



The Delta Millers' Newsletter

The Gist of the Grist

Fall/Winter 2022

A Challenging but Successful Year

After two years of COVID closure, we were looking forward to having the mill open for our normal season, 7 days a week, from Victoria Day weekend to Labour Day weekend. Things were looking up when all the summer staffing grants we applied for (6 positions) were approved. But then we ran into a snag, not enough people applied and most of those were high school students who wouldn't be available during the week until the end of June.

Your board of directors has a long history of meeting difficult challenges so we adapted as best we could. We initially tried to get sufficient volunteers to be able to be open 7 days a week, but that proved impossible. So we ended up making the decision to be only open on weekends during May and June. We relied on adult volunteers (Mill Shop sitting) on those weekends since at times we only had one student available to conduct tours. We also created a self-guided tour brochure for visitors to use. The interpretive signage we've added to the mill in the last few years now allows for a good quality self-guided tour.

Huge thanks go to our "student and volunteer wranglers", in particular Liz Priebe for managing volunteers, Katherine Killins for helping to training our student staff and most especially Anna Greenhorn for educating our summer staff and keeping tabs on them on a daily basis throughout the season. Sharon Okum did her usual excellent job at staff scheduling. Thanks also to the many volunteers who helped us keep the mill open this summer.

Milestones this year included the completion of our "new" Blacksmith Shop, (a very large project) and the continuation of our Collections project. Information about those can be found inside this newsletter.



The Grand Re-Opening

Anna Greenhorn and Katherine Killins on May 21, after the rope untying ceremony officially re-opened the Old Stone Mill after two years of COVID closure.



Refreshed for 2022

The dynamic duo of Anna Greenhorn and Katherine Killins had lots of fun during closure getting exhibits in the mill installed and/or refreshed. These included a new look to the Miller's Room and a refreshed Mills & Stills exhibit in our new special exhibits area on the third floor. Our new hopper-boy, new interpretive signage and other displays wowed visitors to the mill this year.

The Delta Mill Society is a volunteer, non-profit organization, dedicated to preserving heritage and presenting milling technology of the 1800s.

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President's Report

The Delta Mill Society had a successful year since the mill opened to the public, on Victoria Day weekend, for the first time in two years.

In the beginning we had a difficult time trying to find students so that we could be open 7 days a week in May and June. Thankfully while we couldn't be open full time, some of our dedicated volunteers and many of our directors helped out which allowed us to be open on the weekends. In July and August we had high school students available to us, and although short staffed at times, we were able to stay open seven days a week until Labour Day weekend.

Our mill interpretation students this year included William Brown, returning from last summer when he worked on mill maintenance. The rest were new faces, Thomas Powney, Maddy Pearson and Alice Loten. Our Treasurer, Sharon Okum, maintained student scheduling and figured out all the students grants so most of our costs were covered.

On the flour milling side, we made a change this year to switch to food grade flour bags, similar to those used by Chris Wooding, our miller. Flour sales went well and many visitors came out to see Chris do his milling demonstrations.

Over the past few years the Exhibits Committee, consisting of Anna Greenhorn, Katherine Killins and Ken Watson, made changes to our exhibits and added new interpretive signage to help explain the milling process. A special new item was the replica hopper-boy that was installed on the third floor this spring. It helps to complete the story of the milling process. These new exhibits and signage were very well received as people came from all over the world to visit our mill.

Anna, our Senior Tour Guide, had a great time showing people through the mill and pointing out the updated exhibits and of course the ridge pole on the third floor. Student training was done by Anna and Katherine, with Anna also spending a great deal of time mentoring and monitoring our students throughout the summer.



Summer Staff

Two of our summer staff, Maddy Pearson and William Brown getting ready to bag flour.

Thanks to Ken Watson for his contributions, which most recently included posting videos, several showing Anna explaining various features of the mill plus a video of our miller's full milling demonstration. They can be found on our website.

Thanks to Rebecca Rothwell, our staff person for the Collections project, supervised by Sally Wanless. Rebecca has worked the last two summers sorting and documenting all of our collections so we now have a

great idea of what items we have.

The Old Town Hall was active with many activities thanks to the leadership of Liz Priebe, Moel Benoit and Lisa Martin. The Festival of Small Halls will have hosted 3 concerts by the end of the year, all selling out quickly. We hosted painting classes for children and adults, the Old Bastards Motorcycle Club breakfasts and a Tea Party for HRH Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee. The Township of Rideau Lakes used our hall for a few events including a film viewing of three historical film productions created by Allison Smith and sponsored by MHAC, and the Township Volunteer Appreciation gathering in late October.

