



Friends of Lowfield Heath Windmill

Spring 2002 News update

What's new:

On March 10th, when there was a strong wind blowing, the volunteers turned the mill to face the wind, they gently disengaged the brake and closed the shutters - and the sails turned wonderfully! This is the first time it has run for any length of time (about half an hour) for over 120 years. The strength of the wind was very irregular but Peter and Mike were able to control the speed of rotation by using the striking chain to open or close the shutters.

You will remember that only two of the sails have shutters - these are known as Patent sails, the other two have canvas & are known as Common sails. We had decided not to use the Common sails because we were freewheeling i.e. the mill stones were not engaged and we could have struggled to stop the mill - the brake is really only a parking brake & not designed to stop the mill in high wind conditions. Normally, when the millstones are engaged there is opportunity to adjust the gap between the millstones, thus increasing the load on the sails & helping to stop the mill.

Hopefully a suitable wind will blow one day soon when the volunteers will be able to put the canvas on the common sails, engage the stones and produce some flour. That will be a great day! We had a couple of passers-by stop to watch, as thrilled as the volunteers, to see the mill in action, but for safety reasons they had to stay outside the hedge whilst the sails were turning.

Current Projects:

During the last few months' work has been progressing on a number of projects: Firstly we now have a proper step at the NW doorway of the roundhouse - made out of French burrs from the old Blackborough (Reigate) post mill, which were rescued some years ago when the site there was being re-developed.

Secondly we have made a new set of steps connecting the spout & stone floor. These are made to a more traditional design than the ones they replaced (made in the early 1970's) and have at the same time reduced the somewhat high nature of the top step.

Thirdly we have increased the width of the landing at the rear of the bin floor - this now fits in with the revised ladder arrangement and allows the proper use of the rear sack hoist.

Currently we are working on the bin floor, re-making the cover around the tail wheel; this needed to be changed because the cogs of the tail wheel were rubbing on the cover.

Lastly we are about to make some covers for the meal arks (flour bins) on the spout floor. On a working mill these would not normally be covered, but in the interests of hygiene we have decided that covers should be fitted - but of course these will be made to suit the traditional design of the meal arks.

Future projects:

We have received a grant of £800 from the Surrey Historic Buildings Trust towards the cost of the material for the bolting machine (flour dresser). We can therefore make a start on this, but need to raise at least another £1200 in order to afford all of the materials - our volunteers will put in all the labour.

Opening times 2002:

If you would like to see inside the mill it will be open on the last Sunday in the month from April through to August, 2pm to 5pm, also on the Sunday afternoons of National Mills Weekend (11th & 12th May) and National Heritage Weekend (14th & 15th September). There are also lots of other interesting mills, buildings and other sites to visit during these open weekends.

Other visits can be arranged by appointment - contact Peter, Mike or Jean below.

Committee contacts:

Peter James (Chairman & Volunteer Leader) 01293 409845

Mike Harrison (Secretary) 01293 862374

Jennifer Smith (Treasurer) 01892 783713

Jean Shelley (Committee Member) 01293 862646

PS.

A box of new copies of the A4 booklet 'LOWFIELD HEATH REMEMBERED' has been found. It was compiled in 1984, at the time that the village was disappearing, but the moving of the windmill had not been considered.

Copies will be on sale at the windmill for £2.50, or by post from Jean Shelley, 4 Norwood Hill Road, Charlwood, Surrey. RH6 0ED at £4, including p & p.