



THE INDEPENDENT

MILL ROAD NEWS

N°24
Autumn
2019

Repair and Restore

In the last issue we looked at how the street was confronting the challenges of – **reduce**, **recycle**, **reuse**, **repurpose** and **repair**. To this list we could also add **restore**. All these activities are of course important to the well-being of our environment and those who inhabit it and sadly we were led into the murky world of land-fill and the exporting of rubbish to Africa and beyond.

This issue continues with these themes but concentrates on **repair** which is more self-explanatory than the other four words on our list. It is not pure coincidence that we chose to tackle these aspects when the road was embarking on the biggest repair job in our history – the gas mains. The pipes, which distribute gas through our community, have been given a thorough repair which has impacted upon traders and residents in varying ways.

We will look at this in the next issue. It is interesting to note that this major work has been completed at the same time as David Parr House opens to the public. This house was home to David Parr, a craftsman of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, who decorated churches and his home with exquisite skill and patience.

We also look at upcycling which may well be a short hand for the **recycling** of trends and styles. Nobody wants the realisation that we must create planet friendly economies to culminate in a dour, lack-lustre, lack-novelty world without fun.

Mill Road, like the rest of the UK, is currently experiencing upheaval, a certain amount of economic contraction and a lot of uncertainty. Despite this it is really heartening to see that crafts to **restore** and **repair** are thriving and also that some cafés and food shops are switching from plastic bags to paper bags.

Our clothing's second life

As the owner of a vintage shop on Mill Road and an ex-volunteer at the Sally Ann, I've seen a lot of local clothes find their next home.

The regular churn of budget high street clothing from our student population makes its way to charity donation bins or sacks brought to charity shops.

It's unlikely that students will have the time required to sell online, as the lower-priced items make it not worth the hours needed to photograph, describe, watch progress, package, and send. When I suggest this path to people trying to sell to me, they grimace at the

work involved or are not comfortable enough with computers.

I very rarely purchase from these local sellers who walk in with their bags of treasures, since usually their idea of the value of their items is too close to original purchase prices.

Plus, I'm only interested in natural-fibre items, which weeds out 90% of what I see when I peer into the sacks.

Sartorial Executors

Sometimes people ask where they can get money for their deceased relatives' clothing. I haven't the heart to say that nearly nobody wants it, unless they find a shop which specialises in fine wool jackets and

nice old dresses. Even then, those shops will want to cherry-pick, rather than buy a wardrobe-lot.

Easiest route

The easiest route for a sartorial executor is to be generous and to donate the bulk to their local charity shops who can sell all of it, either in their own shops or to the jocularly-nicknamed "rag & bone" resellers.

The R&Bs then sell on to customers abroad. No doubt some of that winds up in landfill, but a lot finds its way through the markets to clothe thousands in poorer countries.

Charity shops have been hit in the last few years by slowing donations of nicer items – and they are rarely sold to me or my colleagues.

Are these better quality clothes spending an extra year at home due to tightening budgets? Or finding a market online where the time required might pay off better; i.e. "charity begins at home?"

I went to the Salvation Army shop on Tenison Road, and to the Wood Green charity shop (which I find a welcome after the superfluous and damp Costa Cafe). "How much of your offer is from local donations?",



Photo: Charlotte de Blois

continued on next page >>

I asked, “and then what happens to the unsold items?”

Gina Vicencio at Wood Green says: “Stock is made up of local donations as much as possible, since it’s generally of better quality than the stock sent from other Wood Greens and sells fast.

At the first sort, too-soiled or other unsaleable clothing is passed on to rag-and-bone. The rest is steamed and stays on the floor for two weeks, then if unsold, gets passed on to central Wood Green processing to be sent out to the other shops in the network.”

Tip from Gina: the Royston Wood Green gets the best and most donations in their network, so avid shoppers are advised to make the trip.

Mill Road’s Wood Green happily accept electrical items but cannot sell them in their shop, so these are sent out right away to the central processing point.

“How is Wood Green doing as the new charity on Mill Road?”

Gina: “Well enough to start, but I did expect more donations, and we miss having donation bins.” The big charity collection bins at points around the city are a source of rent income to the Council, about £40 per month per bin. If the bins are not labelled to a specific charity, the contents most likely belong to R&Bs.

Charmaine Wilson at Sally Ann’s reports: “The Sally’s clothing offer is nearly all from local donors (but not from the local bins, which are processed in London). When stock doesn’t sell, even from the £1 basket, part of it might be donated on to the Red Cross and otherwise the majority gets picked up by Fussey’s, a

Newmarket removals company.”

Re-upcycling: The Sally Ann collaborates with Anglia Ruskin University’s fashion students, who are assigned an upcycling project every year. They come in to buy items which they then transform into styling experiments. Some of the results are showcased in the big front window each February.

