



COBHAM MILL PRESERVATION TRUST

NEWSLETTER ~ SPRING 2014

Start of another Year And what a start it has been so far! At the time of going to press, the Mill has been flooded on five occasions since our last public open day. The worst occasion was around last Christmas when the water level reached two feet above the floor. Everything below this level was covered in 'river water residue'. Since then the mill has been repeatedly flooded, but thankfully not to the same depth. Nevertheless this has significantly delayed our winter maintenance programme, making it a much more complex and time-consuming task than usual. Floodwater contaminated the tun, which had been removed in the autumn to enable the running stone to be checked, and subsequently all the storage lockers. Much had to be thrown away. It was then necessary to pressure clean and disinfect the tun and lockers, including any of their contents that could be salvaged, before thoroughly cleaning the inside of the building. The tun needed to be re-varnished before being refitted and most of the machinery required re-painting. With so much still to do before we could re-open the mill, it was decided that **our first Open Day in 2014 could not take place until the second Sunday in May**. In over two decades of the existence of the Preservation Trust, this is the first time that an open day has been cancelled.

We were intending to have an open meeting for all 'millers' during the early part of the year, though no date had been fixed. Unfortunately, the potential venue of Church Gate House was also severely affected by flooding, and we hear that it is unlikely to be back in use until the middle of 2014. Consequently, and for the time being at least, our plans for this meeting are 'on hold'.

Board Membership. There have been several changes during the past year. At the 2013 AGM, Harold Addicott, a long-standing member of the Board of Trustees who had previously signified his desire to relinquish his responsibilities on the Board, formally retired. For many years he acted as the Company Secretary and Treasurer until these positions were taken over by David M Taylor last year. Latterly Harold had additionally assumed the duties of the Membership Secretary, previously carried out by Ken Green. Ken also decided to retire at the 2013 AGM. The CMPT is very grateful to Harold and Ken for their commitment over the years, and wishes them both a long and happy retirement. Sadly we shall shortly be losing three more members of the Board. John Ball, Mike Measures, and Mark Quinn, all Directors of long standing, have given notice that they wish to retire at the 2014 AGM, though all will continue as volunteers. However, on a positive note, we have welcomed Bob Cummings to the Board. Bob, a recent volunteer, will be taking responsibility for maintaining our membership information.

In Memoriam. We are sorry to report the death last December of one of our founding members, Vernon Barrow. Until his death at the age of 96, he always took a keen interest in the conservation of the mill. It was Vernon and fellow engineer Roger Wright who, after much head scratching, insisted that between them they had 'experience of coeprage work' and together designed and constructed the tun. It is still in use today.

Family of swans. The breeding pair of swans which successfully raised a family of four cygnets in 2012, made its nest in the same location again last year. Sadly, after belatedly laying a clutch of 4 eggs, the swans failed to produce any cygnets this time around. All the eggs suddenly went missing and the nest was deserted. We are not sure of the reason but having noted the quantity of broken eggshell in the vicinity suspect that they made a ready meal for a local fox family.

Planting Project. With the agreement of the CCHT that an area bounding the mill tailrace be deliberately left in a naturally wild state, it remains our intention to introduce some additional and low level planting of native riverbank species in this region. We have received some general advice from the Environment Agency on the most suitable and acceptable species and look forward to making a start on this in the spring.

Girl Guides. As in 2012 the 1st Cobham Guides, under the leadership of Alison Greenwood, kindly undertook the task of caring for the border of low growing and evergreen flowers that they had planted around the old millstones adjacent to the mill. Additionally, further plantings along the riverside border area were made. The planting around the millstones was successful despite the occasional flooding and periods of extreme heat, but alas their horticultural efforts by the riverside were somewhat thwarted by over-enthusiastic strimming by our mowing contractors.

Parking close to the mill. Parking has continued to be a problem for those volunteers working at the Mill on maintenance tasks and occasionally on open days, especially when tools, machinery and goods need to be unloaded. As reported last year, I have raised with SCC the possibility that a few parking permits could be allocated to the Trust so that we can from time to time use the frequently vacant spaces in Cedar Avenue and Cedar Road. I was told that our request would be reviewed in early in 2013, but nothing materialised. However, the matter has been raised again and with the added support of our Surrey County Councillor, Mary Lewis, we hope that some progress might be made this year.

Website, Membership, Subscription and GiftAid form. This is just a reminder that Cobham Mill has its own place on the Internet, with a website which is updated from time to time. If you have not yet come across it, just type 'Cobham Mill' into your browser search bar and there we are. Also please do direct friends, neighbours and visitors who are not Millers to take a look. Forms for membership, paying subscriptions and for signing up to GiftAid are all available on the website.

The trustees will be making greater use of the Internet as the normal means of communication with millers. The first steps in the distribution of our annual newsletter by email were taken last year, but sadly our request for more of you to let us know your preferred email address was disappointing. We will continue to use the current mailing system for those who are not connected to the Internet, but in view of the current high cost of the mail and the forthcoming further increases, this can't go on forever. So **please let us know your preferred e-mail address**. This will enable us readily to send you the newsletter and to contact you in the event we need to call upon you for some volunteer assistance. We will not use this information for any other purpose than to make contact with you regarding matters related to the Mill Preservation Trust. **All you need to do is send an email to info@cobhammill.org.uk with "Email address" in the subject line and your name, address and postcode as the main text, and we will do the rest.**

Looking ahead. The new season lies ahead of us and I trust it will be as successful as the last. Despite the fact that the summer of 2013 was regarded a good one, rain or wind seemed to blight several of the Open Days and there were fewer visitors than usual. However, we welcomed more groups than ever before – we could scarcely keep up with demand. There was an exceptionally good turnout for Heritage Day and people lingered a long time, enjoying tea and homemade cake and chatting to our volunteers. My thanks to all our hard working volunteers and to all Cobham Millers for their continued support.

Richard Ward, Chairman

Board members: John Ball; Ray Brodrick; Bob Cummings; Michael Measures; Mark Quinn;
Nita Rodd; Keith Simm; David Taylor; Patricia Ward; Richard Ward.

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