



# COBHAM MILL PRESERVATION TRUST

NEWSLETTER ~ SPRING 2021

**Covid-19 permitting, the 2021 Open Days will be on the following Sundays:-**

**11<sup>th</sup> July, 8<sup>th</sup> August, 12<sup>th</sup> September and 10<sup>th</sup> October – from 2.00pm to 5.00pm**

**plus Cobham Heritage Day, Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> September, from 12.00 noon to 5.00pm**

Before you do anything else, please read the section on “Our records and future policies” on Page 3.

## **Covid-19 and how it affected us.**

As you will have noticed the mill remained closed to the public for the entire 2020 season (from the first lockdown early last year to the present). The primary reason for this was that lockdown commenced before we had completed the normal winter maintenance programme. Typically, this requires a minimum of three persons to work in close contact, and in a confined indoor space. And, to put it tactfully, those concerned are generally of the age group considered to be amongst the more vulnerable to the serious effects of Covid-19.

This situation continued throughout last year. However, along with improving conditions following the introduction of the vaccination programme and the Prime Minister’s broadcast (22nd February) outlining the “roadmap” toward “normality”, there may be some light at the end of the tunnel. Even so, restrictions may remain in place until June 21<sup>st</sup> that may delay the completion of last year’s maintenance programme. It is possible that we may find additional problems, arising from the extended period of inactivity since the Mill last saw action, that also need to be addressed. Consequently, the dates given in the banner headline above should only be regarded as a tentative guide to our opening times for the 2021 season.

## **The Landscaped Area - a new look for the area beyond the weirs**

This area of land, often referred to as the picnic area, is now included in the Cobham Conservation Area. For some time we have been giving consideration to changing the look of this area, with the possibility of it being open to the public on a more regular basis. With this in mind, tentative plans were first put to the Environment Agency (EA), which owns about a quarter of the land, and which ultimately controls pedestrian access. Our proposals have now been approved. The idea is that the area should be converted from a plain grassed area that is mown monthly from April to October, into a wild flower meadow (the term meadow is a bit of an exaggeration). (See sketch on page 4)

The whole area, with the exception of marked pathways and access to the bins and seating areas, will be seeded and planted with a mixture of wild flowers (which should include yellow rattle) and then left for nature to take its course. The boundary hedge areas will also be seeded with a “hedgerow mixture”. The EA has stipulated that only UK native species should be used.

We are hoping that our members and any other interested local groups (scouts, guides, local schools etc.) will come forward with the seeds or plants, and we will make sure that necessary access is available.

A small additional benefit from this has been a reduction in the cost of the monthly mowing, that comes out of our funds.

## **Group Visits during 2020**

Sadly, and for obvious reasons, there were no group visits during the whole of 2020. Hopefully, when we are up and running again, this will change.

## **Retirement of Bob Cummings as a Trustee and Board member.**

After the death of his wife Janet in 2017, Bob continued to be an active trustee and board member of the CMPT. However, last year he decided that he would relocate to the west country to be closer to his family and has recently completed the move. As a result, he has also resigned from his responsibilities as a trustee and board member. For all his enthusiasm, patience, wisdom and hard work on behalf of the CMPT we are extremely grateful.

Bob's portfolio of responsibilities, which included maintaining and updating our membership records, have now been passed to board member Noel Ingram. It would be a great help if all members could keep Noel informed of any changes to their postal and email addresses. This can be done either by a letter to the mill or by email to [info@cobhammill.org.uk](mailto:info@cobhammill.org.uk)

## **Routine Annual Maintenance**

As usual, a few of the older elm paddles had worked a little loose and required attention during 2019. Most of this was dealt with during the time before the first lockdown of 2020. The original paddles were made of English elm (*Ulmus procera*) and are supported by 'starts' made from English oak (*Quercus robur*). Due to the shortage of English elm, of which there are only about 100 trees left in the UK, we have been replacing the deteriorated elm paddles with English oak for a number of years. So far these newer paddles have proved to be up to the task.

During the latter part of 2019 we noticed that a young willow tree had started to grow in the tail race just by the mill and that the tail race itself was generally becoming a little overgrown, and was restricting the outflow. This was commented upon during a visit by the EA whilst it had personnel clearing debris that was blocking the river flow over the nearby weir. Magically, the tail race was cleared and the willow sapling disappeared. Our thanks for this go to the EA.

