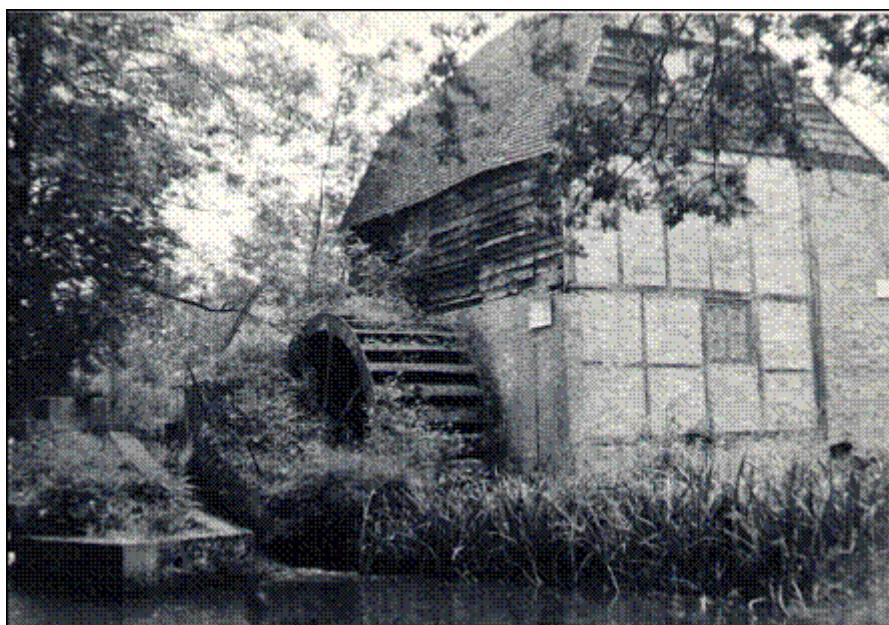


Spring Clean At Pilcot Mill

By Peter Mobbs



Pilcot Mill © HMG Arthur Lowe Collection

Recently I was very pleased to receive an invitation from David Plunkett to assist a team of HMG members to work at Pilcot Mill near Fleet in North Hampshire. It is a beautiful, small 3 storey mill, snuggling alongside a tributary of the River Hart at Dogmersfield, which last worked long ago circa 1928 but in recent years had been used as a store.

Our task was to identify and catalogue the numerous artefacts and a large amount of various shapes and sizes of wood. Any unwanted items we were to deposit in a skip. We started at the ground floor and worked in a continual thick dust haze. After not too long we had half filled the skip with items ranging from bags of cement to numerous polystyrene sheet- plus a considerable amount of wood, honeycombed by boring beetles.

In addition to rationalising the contents of the mill we were also required to clear the floor area of a double garage so after lunch we diverted efforts to this task. There we found a wonderful treasure trove of blacksmiths tools; just about everything you would need to set up a business including bellows, forge and anvil. We even found an enormous pair of metal cutting shears. By the time we had catalogued both the blacksmith and milling tools we felt that we had achieved a satisfactory target for the day and decided that we could tackle the second floor another day.

Day Two proved as super a sunny day as on our work day a fortnight earlier. On the stones floor we strived to get a light working so that we could properly see what we were doing. We'd tried exchanging tubes and starters from the solitary light on the ground floor, but, after struggling and trying all possible combinations, we gave up defeated. So we were forced to carry on working in "Twilight" conditions. Virtually all we had to do on this floor was to remove several decades of detritus including several gruesome feather adorned skeletons of birds that presumably had not been able to find an exit. Seemingly, we generated a thicker dust cloud than we had made on the ground floor. Next, we carried out some heavy lifting, re-chocking

millstones (replacing worm eaten timber blocks) and removing large bulks of timber from the Garage.

Finally all that was then left for us to do was carry out a final “tidy up” and to “dot the I’s and cross the T’s on the inventory for the mill owners.

Sarah looked after us extremely well supplying welcome elevenses, to be followed later on by a magnificent buffet lunch in a rustic summer house.

Personally I felt both days, for me, were most enjoyable, interesting and satisfying. I wish to offer sincere thanks my fellow team members for making it so. And best of all it seemed that the owners appreciated our input as Sarah wrote to us all:

“Dear David, Peter, John, Mick, Alison and Sheila

Thank you all so very much for the most extraordinary amount of work that you have completed. The Mill looks absolutely amazing and we are so grateful to you all. We could not possibly have done it ourselves. It was also such fun to meet you all - Anne Finnigan always spoke so highly of the HMG and we can see why! We hope you weren't all too exhausted after the long day.”

Sarah Finnigan



A couple of bills uncovered
backs into the spring clean

Peter Mobbs holds the giant blacksmith's shears

Putting



Teamwork

Measuring and recording



One reuseable wheel bucket

Understanding the purpose of the parts