



COBHAM MILL PRESERVATION TRUST

NEWSLETTER ~ SPRING 2019

Open Days during 2019 will be on the following Sundays from 2.00pm to 5.00pm
14th April, 12th May, 9th June, 14th July, 11th August, 8th September, 13th October
and Cobham Heritage Day, Saturday 14th September, from 12.00 noon to 5.00pm

Our Crown Jewels

The Trust has been invited to take part in an initiative of the Cobham Conservation & Heritage Trust (CCHT) involving St. Andrew's Church, the Mill and St. Mary's Church in Stoke d'Abernon, these being considered to be the three crown jewels of our local historic heritage. It was agreed by the Mill Board that it should take part. Briefly, the proposal is that an illustrated leaflet will be produced by the CCHT giving pictorial and descriptive details of each location, emphasising the particular historic and heritage features. These leaflets will be distributed both locally and more widely and will be available at each venue. Additionally, all three locations will be open to the public at times coincident with our normal Sunday openings on the 2nd Sunday of the months April to October, and of course Heritage Day. Our proposed photographs and accompanying text for inclusion in the leaflet have already been submitted to the CCHT scrutineers. As at the Mill, guides will be on hand at each venue.

Ownership of the Mill

You will now be familiar with the fact that the Environment Agency is the current owner of the mill. In early 2016 it initiated discussions with the Mill Board concerning the future of the mill. The Agency indicated that it wanted to pass on ownership of the mill to the Trust. In principle, this was acceptable to the Trust as there had always been a determination that the mill should one day be considered to belong to the people of Cobham. However, the proposal from the EA included a requirement that the Trust should also take full responsibility for the ownership, maintenance and operation of the weirs, a proposal we felt to be both unrealistic and unfeasible. The discussions then stalled.

Toward the end of 2017 we made a tentative enquiry regarding possible progress on this matter, suggesting that since we had heard nothing for such an extended period, the whole idea of the EA disposing of the Mill, land and weirs had been quietly dropped from its agenda. This resulted in a quick response to the effect that the 'disposal' was still an on-going objective.

However, a recent discreet enquiry has not moved matters forward. Therefore we can only surmise that the 'disposal' of the mill is no longer a primary concern of the Agency. Of course, we will keep you updated should we hear anything further.

Volunteering at the Mill

As always, our current team of volunteers has continued to organise and run the normal Sunday open days and the occasional weekday or weekend visit of other interested groups. However, our volunteer resources during last year were severely stretched. The Board is working hard to recruit more members and more volunteers and we hope that our current members will do everything possible to spread the word. Please do mention the Trust to new neighbours and especially to those who are reaching retirement or are already retired. As an existing member, why not consider becoming a 'volunteer' yourself?

Open Days during 2018

As usual our Sunday Open Days proved popular, with donations and takings from the sales table very much in line with previous years. We were particularly pleased to see so many families; some, recently moved to the area, bringing their children and showing interest in the way wheat used to be converted into flour.

Group Visits during 2018

We had several group visits during last year. Of particular note was a group from Wimbledon Windmill, from whom we received the following message of thanks from their group organiser: -

"We all had the most lovely day out in Cobham and are most appreciative of your kindness and enthusiasm for showing us the results of your amazing work on the mill. A couple of our volunteers remembered the mill from the days when it was about to crumble into the river, so were especially pleased to see it now in all its glory. We also much enjoyed the video and came back with fresh ideas of what we might do in Wimbledon. I still have my bag of flour so will think of you again when I get round to baking a little loaf!"

Wishing you all the best for the mill in the future, and thank you so much for sharing your time with us."

The Landscaped Area

As reported in the 2018 Newsletter, the Cobham Conservation and Heritage Trust (CCHT) has approached the Mill Trust concerning the possibility that the area might be opened to the public more frequently. We believe that it has also approached the Environment Agency (EA) along the same lines. At present the EA position, with which we concur, is that the area will normally be kept locked in order to minimise litter and vandalism in the area, and to take into account "Health and Safety" aspects. However, the area is often open for public use during the times that the mill is open. Recently, the CCHT has hinted at the possibility of Saturday openings immediately preceding our Sunday openings, but further than this no decision has yet been made.

It is also worth noting that the Landscaped Area is being considered for inclusion in an updated version of the Cobham Conservation Area. Recently the Mill Trust has been involved with the Cobham Character Appraisal & Management Proposals Working Group that has been charged with the task of putting forward proposals for amendments to the boundary of the current Cobham Conservation Area. It was pointed out that the weirs upstream of the mill were vital for the continued monthly operation of our historic mill and that the landscaped area provides some of the best locations from which to view Cedar House. The latest draft report and proposals of the working group include the introduction of the whole of the landscaped area into the Cobham Conservation Area. At the time of going to press the final approval of the proposed amendments to the conservation area are still awaited.

You may have noticed that the willow tree in the east corner of the landscaped area that collapsed into the Mole last summer was eventually cleared away by the Environment Agency. Subsequently, a survey of other trees in the area was conducted. This revealed that one tree was dead and rotting, and others were in need of urgent attention on safety grounds. The dead tree was found to be home to numerous insect species, and in line with the EA principles, was cut down and set aside to continue rotting and acting as an 'insect hotel'. Others have been trimmed, possibly too drastically in our opinion, and left to regrow.

