



COBHAM MILL PRESERVATION TRUST

NEWSLETTER ~ SPRING 2012

Anniversary Party and the Lease Renewal: On Sunday June 19th last year we held a most successful party at the Mill to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the incorporation of the Cobham Mill Preservation Trust as a registered charity. This year we are able to celebrate that, after seven years of negotiation, we have successfully renewed the lease of the Mill from the Environment Agency. The new lease will run until 14th July 2024. At one point in these negotiations, it seemed that the EA was taking steps that would require the whole process to be recommenced. The Board is very grateful to local MP, Dominic Raab, who intervened on behalf of the Trust by approaching the Rt. Hon. Lord Chris Smith of Finsbury, Chairman of the Environment Agency, to secure a speedy completion.

Lammas Day August 2012: In conjunction with St. Andrew's Church in Cobham, some of our Millers, led by Paul Bryant, helped to revive the old custom of celebrating Lammas. The first harvested corn of the year, supplied by local farmer Dominic Combe, was freshly ground at the mill. The Patisserie in Stoke D'Abernon used the flour to bake special Lammas Day loaves. These were presented during the service and then broken into pieces by some of the children in the congregation before being distributed for everyone to taste. It was a happy occasion, thanks to all those who took part.

An increase in group visits in 2011: It was especially encouraging to see so many groups of children from schools and from other local organisations exploring the Mill and obviously relishing their time there. Some spent half-an hour, but others were there for the better part of an afternoon.

CCHT Riverhill Project: As you will no doubt have noticed, outdoor work on the Riverhill Project has at last started in earnest. A number of trees, whose roots were undermining the road and footpath, and a number of fallen branches have been severed and removed. However, coppicing rather than pollarding of others seems to us to have been unnecessarily harsh. The Board has been given assurance by the CCHT that a five metre wide strip to the west of the tailrace will be left undisturbed as a wild life haven. This will be marked solely by a line of short but substantial timber posts which will be sunk into the ground. A further development is that the limited parking at the end of Riverhill is replaced by a pavement extension. Double yellow lines will be introduced along the length of Riverhill beyond the mill. Sadly, this will make it more difficult, especially for the aged or infirm, or those with small children, to find easy parking close to the mill. Even using Sunday parking in Cedar Road or Cedar Avenue will leave the need to cross a sometimes very busy Mill Road.

Website: During the coming months, with the assistance of the CCHT webmaster Richard Mulhall, we shall be setting up a new website. Although there will be a link to the CCHT website as at present, it is intended that our new website will be fully independent and directly accessible for people searching on the internet. It should also be easier for us to keep the website up-to-date, and we hope that the changes we introduce will avoid the confusion that sometimes arises between the CCHT and the CMPT.

Research project: We are proud to record that, last summer, the Mill was chosen to be a guinea pig for an assessment of the impact of flooding on cultural heritage sites. Local resident and Oxford University undergraduate, Victoria Elbourne, used the mill to test certain hypotheses, and her assessment will form part of her final's dissertation. She has offered to give a presentation of her findings, later in the year.

Keeping the wheels turning: On the technical front, it was toward the end of 2010 season that it was noted that the engagement of the pitwheel with the wallower had diminished over the years to the extent that urgent remedial action was necessary. This was successfully undertaken by two of our volunteers, Malcolm Perry and Ben Newport; many thanks to both of them. We continue to keep a close eye on this area, but have since completed a full season of operation without further concern.

For some time now we have also been carefully monitoring the deterioration of some of the wooden gear teeth of the spur wheel. Despite being of fruit wood, probably apple, the teeth are proving remarkably tough and resilient. Nevertheless, we have obtained half a dozen spares, just in case. We are most grateful to John Williamson of East Molesey who kindly manufactured these from our existing small stock of fruitwood (probably pear), to our in-house design.

Despite recent concerns about the possible closure of our timber suppliers at Norbury Park Sawmill, which is managed by the Surrey Wildlife Trust, we have obtained a further supply of replacement oak paddles, wedges, and other basic components. These should enable us to maintain the water wheel in a satisfactory working condition for some time. Our association with this sawmill goes back many years. It made the timber benches located at the mill and on the picnic area beyond. It is to make a new oak bench, kindly donated by the family of the late Terry Kelly, and to be inscribed to his memory. Terry loved the Mill and for many years acted as its 'caretaker'. The bench will be located on the picnic area later this year. If you intend purchasing some solid oak garden furniture, Norbury Park Sawmill is well worth checking out.

A winter visitor: During the past winter months, certain 'wildlife' took up temporary residence in the mill. Judging from the content of the 'scat' left behind this was probably a mink who had fed well (and probably frequently) on the local crayfish population. Rest assured all areas will be well cleaned and disinfected prior to our first open day on Sunday 8th April.

Looking ahead: Our usual winter maintenance programme is progressing well; so far with no major problems to contend with. The new season lies ahead of us and I trust it will be as successful as the last. My thanks to our hardworking volunteers and also to all our members for their continued support.

Richard Ward

Chairman

A few administrative matters:

The subscription renewal form is enclosed: please note that the minimum subscription is £2 per person per year. If you are able to set up a standing order, that would certainly make life easier for our Treasurer. A current e-mail address would also be handy for our administration team.

Board members: Richard Ward, Chairman; Michael Measures, Deputy Chairman; Patricia Ward (Hon Secretary); Harold Addicott (Hon Treasurer and Membership Secretary); John Ball (technical advisor); Keith Simm (Open Day organisation); Mark Quinn (Security); Nita Rodd (Sales Director); Paul Bryant and Ken Green.