



# The Combe Dard

## Newsletter of the Combe Mill Society



October 2026

### September steaming event

We held our Crafts and Skills steaming event on 20 September and it was very well attended by 180 visitors on another glorious summer's day.

As well as the displays from local craft clubs, we also enjoyed the attendance of several classic vehicles. The most striking attendees were several members of the steampunk community who circulated among the crowd and enlivened the day with their imaginative costumes. We hope they will return.



Photos of the steampunk attendees



Andy Hicks with his farrier display



Market stalls near the entrance



Variety of classic cars on display



Colourful spinning demonstration



Continued .....

.....Continued



Mark Richards provided an interesting demonstration of rope-making that always attracts much attention.



A first for a long time was the running of the barn engines and pumps. The team comprising Richard Stone, George Farmer and Dave Sullivan have worked hard to reach this point.



**Peter Trowles samples the boiler water properties under the watchful eye of Richard Newman**



**Sally Bridgeman and colleague at their stall representing the Old Souls Parlour recently opened in Woodstock**



**Errol Taylor and Steve Mullinger attending the small steam engines with supervision by Brian Layt-Williams**

*Continued .....*

.....Continued



Finally, no report of our September steaming event could be complete without mention of the Charlbury Morris side which, as usual, gave an energetic display in the afternoon.

## Christmas Fayre poster competition

There were two entries for the poster competition. One from Tony Simmons and the other from Emma Yeatman, a friend of Chris Maycock. The choice among the directors was for the one by Emma - it was chosen because the wording stood out more clearly.

Emma has been asked to make a few amendments and to produce an A6 version for use on social media.

The purpose of running this competition had been to find members with artistic talent but we failed to find such a person within our ranks.

Well done Emma.



## Visit from Kidlington men's shed

This message was received by Richard following this visit.

On behalf of the Kidlington Men's Shed members, who attended Combe Mill tour yesterday. I would like to thank you and all the Mill volunteers we met on our tour around the Mill yesterday, 14th Oct.



We met Alan at the Ticket Office and he impressed everyone with his incredible knowledge of the Mill's history and of the Church clocks and how their mechanism worked.

Everyone was most welcoming and seemed incredibly enthusiastic about their particular area of expertise. What a knowledge bank you have.

I knew our guys were enjoying themselves, because it was so hard to drag them away from your volunteers. Herding cats is easier.



We all left with a smile and I'm sure some will return to the Mill soon.

Once again Richard, thank you for your help with this successful trip, it was very much appreciated. Please pass on our thanks to everyone.

Regards Cefn, Kidlington Men's Shed.

---

## Waterwheel repair progress

Keith Johnson, Steve Mullinger, Andy Hicks, new volunteer Erroll Taylor and I recently started the task to raise the waterwheel, pit wheel and axle assembly in order to be able to extract the failed support beam. This was undertaken after a careful review of the options and a risk assessment.

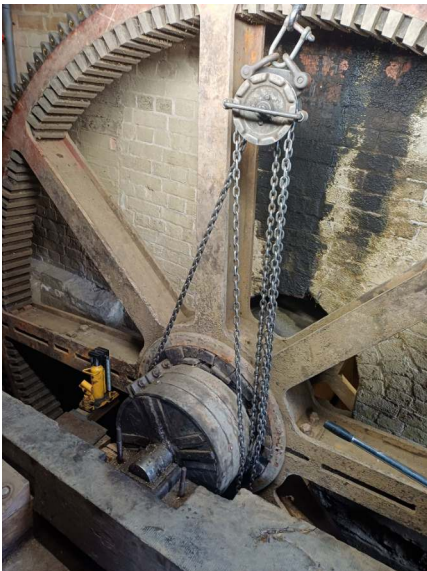
The method chosen was a pair of toe jacks supported by steel box section across the pit. This was combined with a chain hoist which was hung from the stub lineshafting. Lifting commenced with great care to ensure equal loading across all supports. The axle was also chocked with wedges where it passes through the wall to the wheel room. The total lift was less than two inches, this was enough to successfully extract the rotten elm beam with the bearing and housing. The bearing was still in good condition.

The next stage is to review the design of the support frame. The consensus among the team is that the existing arrangement is less than ideal and although the failure was due to rot, we believe that we should be able to come up with a solution that better supports the significant weight.

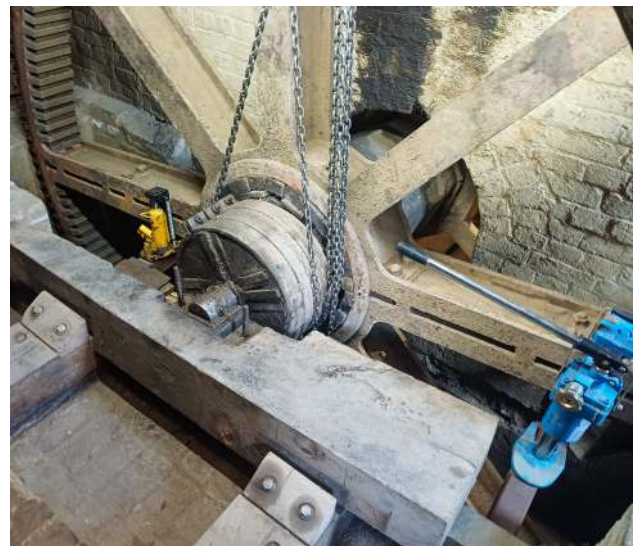
The final task of the day was an inspection of the clearance under the waterwheel, which did show a good gap at the pit wheel end.

