

## **Newsletter - March 2008**

### **Interest in the Mill continues**

Our Open Afternoons on seven Sundays in 2007 attracted a steady stream of enthusiastic visitors, averaging approximately 100 on each occasion. The special opening on Saturday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, when the Mill was running for much of Cobham Heritage Day, proved to be particularly popular. We were delighted to welcome not only visitors to the Mill but also a substantial crowd that gathered around the Mill and on the banks of the Mole to watch the Duck Races, and to cheer on the ducks that managed to make it to the boom at the end of the races.

We are also pleased that amongst our most regular visitors to the Mill are some handsome herons, which are frequently provided with gourmet meals by a local resident.

### **Changes to the Board**

Mike Measures retired as Chairman last June after nearly five years in the post, but has remained on the Board as Deputy Chairman. One of Mike's primary concerns is to ensure that the Mill has a permanent place in the history of Cobham and that it should be cared for and maintained in such a way that it can endure for future generations to enjoy.

Richard Ward has since taken over the chairmanship and we have welcomed Ken Green as director responsible for membership.

### **Anne Bryant**

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death of one of our staunchest volunteers, Anne Bryant, who died in January. Anne not only supported her husband Paul in all the various duties he undertook as a former Director and Chairman of the Trust, but made many special contributions of her own including some pen and ink drawings for the revised guide to the Mill.

### **The Mill has made it to the World Wide Web**

With much help and assistance from the Cobham Conservation and Heritage Trust, in particular from Richard Mulhall their webmaster, information about the Mill and membership of the Preservation Trust are now available directly at [www.cobhammill.org.uk](http://www.cobhammill.org.uk), or through the CCHT website. Also we have a general contact e-mail address ([info@cobhammill.org.uk](mailto:info@cobhammill.org.uk)) and a number of others that are identified on the website and in this newsletter. We are always looking for improvements to our webpages, so if you have any suggestions, please e-mail them to us.

## **Maintaining the Mill**

This, of course, is one of the most important aspects of the Trust's work.

We mentioned in last year's newsletter that many of the 32 wooden paddles and their attachments to the waterwheel (starts) were found to be at, or close to, the end of their safe working life. We can now report that those most in need of immediate attention have been replaced. The rest will be dealt with before our first opening in April. The starts were originally made in elm and we are hoping that the new paddles and replacement oak starts will last a little longer.

The winter months have been put to good use and preparations for the new season are now under way. Essential tasks have ranged from inspecting bearings and re-levelling and re-installing the millstones to removing the tree roots that were impeding the flow of water to the waterwheel. However, we are increasingly aware that some time in the not-too-distant future more extensive, and probably expensive, engineering work will have to be undertaken; parts of the Mill machinery are now nearly 200 years old and showing their age.

Following the winter period there is a need for the Mill to be given a thorough clean and for some internal repainting before our first Open Afternoon on Sunday 13th April. **To volunteer to help with this, please send an e-mail to [info@cobhammill.org.uk](mailto:info@cobhammill.org.uk), giving the date(s) and time(s) that you could be available, or leave a message on 01932 867387.**

## **A Plea for Continued Support**

Mike Measures, the recently retired Chairman, has spoken frequently about how the Trust's remit is to ensure that the Mill can be enjoyed now and in the future. It is an important local landmark and is one of the features that give Cobham its distinctive character. However, we need to expand our team of volunteers, particularly people willing to become guides and technicians, help with the sales table, or simply lend a hand with the extensive programme of maintenance which goes on throughout the year. Commitment in terms of time can be as little as a few hours a year, so if you are not already a volunteer, please do consider becoming one. Our membership has remained stable over the last few years but, as always, we would like to see more residents of the local area become Cobham Millers. If you are able to encourage friends and neighbours, especially new neighbours, to join the Millers, please do. Details are easily found on our new website. **Anyone interested in volunteering can contact the Trust by e-mail at [info@cobhammill.org.uk](mailto:info@cobhammill.org.uk). Alternatively, contact the Membership Secretary at the address on the enclosed form, or simply leave a message with contact details on 01932 867387.**

## **The Future of Skilton's Yard**

Skilton's Yard, together with the Mill and the houses adjacent to the Yard, are at the heart of Cobham's history and heritage and are part of our most important Conservation Area. Unfortunately, the timber buildings are not nationally listed but are on Elmbridge Council's list of 'Local Buildings of Special Interest' published in 2000. They are therefore considered to be 'locally listed'. Some development of this site is almost inevitable and may be advantageous in the long term. However we do feel that such development should not be overbearing or out of character, but should conform to, and if possible enhance, this conservation area.

Since our last newsletter, further planning applications relating to this site have been submitted to Elmbridge Borough Council. The latest of these proposes the conversion and modification of the existing timber buildings into four flats, plus the construction of a further two flats in the remaining space. We hope that Millers will take an interest in the future of Skilton's Yard, and continue to express their views and concerns to Elmbridge Borough Council.