On November 19th, we will be hosting a Christmas Craft Sale and Cafe at the Old Town Hall from 9 a.m to 2 p.m. On December 2nd we'll host a Festival of the Small Halls concert and on December 7th we plan to have a Christmas concert.

Our largest project this year was the conversion of the Drive Shed to the "New" Blacksmith Shop. One of the biggest hurdles was the rehoming of several artifacts to make space inside the shop. Thanks to the many volunteers who helped with that process.

We were fortunate to have received a private grant for \$20,000 and a private donation also of \$20,000 to allow the project to be completed, under the leadership of Art Shaw. The work included stabilizing the south wall, reconstructing the old forge, installing a second forge and building a large display cabinet. The Exhibits

Committee has been working on a blacksmithing tools display for the cabinet and interpretive signage for the Blacksmith Shop. With the training forge now installed, we hope to have blacksmith training lessons starting in the spring.

On September 24th, as part of Delta Harvest Festival, we had an official opening of the new shop and had nine blacksmiths on site to do a "Hammer In".

This year, President Cathy Livingston compiled our Health and Safety Policy and we are in the process of adding safety rules and PPE for the Blacksmith Shop. Thanks to Jared Hayes for doing the safety audits of our three buildings to ensure they are safe for our staff, volunteers and the public.

In November we will be reviewing our strategic plan. It has been a few years since we last did this. Much has happened since then so we need to do an update. We have a very progressive Board of Directors, we're always moving forward and I'm sure that many good ideas will come out of that meeting.

It won't be long and the Old Stone Mill, Old Town Hall and Blacksmith Shop will be beautifully lit for the holiday season thanks to Moel and his volunteers. The beautifully lit mill is something the village always looks forward to.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas!

Cathy Livingston, DMS President

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our Annual General Meeting was held on June 20, 2022 at the Old Town Hall in Delta. President Cathy Livingston gave her President's Report and tabled our 2021 Annual Report. Our 2021 Financial Report and Minutes of the last AGM were presented and approved.

The Nominating Committee put forward the following slate of directors for 2022/23: Moel Benoit, Anna Greenhorn, Jared Hayes, Katherine Killins, Cathy Livingston, Lisa Martin, Sharon Okum, Liz Priebe, Art Shaw, Sally Wanless and Ken Watson. This slate of directors was approved.

Following the AGM a quick board meeting was held to select the 2022/23 executive which consists of:

President: Cathy Livingston
Vice President: Ken Watson
Treasurer: Sharon Okum
Secretary: Lisa Martin



Mighty Were the Preparations

In addition to the full mill cleanup and other pre-opening activities, lots of preparation work went on in the background.

On the left we see miller Chris Wooding fixing the grain leak in our millstones.

In the center, Art Shaw combines his carpentry and blacksmithing skills to install the hopper-boy (built by Dustin Smith).

On the right Jared Hayes cleans the Moving the Grain display, getting it ready to be refilled with fresh grain.



GINORM BOOK SALE

Slightly scaled down from our spring Ginormous Book Sale, this sale in the Old Town Hall during Harvest Festival was enormously popular and remains our largest single fundraiser. There is a lot of volunteer work that goes into both set up and tear down. A big thanks to Liz Priebe and Moel Benoit and their crew of book sale volunteers. The book sale is sponsored jointly by the Delta Mill Society and the Rideau Lakes Public Library, with profits split 50:50.

Events we host at the Old Town Hall provide needed funding for the Delta Mill Society as well as community engagement, helping to maintain the vibrancy of the small village of Delta.



VIDEOS POSTED

A series of videos shot in the mill back in 2018 are now, finally, available on the internet. The longest (at 20 minutes) is a video shot by Ken Watson of our full milling demonstration. Ken edited the video to include a section on dressing the stones and one showing the bolter in operation.