I know from my three years at the Sally Ann that a good amount of clothing and bedding is given away free right up front to those in need – drawers of gloves, socks, and pants; heavy jackets and sleeping bags find compassionate use every day. The Sally collaborates with Winter Comfort, Jimmy’s Shelter, Cambridge Cyrenians and Cambridge Outreach to exchange their vouchers for clothes and household items.

Care workers and local council workers can also apply for vouchers for free furniture. Charmaine adds, “There’s also **Cambridge Re-use** on Cherry Hinton Road, who sell repaired furniture and electrical appliances cheaply to qualifying households.”

So **re-use** of textiles and garments is nothing new on Mill Road, it has just been slapped with the trendy tag of up-cycling.

Pamela Wesson, Fantasia & Friends, 64 Mill Road

Editorial comment: buying clothes from charity shops carries the risk of introducing clothes moth eggs and or larva into one’s home. Vintage shops take more rigorous precautions but there is an easy way to overcome the problem altogether by putting newly acquired items into your freezer for 48 hours. It kills the beasties.

Repurpose and Preserve

After years of unsightly dereliction the old Robert Sayle warehouse site at 309-313 Mill Road has been **re**incarnated as the city’s new Central Mosque. Since April 27 this significant addition to an already interesting and diverse part of Cambridge has attracted a wide range of worshippers and visitors from many of the city’s communities, both town and gown.

When we bought the site back in April 2008 we aspired to do three things. Firstly, we wanted to create the city’s first purpose-built mosque, to relieve overcrowding at the small existing mosques (Mawson Road, Devonshire Road, Darwin Drive). Secondly, to explore ways in which a specific religious community’s spiritual hub could also work as an amenity for the wider community. And thirdly, to signal the Muslim community’s commitment to the fight against climate change, a threat which is particularly severe in many Muslim parts of the world, including Bangladesh, where many Cambridge Muslims have their roots.

After an eleven-year gestation with some complications we have now opened our doors. And it has been heart-warming to see so many visitors: not only worshippers, but tourists, local residents, architecture

students, school groups, and many more.

We have a long backlog of would-be participants in our guided tours. But anyone can visit the mosque any afternoon of the year, and enjoy the garden, the prayer hall, and the other peaceful corners of our little oasis.

A Mission

But we have a mission! Not of the usual ‘missionary’ kind. We want our visitors to see how the world’s spiritual traditions unite around the idea of ‘creation care’, and in



Earth from the moon August 1986. Image NASA

their concern for what is happening to the biosphere which we all inhabit, and which is our only life-support system. It is now fifty years since the first moon landing; how amazed we were when photographs were

beamed back to Earth of our amazingly beautiful green-and-blue world.

A smallish fragile sphere

We are now increasingly aware that we need to work together to protect our common home. So we have built a Green Mosque. This means solar cells on the roof, rainwater harvesting, an air-source heat pump, and timber sourced from sustainably-managed forests. With zero carbon emissions we do our bit for air quality in Cambridge.

The mosque celebrates feast days, and these present another challenge! We try to use **re**cyclable materials for plates and cutlery. We have an underground car park, but we urge visitors to come on foot or bicycle, or by public transport. Visitors who bring food for weddings or other events are encouraged to go for organic menus.

We are only a single building in a growing city; and the challenges continue; but we hope and pray that by showing that we care about the environmental disaster which seems to be unfolding, that we are turning a smiling face to our neighbours, who are all God’s guests on this planet, with equal rights to its blessings.

Timothy Winter, Cambridge Muslim College

Crafty people on the Road

Mill Road has been a home to specialist crafts' people for a long while. Constructing picture frames for oddly shaped works of art, **rebinding** old and precious books, or **restoring** violins and trumpets are **repair** and **restore** activities that did not die out completely in the late twentieth-century, as such niche artefacts cannot be so easily produced en masse.

More recently companies such as Cambridge Classics have developed techniques to **reproduce** replica wooden windows for buildings that are enjoying renovation.

Those of us who are concerned about the over use of plastic welcome their values and commitment.

Newly arrived

What is really quite new though, is the return of tailoring to our High Street and a new upholsterer.

Our Mill Road Tailor works really long hours and provides a quality service at reasonable rates. He takes hems up and down, seams in and out and also embarks on other aspects of tailoring.

It is marvellous that we now have a really skilled and experienced tailor who can customize and **repair** clothes for us and therefore extend their length of service.

This is a viable alternative to buy, buy, buy followed by chuck, chuck, chuck-away.

See it all happen

A few doors away from the Mill Road tailor is where our new upholsterer, has set up shop.

