



# COBHAM MILL PRESERVATION TRUST

NEWSLETTER - SPRING 2024

**Open Days during 2024 will be on the following Sundays from 2.00pm to 5.00pm**

**14<sup>th</sup> April, 12<sup>th</sup> May, 9<sup>th</sup> June, 14<sup>th</sup> July, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 8<sup>th</sup> September, 13<sup>th</sup> October**

**and Cobham Heritage Day also from 2.00pm to 5.00pm**

## **PREVIOUS OWNERSHIP OF THE MILL**

Reference to the “History of the Mill” section of our website in the “Owners and Tenants” section shows that in the seventeen hundreds one Thomas Lucy was the owner of the Mill and the house opposite. In 2019 we were contacted by a descendant of Thomas Lucy, currently living in Australia, who was planning to visit the mill in mid 2020. Due to Covid 19 travel restrictions this visit was cancelled. However, we were contacted again early last year and several family members of the relations of Thomas Lucy visited the mill on 17<sup>th</sup> June last year. Our local historian, David Taylor an expert on local history and author of several books related to Cobham’s history, was able to accompany them whilst they were in Cobham and at the mill.

## **FOOT BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER MOLE**

In the latter months of last year it became apparent that the second foot bridge over the River Mole was showing signs of structural deterioration. Consequently, the Environment Agency (EA), as owners of the mill and much of the surrounding area, decided that it was beyond repair and should be replaced. This foot bridge was marked as a ‘no go area’ during the latter months of 2023.

The work to replace the footbridge with one of a similar design and constructed in treated tropical hardwood timber began in January. The work was completed in February.

## **NEW COBHAM MILL TRUSTEES**

During 2023 it was agreed by the current Preservation Trust trustees that we needed to increase the number of active trustees. This was primarily brought about by the imminent retirement of Ray Brodrick and Noel Ingram as trustees. A number of our current membership were contacted in this regard. From some there was a ‘sorry, but no thanks’ but others were more positive.

As a result we would like to welcome Evelyn Brodrick and William Forrest to the fold. Both Evelyn and William have been members of working parties at the mill for some years, and are familiar with the organisation already. I hope we can look forward to a long and positive association with them.

## **REPLACEMENT OF WATER WHEEL PADDLES**

During last year it was noted that there were several paddles that were close to their ultimate working life. Some with corners missing, others working a little loose in their attachment to the waterwheel and others just showing their age and general deterioration. This has now become more of a problem than it was just a couple or so years ago when we always had a reliable source of replacement oak paddles.

With our ever-diminishing stock of paddles we are now faced with the problem of striking a workable relationship with an alternative local supplier. Although there are a number within the local area, these will need to be evaluated to determine whether they can meet our requirements.

## **PIT WHEEL AREA ILLUMINATION**

This area was previously illuminated by three simple standard strip lights mounted under the hurst frame. Following a safety review by the EA several years ago, these were replaced with sealed units. Unfortunately, these new units have proved to be considerably less reliable than the original units. At the time of writing this newsletter we are awaiting delivery of replacements.

The electrical supply and routing to these lights is also under review and will be amended as necessary, as will the supply and routing to the running stone viewing port access light circuit.

As a matter of general interest, several years ago this latter circuit became a frequent target of what we believe to be a mouse, or perhaps it was a local mink. Whatever it was had obviously taken against this particular circuit for some reason because it was often found totally eaten away during the time the mill was closed between open days. And always in the same place too. This part of the circuitry was eventually replaced with armed cabling and has survived uneaten so far.

## **OUR FINANCES and OTHER MATTERS**

It may have come to your notice that we have been having difficulty with our account with Barclays Bank. The bank has repeatedly closed our account without warning and for no appropriate reason. Never-the-less, it is now up and running again. For those whose subscriptions or donations were returned by the bank we would welcome your renewal.

As usual we remain very aware that the bulk of the mechanical drive components are up to 200 years old and are considerably worn in some places. This is the primary reason why we maintain significant financial reserves which we believe will be sufficient to cover most eventualities. To repeat previous newsletters, our income comes from generous donations, annual membership subscriptions, and the profits from the sales table. However, a significant contribution has come from a quite independent source. Yes, you have guessed it, the area behind the hedge and beneath the parasol.

For many years Elizabeth (and friends) have made this the place to be on our open days; where there is shelter from the sun (or rain) and you can get a 'cuppa' and a cake and have a chat with friends. All down to Elizabeth (and friends). Sadly, Elizabeth feels the time has come to take it a little more easily on the run up to mill open days. This has been a major contribution to the overall success of our open days over recent years and a major addition to this local attraction. The CMPT would like to thank Elizabeth for all her trojan efforts. She will be greatly missed. We hope to continue with the provision of tea and cakes under new arrangements.

Another "behind the scenes" change is that neither Nita nor Michael will be around on open Sundays. Nita, one of the original trustees of the CMPT, continued to take responsibility for the

ordering and storage of the goods available at our sales table following her retirement as a trustee. Additionally, Nita continued to monitor the cash left in the heavy donations box and also, alongside her husband Michael, she often assisted with the setting up of our heavy large parasol. By itself, no easy task!

Nita's long-time association with the mill goes back to the days of the original restoration in the early 1990s, and the formation of the CMPT. Her contribution to the overall success of the Trust and the frequent openings of the mill to the public is immeasurable. Many, many thanks Nita.

## **UPDATING OUR PAYMENT SYSTEM**

We are investing in an up-to-date card payment device like those widely used in most retail establishments. A little advanced for the Mill but we must move with the times! We think most people are familiar with "point of sale" devices from a customer's point of view. No doubt, our sales team will need a little practice on how to confidently operate it in all aspects, but we are hopeful that all will soon run smoothly in the long run.

## **AND FINALLY**

There is just one further retirement that I need to mention. After many years as the current chairman of the trustees of the CMPT I have decided that it is time for someone else to take the reins. However, I shall continue as a trustee and chairman for the immediate future until the new "chairperson" has been appointed.

My thanks to all the current 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.

Just one final request; **please make sure that we have your up-to-date email address.**

Richard Ward  
Chairman

Trustees / Board members    Maggie Bowen; Evelyn Brodrick; William Forrest; Noel Ingram;

David Taylor; Patricia Ward; Richard Ward

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## **POST SCRIPT**

Please be advised that William Forrest has been appointed as the new Chairman of the Cobham Mill Preservation Trust with immediate effect.