The clearance of the usual root growth from the nearby willow tree, that can so dramatically reduce the flow to the waterwheel, will also need attention at some time before the first 2021 open day. So there is still plenty of work to be done. Any offers of assistance will be gratefully received!

## **Our Crown Jewels**

We will continue to play our part in this Cobham Conservation & Heritage Trust (CCHT) initiative as best we can. Updated leaflets will be available at St. Andrew's Church in Cobham, St. Mary's Church in Stoke d'Abernon and also at the Mill on our restricted open days during 2021, and will generally be available more widely at other times.

## **Volunteering at the Mill**

Our volunteer resources during past few years have become severely stretched. The Board continues to work hard to recruit more members and more volunteers, and we trust 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. If not already a volunteer, as an existing member, why not consider becoming a 'volunteer' yourself?

## **Ownership of the Mill**

Despite periodic discreet enquiries to ascertain whether the EA has moved matters forward, all we know is that the future ownership of the Mill is still under consideration. We will keep you updated should we hear anything further.

## **Data Protection**

As previously stated, the UK's departure from the EU should not impact the way we protect members' personal data. We still need to comply with the UK Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA), now known as the UK GDPR. However, recent enquiries lead us to conclude that we no longer require members to provide a specific statement such as "Yes I agree to the CMPT keeping/holding my personal data". The reason for this is that most, if not all, communications with members are of a "servicing" nature (i.e. this newsletter or notification of specific events etc.). Such communications come under the term "legitimate interest", but primarily because the data we hold will not be used for the purposes of direct marketing.

## **Our records and future policies.**

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 part of our continuing efforts to minimise unnecessary paperwork and to avoid the ever-rising postage costs, the following policies will apply.

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.

Additionally, unless a request for communications by post only is made, future copies of the annual newsletter and other communications will be by email or via our website only. It is therefore most important that you ensure that we have your current email address, or that you have made a specific request for communications by post only. This can be done by letter to the mill or by email to 'info@cobhammill.org.uk', and we will do the rest.

## **For the Philatelists**

We still have a few 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 20<sup>th</sup> June 2017. Should anyone be interested, I'm sure we can agree a price.

## **Our Finances**

We are very grateful to our members who pay their annual subscription, many of whom also make a donation. This income is usually supplemented by sales and donations made when we open the mill to the public. Sadly we were not able to do this in 2020. So far this year, we have been fortunate in avoiding significant damage caused by flooding and the careful attention of our technical volunteers has kept us free from major expense. If the driving mechanism of the mill should fail, and some of it, if not most of it could be close to 200 years old, we could be faced with very large expenditure. We maintain adequate reserves to cover such an eventuality.

## **Death of Gordon Potter.**

Our Spring 2020 Newsletter recorded the visit of Gordon to our 2019 tea party in the Cobham Village Hall following his 100th birthday. This time we have to record that Gordon died on 20th January 2021 at the age of 102 following a short illness. He will be remembered as one of the leaders of the initial restoration of the mill during the 1980's and 1990's.

## **And finally**

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 and postal addresses.](#) Remember, all recent newsletters can be viewed on the 'Newsletters' page of our website.

Richard Ward,  
Chairman

Trustees and Board Members: Maggie Bowen; Ray Brodrick; Noel Ingram; David Taylor;  
Patricia Ward; Richard Ward

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- FB = FOOTBRIDGE
- = TREE OR TREE STUMP
- = WASTE BIN
- ▨ = HEDGEROW - RANDOMLY SOWN WITH HEDGEROW MIXTURE
- = PROPOSED LIMIT FOR REGULAR MOWING
- = PATHWAY TO BE APPROX. 2 METRES WIDE & APPROX 1 METRE CLEAR OF TABLES, BINS & BENCH SEATS
- = PROPOSED AREA TO BE SEEDING WITH YELLOW RATTLE PLUS A VARIETY OF WILD FLOWERS TO ATTRACT BEES AND BUTTERFLIES ETC.
- = SHRUBS ETC.

NOT TO SCALE

R.W. 11-NOV 2020