The other videos are a series of "Anna Explains" videos taken by summer student Nicholas Couzelis back in 2018. These have been edited by Ken into a series of short presentations, including The Automatic Mill, the Millstones, the Roof Architecture, Harvesting the Wheat, the Courting Candle and Buster the Rat. You will find these on the photos page of our website: www.deltamill.org/photos.html

Visitor Comments

Gratifying to those who volunteer with the Delta Mill Society are the many compliments we get about a visitor's experience. These are made in person at the mill, written in the mill guest book or written on-line on our Google site. Ratings on Google are consistently 5 star with comments such as:

- *Lovely historic mill. Had a great visit, the explanation and signs were very clear and informative.*
- *Easy walk through multi level self guided tour with some interactive displays. Learned how flour is made and left with some to take home and bake with.*
- *Had a wonderful experience with the tour guide Anna. Very informative and lots of history I did not know about!*
- *Totally excellent mill experience.*

Our mill guestbook showed similar comments:

- *This is great, my daughter got to see a real miller. Thanks.*
- *Had a wonderful and informative tour.*
- *It was really cool.*
- *Great display and info. Nice Staff.*
- *Super restoration, nice tour.*
- *Very interesting, Well preserved and historic.*
- *It's amazing! Thanks!*



A November Tour

Anna is always ready to showcase the mill. Here she gives a tour on November 5th to members of the Russell family who were in Delta for a family reunion.

CHRISTMAS CRAFT SALE and CAFE

November 19—9 am to 2 pm
at the Old Town Hall

The Blacksmith Shop Project

WOW! What a great day. Our grand opening brought out 9 smiths working (playing) and lots of public interest and appreciation. The weather was perfect. Both new forges worked fine. Tonight I am relaxing with a glass of rum, reflecting on the last 19 months, and feeling gratified. – Art Shaw on the evening of September 24 (Delta Harvest Festival day) reflecting on the culmination of months of hard work.

Under the skillful direction of volunteer Project Manager Art Shaw, our “new” Blacksmith Shop officially opened to the public during Delta Harvest Festival on September 24. Both forges were burning bright with smiths hammering away to the enjoyment of many people, it was a popular stop for visitors on that day. It was a long slog to get to this point, starting with making room to allow the existing very small public area to be greatly expanded. That involved many volunteer work bees of moving large (and very heavy) artifacts. Then came the contracted work, to build a display cabinet, to rebuild the old forge and to install a training forge, and to install new chimneys for both of those. Work also included some stabilization of the south wall of the building and the installation of new wiring in the building. Art spend many (many) hours on the project, doing some of the work himself, including the display cabinet windows, and overseeing every aspect of the contracted work. He then fine tuned the forges so that they would be ready to go on the 24th. A huge thanks to Art for seeing this project through to completion.



Before and After

The photo on the left, taken in 2019, shows the small amount of visitor room—the bench on the right is up against a wall. The photo on the right shows the “new” shop. The wall has been removed and a display cabinet now delineates the north end of the public area. The yellow tape on the floor separates public and smithing areas. The displays inside the cabinet will be completed and interpretive signage added this winter.



Lighting the Forge

Blacksmiths Amanda Van Bruggen, Megan Carter and Art Shaw light the rebuilt main forge.



Smithing for an Audience

Blacksmith Nick Verbree explains an aspect of blacksmithing to an interested audience.

The Collections Project

This year was the third year of our large Collections project, working on Phase II of the project. In a nutshell, the project is to properly document and organize all the artifacts and archival material that we have in our collections. We follow museum protocols for this, trying to maintain our collections to the highest standards.

Phase I was the creation of a paper (file folders) information base for each item, tied to a digital index of those items. It involved gathering all the available documentation and putting that into order along with the creation of the digital index. Phase II involved tying the physical objects to the paper documentation – locating, sorting and in some cases labeling the objects.

The project is headed by our Collections Chair, Sally Wanless, assisted as required by Ken Watson. We were very fortunate to get last year's summer staff, Rebecca Rothwell, back with us this year. Designated donations to the DMS for this work and a Canada Summer Jobs grant allowed us to employ Rebecca from early May to the end of October.

In addition to paper and digital organization, there was also physical organization done this year, cleaning up our collections rooms and our storage area for oversize artifacts in the Old Town Hall.

This winter we'll review what we've accomplished and determine what is left to be done.



Organizing the Collections

Tables allowed artifacts and documentation to be spread out, sorted and matched. Below, Rebecca in one of the re-organized collection rooms.



The Cow has been Moooooved

One of the stranger items in our collections was this full size paper mache cow—being petted in this photo by Director Moel Benoit. We found a new home for her, not that far away, at Forfar Dairy. She'll be out on display there once they complete the renovations of their store.



Oversize Artifacts

We're using part of the upper hall in the Old Town Hall to store oversized artifacts. Rebecca is standing in that artifact area. Behind her is the Christmas decoration area and behind and out sight to the left are signboards and other previously used exhibit material.