Mr Mantas Mavickas learnt his skill in the UK, which I found surprising. He studied for several years at Wendy Shorter Interiors Ltd in St Albans and was eventually awarded a Craft Skills Certificate in Traditional Upholstery – Pass with Distinction. He uses his shop space as his workshop, which is exciting and enticing.

We are now so used to items for **repair** disappearing for weeks to some distant, possibly windowless, workshop. Mantas makes full use of his shop window displaying furniture at various stages of **restoration**. It is very instructive and stimulates us to value the physical activity of **renovation**.



Photos by Charlotte by Blois

Editorial note: Cambridge Classics have moved their premises from North Petersfield to Cherry Hinton. Their new number is 01223 491910.



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GOING WITH THE GRAIN

Earlier this summer the newly opened **David Parr House** hosted a course for those who wish to acquire the skills to repair and upcycle their Victorian homes.

Saskia Huning has spent many hours in **David Parr House** recreating wood graining on the stairs and she showed participants the different areas of wood graining in the house before demonstrating the tools, materials and techniques involved in this key aspect of the art of painted decoration.

A variety of examples of grained surfaces in styles from different periods were discussed before participants embarked on their own

oak graining. They used different types of combs and a variety of brushes to create oak graining.

This was an introduction to the ancient art of graining with the exciting opportunity to see the examples of David Parr's own graining work at 186 Gwydir Street. We very much hope the course, which cost £150, will be available at dates in the future for those who missed it the first time.

Please visit www.davidparrhouse.org/newsletter to join the mailing list for future events and activities.

Editorial Team

Cambridge Re-use

We are the only furniture charity in Cambridge that only serves people on low income.

We offer a service based on choice, quality, and affordability. Anyone who is earning under £18,000 as a single household or £23,000 as a couple can access the service and shop at *Cambridge Re-Use*. New customers bring in proof of

their income, ie wage slips or benefit letters and then receive a customer card and can start shopping!

We have a variety of sofas, beds and wooden furniture. Our stock is constantly changing, with new items in every day and we have paintings, curtains and crockery to help make a house a home.

We can deliver your items to you;

we deliver within a 15 mile radius of Cambridge. We do have a delivery charge which is £10 for Cambridge City and £15-20 for surrounding areas, but this is per delivery and doesn't increase if we deliver lots of items to you. You are also more than welcome to come and collect your items.

Open: Monday-Friday 9.00- 4.30 pm.

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www.cambridgereuse.org.uk/html/customer

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Mill Road make-do and mend mash-up

The **reuse** and **recycle** **Charity-Fashion-Art Event** at St Philip's Church, on Mill Road, organised by local charities the *Children's Society*, *Arthur Rank Hospice* and *Romsey Mill*, featured artists, makers,

fashion designers and creatives who work with sustainable media.

There were interactive activities as well as varied shopping opportunities. These much-loved local charity shops showcased a wide

variety of their stock, including vintage and designer fashion, 'unusual finds', antiques, electronics, books and bric-a-brac.

On the *Hand Stitch a Skirt* stall, at the *Making the Most Of Event* on 17th August, a pile of clean, but torn, denim jeans was re-purposed into fashionable, handcrafted bespoke skirts. In the photographs are Lindsey Stanton, community worker at Saint Phillip's Church, demonstrating techniques. Receiving assistance with the **re**-purposing of this pre-loved denim is local resident Kasia.

Richard Wood



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Refitting – the eco-friendly Way



There are two new businesses on the road that are using **repair** and **restore** attitudes to refit their premises.

Refresh (whose very name suggests making what is already there prettier and healthier) is planning to **re**tile by replacing damaged tiles only.

While *Vanderlyle* took the brave and exciting decision to sand down the walls of what was once Barneys to **re**veal several incarnations of paint and layers of colour (see above).

It is an environment that screams successive generations of style and quiet taste divorced from fashion.

Editorial Team

NO to Plastic in Supermarkets

On Tuesday 24th September marchers met at Vinery Road to protest against the use of plastic packaging by supermarkets. This event was hosted by Extinction Rebellion.



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School children campaign

During my daily walk around Mill Road and its side streets I have stopped to admire the various posters in the windows.

These posters got me wondering what food items I have in my kitchen cupboards that contain palm oil. I was amazed by the range; bread, chocolate spread, ice creams and pizza to name a few.

After looking at the posters, I was encouraged to check my food labels and swap items that contain palm oil for sustainable palm oil. I encourage all of you to stop and look at these posters as I have learnt about how sustainable products are being used to save orangutans and why I should reduce my plastic use.

I would also like to thank these children for raising our awareness of these issues and for using **recycled** materials to make these posters.