Mill Maintenance

Thankfully there were no major problems with the mill machinery during last year. A few of the paddles worked a little loose due to old age and one fell off altogether and was replaced. Also a family of mice made the mill its home for a period last summer. The mice seem to have developed a particular taste for a low voltage cable which, as a result, had to be repaired a couple of times. Hopefully, this little problem has now been remedied, certainly for the time being. Sadly there are so many places where these little rodents can enter, we can be fairly sure they will be back at some time. In addition, our usual winter visitor, the mink, recently took up residence again!

We are currently in the process of improving the appearance of the area around mill by better retention of the weed barrier membrane and the addition of more pea shingle. Additionally, we are planning to replace the banner that is normally attached to the west side of the mill during the week prior to our Sunday open days. The new one will carry the same message but will be smaller, smarter, and above all, easier to put up.

Before our first open day we will have completed the re-assembly of the milling machinery following our usual winter maintenance programme. The replacement of some ageing waterwheel paddles is also necessary. The clearance of the usual root growth from the nearby willow tree, to ensure adequate flow through the leat, will also need attention. So there is still plenty of work to be done, both inside and outside the mill building before our first open day on Sunday 14th April. Any offers of assistance will be gratefully received!

Data Protection

As you will be aware the latest evolution of the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) took effect on May 25th 2018, and the UK Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) received the Royal Assent on 23rd May 2018. In order that the Trust can show compliance with our understanding of these two legislative instruments, we must be able to show that we have obtained your valid and specific consent for us to hold your personal data.

In anticipation of this, we previously included a form that provided further information and required your completion and return if the Trust is to continue holding your data. With a few exceptions, the majority of the completed forms indicated satisfaction that the Trust continued to hold the limited level of members' personal data sufficient to maintain our records. However, the overall response was rather disappointing in that, so far, we have only received responses covering roughly a third of the membership.

If you have already completed the form or provided the Trust with an equivalent response, I thank you. However, for the remainder of our members, I am again asking that you complete and return the "Data Protection" form that comes with this newsletter. Please use whatever means is most appropriate for you (i.e. by hand, by Royal Mail, by email etc.). Alternatively, a simple letter will suffice. Please make sure that whatever method used clearly identifies the preferences for all the members that the letter covers, and is signed and dated appropriately. (Please note that a Membership Subscription form is also included, just in case you need one.)

Our records

Over the years we have tried to keep our records as up-to-date as possible. However, despite our best endeavours, this has not proved to be an easy task. Members move location and may not advise us, members pass away and we don't hear, or simply members do not wish to continue with their membership and we are not informed. Therefore, as a means of minimising the unnecessary paperwork and postage costs that this implies, we have decided to apply the following strategy.

Should our current records show that a member has not paid the annual subscription for 3 consecutive years, the member will no longer automatically receive a copy of our annual newsletter, nor will the member receive further communications from the Trust.

As part of our continued efforts generally to reduce unnecessary paper work and postage costs, we will continue to send out copies of the newsletter by email, unless you have specifically requested communications by post. However, and where possible, please advise us of your email address by emailing us at 'info@cobhammill.org.uk' or 'membership@cobhammill.org.uk', and we can do the rest.

For the Philatelists

During 2017 we accepted a request for Cobham Mill to be involved in the introduction of a new postage stamp issue to commemorate Windmills & Watermills. In thanks we were given a limited number of First Day Cover envelopes with the £1.40 stamp pre-franked by a simplistic waterwheel design surrounded by the words "COBHAM MILL, COBHAM, SURREY" and dated 20th June 2017. Should anyone be interested in one, I'm sure we can agree a price.

Mill Restoration Video

As mentioned in last years newsletter, but probably worth another mention, is that the video that is frequently shown during our open days is now available to a worldwide audience via our website. Simply open your browser and search 'Cobham Mill', go to the 'History of the Mill' page, then to the 'The Mill Restoration' page, and click play.

In Memoriam - John Bonny ARIBA

Following his retirement in 1988, John became a member of the Trust in August 2000. For many years he served as one of our open day guides and was made an honorary life member. As a gifted artist, his sketches of the mill were used to produce notelets and notepads, often on sale at the mill to the benefit of our funds. You can see one of them below. Sadly, John passed away, aged 90, last December.

And finally

As usual, my thanks go to all our hard working volunteers and also to all Cobham Millers for their continued support. If you know of anyone who would like to join our volunteers in maintaining the Mill, or who might be able to assist in any way, please do ask them to get in touch. Our contact details are shown below.

And just one last request; please make sure that we have your up-to-date email address. Using email enables us to avoid the ever-rising cost of printing and mailing your annual newsletter. Remember, all recent newsletters can be viewed on the 'Newsletters' page of our website.

Richard Ward,
Chairman

Board members: Maggie Bowen; Ray Brodrick; Bob Cummings; Noel Ingram; Nita Rodd; David Taylor;
Patricia Ward; Richard Ward

Telephone: 01932 867387 (please leave a message).

Postal address: Cobham Mill, Mill Road,
Cobham, KT11 3AL

Email address: info@cobhammill.org.uk

Website: www.cobhammill.org.uk



Drawing by John Bonny

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