.76      |             |           | £863.83     |             |  |
|                         |                                 | Learning & Training Costs    | £ 112.97      |             |           | £290.32     |             |  |
|                         |                                 | Other                        | £ 342.45      |             |           | £441.84     |             |  |
|                         |                                 |                              | -----         |             |           | -----       |             |  |
|                         |                                 |                              |               | £ 14,903.07 |           |             | £9,509.96   |  |
| Governance - Admin      |                                 |                              |               |             |           |             |             |  |
|                         |                                 | Printing & Postage           | £ 1,075.49    |             |           | £1,882.58   |             |  |
|                         |                                 | Reference book or publicatio | n£ -          |             |           | £ -         |             |  |
|                         |                                 | Subscriptions for Other Bodi | s£ 307.00     |             |           | £576.00     |             |  |
|                         |                                 | Insurance and Professional F | ee£s 6,880.63 |             |           | £2,702.65   |             |  |
|                         |                                 | Museum Accreditation costs   | £ -           |             |           | £ -         |             |  |
|                         |                                 |                              | -----         |             |           | -----       |             |  |
|                         |                                 |                              |               | £ 8,263.12  |           |             | £ 5,161.23  |  |
| Finance charges         |                                 |                              |               |             |           |             |             |  |
|                         | Bank charges/PayPal+Zettle Fees |                              | £ 286.35      |             |           | £887.79     |             |  |
|                         |                                 |                              | -----         |             |           | -----       |             |  |
|                         |                                 |                              |               | £ 286.35    |           |             | £ 887.79    |  |

|                     |                  |                                            |       |  |                |            |                |
|---------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------|--|----------------|------------|----------------|
|                     | Assets purchased |                                            |       |  |                |            |                |
|                     |                  | Office Equipment<br>Furniture<br>(Marquee) |       |  | £ 1,196.09     |            |                |
|                     |                  |                                            | ----- |  | -----          |            |                |
|                     | Loan repayments  |                                            | £-    |  |                | £ 1,196.09 |                |
|                     |                  | Loan repayments                            | £-    |  | £-             |            |                |
|                     |                  |                                            | ----- |  | -----          |            |                |
|                     |                  |                                            | £-    |  |                | £-         |                |
|                     |                  | Expenditure                                |       |  | £<br>40,423.06 |            | £<br>37,897.87 |
|                     |                  |                                            |       |  | £<br>47,487.80 |            | £<br>48,646.30 |
| Balance at 31 March |                  |                                            |       |  |                |            |                |
| Lloyds Bank         |                  |                                            |       |  | £<br>12,867.29 |            |                |
| Savings Reserve     |                  |                                            |       |  | £<br>35,000.00 |            |                |
| Petty Cash          |                  |                                            |       |  | £ 476.53       |            |                |
| Cash In Hand        |                  | Balance at 31 March<br>2025                | £-    |  | £<br>48,343.82 |            |                |
| Unaudited           |                  |                                            |       |  |                |            |                |
| Cash In Hand        |                  | Balance at 31 March<br>2024                |       |  | £<br>44,963.56 | Inc-Exp    | £ 3,682.74     |
|                     |                  | Increase                                   |       |  | £ 3,380.26     |            |                |