Written by Hema Tasker



Mill Road News is published by the non-profit organisation Mill Road Bridges, c/o The Six Bells Pub, 11 Covent Garden, Cambridge, CB1 2HS UK. Mill Road Bridges is a volunteer community group serving Petersfield & Romsey wards in Cambridge.

We welcome your submissions on any topic about the Mill Road community.

Send images and short articles to info@mill-road.com. Please note that our articles cannot favour a political party, they should not be of a purely commercial nature, and we reserve the right to edit, refuse, or postpone use of

submissions. Any views expressed in the Newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the editor or group.

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Care to help? We need volunteers! It merely requires delivering a bagful to your own neighbourhood mailslots.



MRB logo: Sam Motherwell, Gwydir Street

A Tribute to Gees

Philip Goldstein and his parents created one of Mill Road's most renowned retail outlets whose reputation stretched across the city and beyond. As traders in electrical spare-parts their ingenuity and memory meant that they were on the frontline fighting the blight of in-built obsolescence.

Gees' was stacked with little bits-and-pieces which were no longer obtainable in the big shops. Their stock rooms reached up over several storeys. Mr Gee's knowledge and his huge cache of new and unused stock meant that all sorts of appliances and gadgets, belonging to his loyal customer base, were given a new lease of life.

It is said that well-loved people acquire lots of nick-names. The same is probably true of shops too. Many customers up and down the road had loving nick-names for Gees. One was "The Four-Candle shop" after the Two Ronnies' Comedy sketch about a hardware shop with a similarly wide-range of stock.

While another loyal customer once said to Mr Gee "If Cambridge were Tolkien's Shire, then this is what the Hobbits' local electrical



shop would look like". Apparently Mr Gee was greatly amused.

We are so sad that the shop was gutted by fire early in August but pleased that no one was hurt and we sincerely wish Mr Gee, and his prodigious talents, happiness in the next phase of his life.

The Mill Road History Society will be writing a commemorative piece about the shop and welcomes your stories and photographs.

Please email: millroadhistory@gmail.com

Charlotte de Blois



Summertime

Our experiences over the summer have been unusual and it is in the interest of shoppers, traders, residents and those who just pass through, that we engage in intelligent impartial discussion. We already have two articles – one from a trader "*I survived the summer: a trader's chronicle*" and one from a resident "*That was the summer that was: a resident's nightmare*".

Both are available to read at Mill-road.com

Letters to the editor

Dear Editor,

In the Introduction to your last issue you mentioned the economist John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) and how his theories transformed the lives of so many when governments around the world turned his ideas into policy. A point of information here, John Maynard Keynes was a Mill Road resident he lived in Harvey Road as a child. Thank you to 'Lost Cambridge' for this information.

Evelyn Wentworth

Dear Editor,

Up to about two years ago I got my eggs fresh from a house in Coleridge Road, where they looked after chickens (& a cockerel) in their back garden. Their garden was quite large and

the birds had plenty of open space, and were looked after very well; in fact they all had names and the children treated them as pets!

Anyway the point I wish to make is about the method I and other privileged customers were instructed to use, as and when requiring more eggs. Suffice to say, a note together with an empty egg-box would be delivered into the front porch, together with the cash, and a full egg-box would be available for collection the following day. A lovely way of reusing the boxes and treating the egg layers with the respect they deserved.

I believe that some shops in Cambridge are now adopting this idea, not only with fresh eggs, but also with honey (refill your glass jar) and a number of other natural food products.
Ed Jenkins

Dates for your Diary

3rd Wednesday of each month
Mill Road WI (Women's Institute)

meets at Romsey Mill. 7.15-9pm.

We are a friendly diverse group of ladies who meet to hear talks and take part in a wide range of activities. New members welcome. The first meeting is free but further meetings until you become a member. Cost £5.

Email: millroadwi@gmail.com

29 October.

Mill Road Bridges

AGM, at the Six Bells, Covent Garden.

7-16 November

Angels Need Love Too

an exhibition of work by Manuela Hubner at the Makers' Gallery Hope Street Yard.

12 November

7.30pm

Ross Street Community Centre

Under the Bridge

Mill Road History Society

20th November

10am-1pm

David Parr House

Course on making floral tableaux.

Cost: £65

DavidParrHouse@gmail.com

27 November

9.30am-1pm

David Parr House

A course on the Art of Wrapping.

Cost: £65

DavidParrHouse@gmail.com

7th December

Mill Road Winter Fair

11 December

7-10pm

Extinction Rebellion at the Unitarian Church Emmanuel Street. General Meeting.



Visit our webpage, mill-road.com, to discover more about Mill Road and add your own contributions. Scan the QR code.

Letters and opinions can be addressed to the editor at info@mill-road.com

Letters published here express the views and beliefs held by their authors

The next issue will concentrate on the road to prosperity.