



Bunbury Mill



The mill comes to life again!!



Last November we looked into the wheel pit and wondered how on earth we could get down there to inspect the timbers. Within weeks we had made a platform, lowered it into the pit, and secured it to the walls.

We could then carry out a detailed inspection of the 10-ton water wheel. We were not greatly surprised to find that many of the wheel timbers were in a very poor state. All the boards were



seriously eroded, some were split apart, and one or two had already become detached from the locating slots in the cast iron framework.

Could we undertake the massive task of replacing most of the timbers? There are 36 'buckets', each formed by three timbers - the sole board, the riser, and the ladle board - 108 boards in all. Each bucket is secured by seven well-rusted bolts - a total of 252.



We very gingerly experimented and progressively established the techniques for removing and replacing the boards. We researched the merits of various timbers, and decided to use green English oak from the yard of Chris Kirby Timber at Spurstow.



In January we passed the point of no return, and set about removing all the ladle boards and risers, and around one third of the sole boards. Chris Kirby worked hard to supply us with nearly a ton of oak, cut to our specifications.



At each of our work sessions, three or four volunteers worked on trimming the



boards individually to fit the slots in the iron castings.



While in the wheel pit, the boards were fitted by two people on top of the wheel, and one or two 'hamsters' inside the wheel. We were very careful to ensure that the wheel was locked during this time!

On 15th February the last board was fitted. Two days later the platform was removed, the sluice was opened, and the team was elated to see the wheel turning sweetly with (we hope) another forty years of life in it. You can see it start at <http://vimeo.com/205431006>

Or even better - come and see it live on or after 26th March.

 A well-earned break for some of the team (apologies to those others of the 16 or so volunteers who contributed but were not present on this occasion!).



The cost of the timber was £1500 and the new bolts and other items added a further £450. If we'd had to pay for the labour, it would have multiplied the cost as much as ten times! Fortunately our team of enthusiastic volunteers put in a conservatively estimated

400 man-hours of work, with a value of perhaps £8000 (plus VAT!).

We all greatly enjoyed the camaraderie of the working parties, and the fantastic sense of achievement when the huge job was successfully completed.

If you are not already a Friend of Bunbury Mill, please consider signing up. The minimum subscription of £10 for a family gives you free entry for a year - go to www.bunburymill.com for details.



The mill opens to the public on Sunday 26th March, then every Sunday and Bank Holiday afternoon until the end of October. The volunteer team are now busy tidying up the car park and the grounds, and preparing the mill and the visitor centre to receive well over a thousand visitors this year. For more details, see our web site www.bunburymill.com.

YOU could have some fun helping us to maintain and run our unique heritage! All forms of help are welcomed.

Contact info@bunburymill.com