The team produced a dimensioned sketch of new oak replacement beams and we have initially approached Blenheim Estate as a possibly supplier.

*Stuart Bridger*



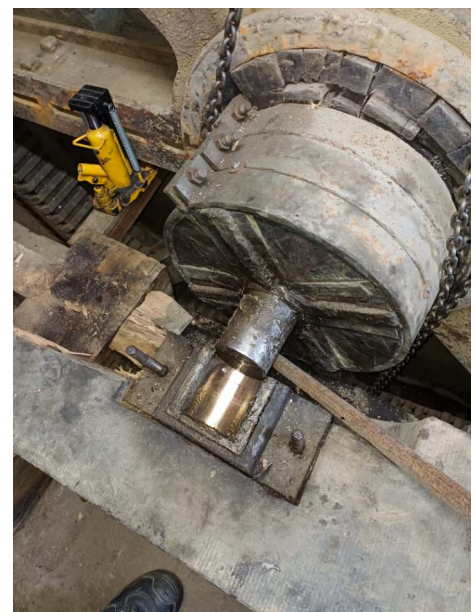
Chain hoist supporting the end gudgeon



Yellow and blue toe jacks in place



Plenty of clearance with broken beam removed



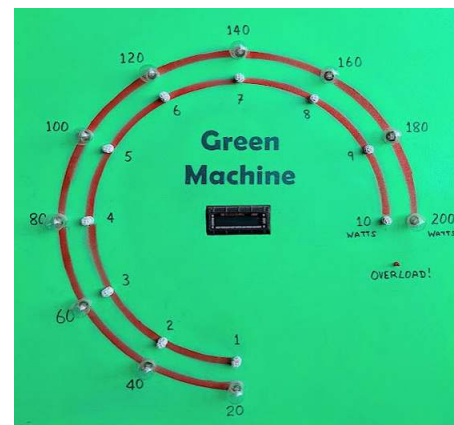
Bronze lower bearing cup before removal

## New STEM display - the Green Machine

At a recent steaming event, Nigel Evans met Steve Sutton, a retired electrical engineer and a retired governor at a school near Swindon who has offered us the 'Green Machine'. This was a STEM apparatus he built for showing children that electricity is not free and has to be made.

The board has decided that this would be a great addition to Combe Mill because electricity power and its generation is an obvious progression from steam and water power.

The bike is a child's bike to give you an example of size. Electronics inside the green box converts the AC voltage to DC and causes each successive light to come on as the pedals are turned faster and the voltage increases from about 8.5V to 12.5V DC. This in turn adds extra load to the circuit making it harder to turn (about 20W per filament bulb). There is a switch on the back to enable you to see what it is like powering LED lights instead of the car brake light bulbs - ie much easier as they are only 10W in total, but very bright.



Power output dial



Behind the Green Machine there is also a chart showing approximately how much energy it takes to run different appliances in the house.

Most children are surprised how much effort it takes to run a games console and it is an opportunity to remind them to switch things off when not in use!

Finally, as shown, the Green machine stands can be removed, the green box unplugged and there is detachable wheel at the back, to make it easier to move about if needed.

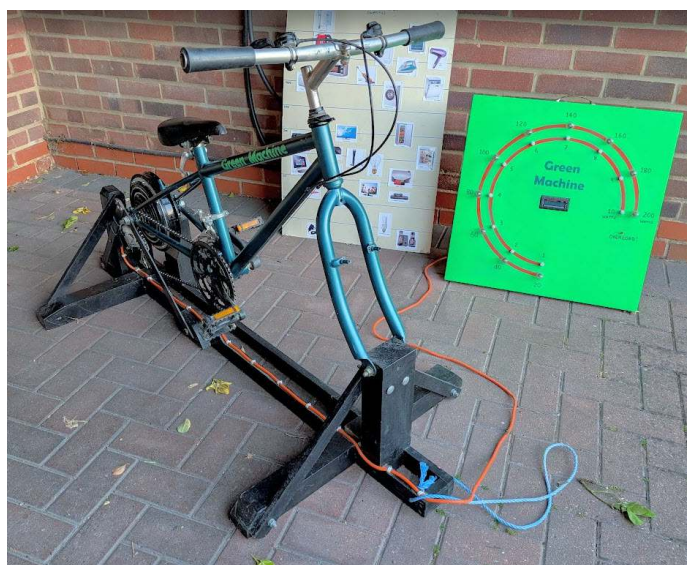
We will thoroughly overhaul and check out this set-up before we let visitors have a go.

Energy consumption chart

*Details from Nigel Evans*



Green machine waiting for set-up beyond the Footman's Bathroom



Green machine set-up before delivery to us

## Forthcoming events

Wednesday 9 December - 2.00pm - Board Meeting @ Mill

| Sunday   |    | Event                          |
|----------|----|--------------------------------|
| October  | 18 | Wood Crafts + Autumn Market    |
|          |    |                                |
| December | 6  | Christmas Fayre (not in steam) |

## Roster for Ticket Office Clerk

| Date           | Ticket Office Clerk | School Hol |
|----------------|---------------------|------------|
| <b>October</b> |                     |            |
| Wed 07 Oct     | Cliff Manion        |            |
| Wed 14 Oct     |                     |            |
| Wed 21 Oct     |                     |            |
| Wed 28 Oct     |                     |            |
|                |                     |            |

## Christmas Craft Appeal



As part of the Christmas Fayre, we are running children's crafts in the Foreman's Office.

Please can you look and see if you have anything we can use such as pine cones, glitter, ribbons, card etc.

*Thanks Rose*