## **The Mill Surrounds and Riverside Footpath**

Over the past few years it has been noticeable that many of the riverside willow trees had put on some considerable growth. The results of this were twofold. First, they were impeding the view of the mill when approaching Cobham along Mill Road, and second, they were overhanging the river to the extent that their roots were beginning to damage the footpath. This footpath is certainly not the direct responsibility of the Trust and there appears to be some uncertainty over where the responsibility for the maintenance and repair of this footpath should lie. However, in order that the stability and safety of the footpath be assured as far as possible, a joint effort was made between ourselves and the Cobham Conservation and Heritage Trust. As a result we arranged for the weeds overgrowing the footpath to be cut back or cleared, the footpath surface to be made good, and for a new top dressing to be applied. Later, the riverside willow trees were initially trimmed back by a Trust volunteer, and eventually heavily cut back by the Environment Agency.

We have been making good use of the Probation Service, which has supervised groups of Community Service workers in the repair of the footpath, as outlined above. These workers have also cleared weeds, trimmed overgrown vegetation, applied preservatives to the fencing and our picnic tables, two of which we had previously repaired. They also cleared and tidied the adjoining landscaped area beyond the weirs. Unfortunately, much of the latter work was undone by the recent heavy flooding which left very considerable deposits of debris and sand over this area. This area will need to be cleared once more, so no doubt we shall again be calling upon the Probation Service.

## **Mill Lease.**

As you may be aware, the Mill building and the area immediately surrounding the Mill are not owned by the Cobham Mill Preservation Trust. They are presently under the stewardship of the Environment Agency with which we have a very good working relationship. The Preservation Trust leases them from the Agency for a nominal annual payment. Our lease is currently being reviewed and amended with the aim of more clearly defining the rights and responsibilities of the parties concerned.

## **Mill Visits**

Group visits for adults or children can be arranged by e-mail to [visits@cobhammill.org.uk](mailto:visits@cobhammill.org.uk) or a message can be left on 01932 867387 to which a volunteer will respond. Visits help to 'spread the word' about the importance of the Mill to Cobham and, in the case of school parties, inform youngsters about their local heritage. So if you are associated with any group that may be interested in a visit, please encourage organisers to get in touch.

## **Cobham in Bloom**

We have recently been advised by the Cobham in Bloom Working Group that they will be entering the S & SE in Bloom Competition again in 2008, *provided they can get help from other local groups*. They have also advised us that Cobham Mill will be on the judges' route this year. If their plans do come to fruition, doubtless we will be giving them all the support we can in their quest for a gold medal.

## **Do you use e-mail?**

If you do and would in future be willing to receive subscription reminders and newsletters in this way, please let us have your e-mail address. A quick e-mail to [membership@cobhammill.org.uk](mailto:membership@cobhammill.org.uk), with a note to this effect, is all that is needed.

## Subscriptions 2008/9

The Annual Subscription for 2008/9, which still remains at a **minimum of £1 per person per year**, is due on 1<sup>st</sup> April. As always, any further donation you may care to make will help considerably toward the cost of the ongoing and future maintenance the Mill and would be very much appreciated.

It might be more convenient for you to place a **Standing Order** with your bank. Such a method is also much more convenient for the Trust. Enclosed with this Newsletter is a form that can be used for Direct Cash or Standing Order payments. Receipts will only be issued if specifically requested.

If you are a taxpayer and have not completed one in the past, you can also assist the Mill financially by completing the **Gift Aid Declaration** on the form. For every pound subscribed during the past four financial years, and in the future, a further sum can be reclaimed from the H M Government.

### Multiple subscription payments by some Millers

We continue to find that a number of Millers who pay their annual subscriptions by bank standing order have made more than one payment during the year. If this was their intention, then we thank them very much. For anyone who did not intend this, please check with your bank and amend the standing order instructions appropriately.

### And last of all.....from the Chairman

*On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to thank all our Millers for continuing to support us with their subscriptions and generous donations toward the work of preserving the Mill. The Board is particularly grateful to those members who volunteer for the various duties that enable our Sunday Open Afternoons and Group Visits to go ahead so smoothly, and to those who offer their help and support with maintenance and other tasks.*

*I would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate that we would very much like to see an increase in the numbers of our volunteers for all the various tasks and activities of the Preservation Trust. As already indicated in this newsletter, the commitment need not be onerous; just a few hours a year. So, if you are not already a volunteer, please do consider becoming one. **Anyone interested can contact me by e-mail at [info@cobhammill.org.uk](mailto:info@cobhammill.org.uk)***

### Open Days in 2008

The second Sunday in the months April to October, 2.0 pm to 5.0 pm, with short talks being given at 2.30 pm and 3.30 pm.

Also, during Saturday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, in support of Cobham Heritage Day