

# Bursledon Windmill's 200th Birthday Bash

## Article and photos by David Plunkett

On the afternoon of Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> November, Windmill Lane at Bursledon was lined with parked cars from almost one end, to the other for a few hours, and the mill parking area was pretty full too. The cause of this abnormal parking event, was the happening taking place at Hampshire's only working windmill.

I arrived rather before 1.00pm to find the official dignitaries assembled including the Mayor of Eastleigh and a small press core busy about their business, so I skirted around the barn and concentrated on this tower windmill. It looks superb in every respect, as if it has just been built.

Well, for most of the past few years it appeared to have been neglected and unloved, once the wind shaft was known to be in a state of decay and the sails were taken down and stored for safety.

It takes rather a long time to prepare a restoration scheme and raise funding to even start such a project. The Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust as owners, know well how to organise a project like this and the required, behind the scenes lobbying and marshalling of funds. The respective Trustees and local councillors were roped in and played their part in gaining local, County and Heritage Lottery Funding.

I then fell into conversation with two ladies with an interesting slant on this mill. One was an Eastleigh councillor and a trustee of HBPT and the other was a close neighbour of the mill of many years.

It was not long before a reporter from the local Wave Radio station asked us if we would give him a few comments or our views on the day's events.

So, all three of us briefly told what our thoughts were on looking at this superb windmill as the miller hauled the sails around on the reefing stage. Just a pity the wind was a little quiet.

Around 2.00 pm we assembled inside the Chineham Barn where Chairman of Joint Management Committee, Alan Broadhurst, (Eastleigh Lib Dem) welcomed us all for attending this 200th birthday event and explained some of the facts and figures making up the project.

Thanks were further given to millwright Malcom Cooper (who was present) and other contractors, engineers and architect. A colourful iced birthday cake in the design of this windmill was ceremonially cut and was applauded by the audience, as the press gathered for pictures.

I then joined a small group waiting to go for a tour up inside the mill by miller, Gary Freeman but I quickly realised that those behind me had never been inside before, so I backed out to give them a chance.

I had a close discussion with Malcolm Cooper and later with two generations of the Soffe, sawmilling family from Copythorne, who sourced and cut the massive oak timber for the wind shaft for Malcolm to work on. Pam Moore, Phil Turner and Bill Fergie were present as officials of the HBPT. I did not spot other HMG members before I left around 3.00 pm but know that Andy Fish attended later but others may well have attended in the good crowd which attended.

This was a well organised media event in which the public were present in good numbers, to wish Bursledon Windmill another 200 years of historic service to the population of Hampshire.

The old wind shaft (pictured below) will remain on site.





Bursledon Birthday Cake