



The Combe Dard

Newsletter of the Combe Mill Society



April 2026

March Steaming Event

Our first event of the season was held on 15 March and although no theme existed, the day happened to be Mothers' Day. The morning weather was sunny and rain only arrived later in the day. We had an excellent turnout and takings were exceptional for a March event.

A local Morris Minor club attended and around six cars displayed which added interest for visitors.

Visitors began to arrive as soon as we opened and a total of 152 attended.

Since the marquee had not yet been erected, the gift shop was located in the Foreman's Office as was the meet-and-greet table and the tombola stall.

Thanks to the various projects carried out over winter, the various areas in the Mill looked very ship-shape and made a good impression.



Visitors in the Pattern Shop



Meet-and-greet underway



Tombola stall

The Tea Room redeemed thirty five Cream Tea vouchers that had been issued by the Ticket Office.

The day was a great success and everyone involved deserves a big thank you for their efforts.



Shaft of sunshine across the forge.

Photo by Stuart Bridger

Re-erecting the marquee

Good weather after the March steaming event provided an opportunity to put the canvas back on the marquee frame.

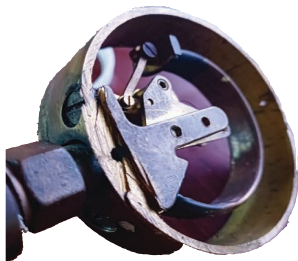
A good team of members rallied to the cause.

It was not long before the gift shop crew re-occupied the space and made ready for the new season.



Weir boiler feed pump

The Weir boiler feed pump had a non-functioning pressure gauge. This was stuck reading at 5 PSI and the case was loose. While not critical to running of the engine, it just didn't 'look right', so was removed for strip and repair.



On strip down, it was found that it had an 'interesting' history. The valve body appeared to have been hand sawn to fit and the plastic bezel (which disintegrated on removal) covered part of the scale. So clearly it wasn't original.

A quick test with an airline proved that the Bourdon tube was functioning. So, the repair proceeded. The scale was cleaned, the needle removed and de-rusted.

A new bezel was turned from acetal.

The gauge was then reassembled, polished and refitted. Under steam, functionality was confirmed as was accuracy against a neighbouring gauge.

Stuart Bridger



Photos by Stuart Bridger

Waterwheel repair

During the first steam of the year, five wedges that secure the waterwheel to the shaft came loose.

On inspection it was found that the clearance between the far (pit wheel) side of the wheel and the aperture in the wall is very tight. Once worked loose, the wedges were catching on the wall and being flicked out.

Keith Johnson, Stuart Bridger and Colin Paice worked to replace the loose wedges which had rotted and firmly secured them.

This was no mean feat with limited room and initially water three quarters up Stuart's wellies. New wedges were cut to fit and hammered firmly home.

Persistence has paid off and after a number of sessions, the wheel was run on 1 April and appears to be running well. Interestingly there was evidence of wedges being secured by nails in the past, but not recently.



Photo by Stuart Bridger

Stuart Bridger

Tea Room promotion

Chris Maycock is promoting customer loyalty in the Tea Room. After collecting six stamps on their loyalty card, a visitor can claim a free tea or coffee.



Note this offer does not apply to members and volunteers in receipt of free beverages as a membership benefit.

What an exciting promotion - we look forward to its success.

Ticket Office refurbishment

Another job carried out during the off-season shutdown was re-roofing the Ticket Office. Water had been dripping onto the occupants during last year and rather than patch the leaks, Terry Bailey and his team decided it was better to re-felt the entire roof.

The ticket office clerks will be very grateful.

Pit-gear teeth refurbishment

The brass discs that identify the names of sponsors of the oak pit-gear teeth had become so tarnished as to be unreadable.

Keith Johnson and helpers have recently removed, polished and laquered the discs and re-attached them with stainless steel screws. They should now last a good few years.

Many thanks.

The names of teeth sponsors can be seen by following this link <https://www.combemill.co.uk/portfolio-item/waterwheel/> on the main website.



Squirrel invasion

We were recently tipped off by a visitor called Paul about a squirrel making a nest in a mill wall.

Paul, wrote: *My wife and I dropped into take some pics of the mill for an N Scale Diorama I'm making at the moment. It was during this visit that we noticed the squirrel intrusion. So glad we were able to let you know.*

Last year the house opposite our bungalow had a squirrel 'family visit' undiscovered for about six months. The roof eventually had to be taken off, all access sealed and inner felt and insulation totally replaced following the amazing destruction they had made.

Hope you and team are able to sort any damage at the Mill without too much work and expense.

We are now considering what steps to take.

Tony Thurlby

It was with great sadness we learnt that Tony Thurlby passed away on Monday 9 March. He would have been 89 on 21 March. Tony had suffered from health problems for a long time and earlier this year he was admitted to hospital again where he succumbed to pneumonia.

Tony joined the Society in 2006 with his wife Carol and immediately became the focal point for our carpentry exhibits. Carol was involved with organising childrens activities until her death in 2017.

Tony was a countryman born and bred. What he didn't know about plucking a pheasant or skinning a rabbit was not worth knowing. He knew all there was to know about wood in all its types and uses.



Tony Thurlby



Celebrating our IMechE Award

One of his hallmarks was his walking stick that he had 'grown' and shaped. Tony can be seen holding his stick in the photograph on the left taken when we celebrated our award from the Institution of Mechanical Engineers a few years ago.

There are reminders of the contribution Tony has made to the Mill everywhere one looks. He made the retail 'gift shop' trolley; the oak stands for the historic clocks were a joint effort with Ken Crawford. He also left his mark at Blenheim Palace where he made new stanchions that supported the crimson ropes in the palace lobby.



Clock stands in the making



Stanchion finials for Blenheim



Finished stanchions ready for delivery

During his National Service Tony had been part of REME in Germany and much involved in vehicle maintenance and movement. On completion of National Service he worked on the railways based in Derby. He was an expert carpenter and joiner and told many a tale of the various projects he had worked on. By the time Tony joined the Society he was a caretaker and school crossing patrol. Both he and Carol were very active in their community.

Tony accumulated a large collection of agricultural machinery and gadgets that he often displayed at our annual events.



Tony's agricultural machinery display

Tony's funeral will take place on Friday 17 April, 12.30 at Tingewick Church, 2pm at Milton Keynes Crownhill Crematorium then tea and cake in Tingewick Village Hall.

Roster for Ticket Office Clerk

Date	Ticket Office Clerk	School Hol
March		
Wed 18 March	Lorna Gale	
Wed 25 March	Lorna Gale	
April		
Wed 01 April	Carol Hicks	
Wed 08 April	Carol Hicks	
Wed 15 April	Cliff Manion	
Wed 22 April	George Farmer	
Wed 30 April	Alan Burch	
May		
Wed 06 May	Rose Ralphs	
Wed 13 May	George Farmer	
Wed 20 May	Richard Stone	
Wed 27 May	Carol Hicks	
June		
Wed 03 June	Rose Ralphs	
Wed 10 June	George Farmer	
Wed 17 June		
Wed 24 June	Alan Burch	
July		
Wed 01 July	Rose Ralphs	
Wed 08 July		
Wed 15 July	Alan Burch	
Wed 22 July	Andy/Carol Hicks	
Wed 29 July	Andy/Carol Hicks	
August		
Wed 05 Aug	Alan Bush	
Wed 12 Aug		
Wed 19 Aug		
Wed 26 Aug		
September		
Wed 02 Sept	Alan Burch	
Wed 09 Sept		
Wed 16 Sept		
Wed 23 Sept	Cliff Manion	
Wed 30 Sept	Goerge Farmer	
October		
Wed 07 Oct	Cliff Manion	
Wed 14 Oct		
Wed 21 Oct		
Wed 28 Oct		

Forthcoming events

Thursday 16 April - 1.30pm - Board Meeting @ Mill

Friday 24 April - 7.30pm - Annual General Meeting - Foreman's Office

Thursday 23 April 2026 - The Marcham Society

Sunday		Event
March	15	Combe Mill in Steam - Mothers' Day
April	19	Military Vehicles + Amateur Radio Society
May	9[^]/10	National Mills Weekend + Amateur Radio Society
June	21	Classic Wheels - Fathers' Day
July	12	Wildlife by the Evenlode
August	16	Models and Collections
September	20	Crafts and Skills
October	18	Wood Crafts + Autumn Market
December	6	Christmas Fayre (not in steam)

[^] Saturday 9 May not in steam

AGM reminder

A reminder that our annual general meeting will be held in the Foreman's Office on Friday 24 April which provides a good opportunity to take stock of the past year and to ask questions of the Board about plans for the future.

News of members

It is good to see Richard Edwards and Derek Goddard back at the Mill. We wish all the best to other members who are currently coping with health problems.