

This report covers a 12-month period of activity by the Friends of Windmill Gardens (FoWG) from July 2013.

The Windmill

We opened to visitors providing tour guides from March-October 2013 and re-opened in April 2014.

Visitors: During the 2013 season 1,169 people visited the windmill on our weekend free open afternoons – more than in 2012. A further 27 came on mid-week group visits, paying £6 a head, making a total of 1,196 visitors. Because Holmewood Nursery opened their Stay and Play setting during this year we had fewer opportunities for mid-week group visits so the overall numbers are slightly down on 2012.

Since re-opening in April 2014 the Friends have welcomed 309 more visitors.

Building: There are some ongoing problems with the spring sail mechanism that still have to be resolved. The extremely heavy winter rains caused a lot of damp and water ingress in the tower. However, the brick tower was repainted both outside and inside in late May and now looks very smart. Seals have been added to windows and doors and we hope these will stop rainwater getting into the building. Outstanding works left over from the 2010/11 restoration works will be completed this year. These include: training Friends and our DEO to use the electric powered millstones to grind flour; installing a ladder to the cap; and adding a grill to protect to glass in the first floor window.

Mills Weekend in May was a great success. Paul Selwood our millwright got the sails moving in a gusty wind and visitors on the Saturday were enthralled – many telling us that it was the first time they had seen Brixton's sails turning!

Future: Last year we launched our Flour Fund Appeal. The fund currently stands at £3.5k following a very generous anonymous donation of £1k. The Exec invited two expert millers one from York the other from Cambridgeshire to visit and give us advice about what we need to put in place if we decide we can regularly produce flour using the restored electric driven mill.

Cooperative Council approach means Lambeth has radically re-organised the way the council works. It is very important we make the council aware of our concerns and plans for the future of Brixton Windmill and Windmill Gardens. The HLF grant ends in 2015. A key task for the 2014-15 executive must be to ensure that officers and councillors engage positively with us to secure the future of both.

FoWG Projects and Events in 2013-14

Mill Memories This year-long project funded by the HLF's All Our Stories grant ended in May 2014 with a very successful book launch, exhibition, and drama performance at a Big Lunch event in the park. A dedicated team of Friends worked very hard over the year to interview 26 local residents, millwrights, council workers and members of the Ashby family and of course Friends. They also researched photo archives

and discovered some new information about the mill's history. Thanks to Kim Winter and the Comms team for organising this complex project, Owen Llewellyn for filming and photographing interviewees and also the Clapham Film Unit and Sarah Lowry who gave us lots of professional help. Pansy Aung, who designed both the interactive exhibition and lovely book containing selections of the audio and recordings, deserves special mention. The interactive Mill Memories exhibition is currently on display at Brixton Library and moves to Clapham Library in July. A digital copy of all the audio, film, and photographic records will be placed in the Lambeth Archive.

Windmill Art shows In May two of our Friends who are creative artists exhibited work inside the windmill. Kim displayed her felt work and Owen his photographs. This was a successful event and their work was on display to windmill visitors during our open days. The Events group hope to make Brixton Windmill a 'venue of choice' for local artists exhibitions.

Windmill Loaf Last August the Old Post Office Bakery started baking a new loaf using a mixture of organic and bio-dynamic flour some grown and milled locally by Brockwell Bake. This sourdough bread, inspired by the Windmill, has become very popular both at the bakery and when sold on our open days. Forty pence from the sale of each loaf is donated to our Flour Fund.

Community Events: FoWG's Events and Parks groups have worked closely with our education officer to organise a lively programme of successful and fun events in Windmill Gardens over the past 12 months. Summer 2013 saw a Big Gig music event and a 5-A-Side Football tournament for children and youth in July. In August we organised Art in the Park followed by a successful Harvest festival on Open House weekend in September. Two events in October: the Big Draw and Spooky Halloween fun were both great hits with local children. And, although the Windmill was closed for the winter, in December it was opened specially for Santa to welcome children to his grotto.

The 2014 season started in rather poor weather but despite the rain the Easter egg hunt attracted lots of families and children. Our most recent event was the very successful Poppies and Prams Parade and Festival held on June 22nd. It was brilliantly organised by Magdalen and the Events group and took place in wonderful sunshine. Feedback from everyone was very supportive. Very many, thanks to everyone who made this event such a great success.

Education Programme

On Mondays and Fridays throughout the academic year our DEO, Stephen Lawlor, provides workshops to a steady stream of school groups visiting the Windmill. He has also designed new display boards that outline the history and technology of Brixton Windmill. This exhibition is on show on all open days and enhances the experience of visitors to the windmill. It is

supplemented by a new set of display boards outlining the role of the Friends and volunteers.

On the ground floor of the windmill visitors unable to climb to the upper floors can now see photographs of the machinery on each floor of the windmill and can relate this to a detailed cut away illustration showing how wind power drove the mill machinery on each floor and the process of producing flour.

The Park

There have been some improvements to the park this year. The gravel path was re-positioned and re-surfaced greatly improving access to Brixton Windmill. We finally got a new drinking water fountain in the park and just need to get the water pressure sorted so that it is easy for children to use.

A new wooden bench seat, donated by descendants of John Ashby, was installed in late May. It matches the bench donated in 2013 and the council paid for both benches to be set on a base of granite stones. They look very smart and are well used.

The park has seen greater footfall since last July when Holmewood at the Windmill opened their stay and play activities for pre-school children.

The fixed ping-pong table is also well used.

Our Parks group have organised several gardening workshops. Bulbs planted last autumn created a lovely display of spring flowers round the windmill and at the park entrance. In April they planted spring wheat next to the windmill.

The first 'Bat Walk' in the park takes place on July 24.

Improving the Windmill Gardens for all users is a key objective of the Friends and after the discussion at last year's AGM with Dr Iain Boulton the Exec has pressed ahead with plans to apply for a Green Flag Community Award early in 2015. A walk round the park with Lambeth Officers is booked for Tuesday July 1st at 2pm to discuss what needs to be improved – all are welcome to attend.

The Friends

We distribute a monthly e-newsletter to nearly 500 supporters. Following our AGM last July the Friends held General Meetings in October and February and a Christmas party in December.

We continue to recruit new members but at a slower pace than in previous years. Current paid up membership is only 75. I recommend the incoming Exec discuss this and in particular how to get former members to renew.

We attend the quarterly meetings of Lambeth Parks and Green Spaces Forum where we are closely following progress of the council's co-operative council parks programme and in particular the experiences of the 'pioneer parks' whose Friends groups have opted to take on more management responsibility.

We also attend quarterly meetings Lambeth's Local History Forum and participated in the first Lambeth History Festival last September.

Executive Committee An important part of the Annual Report is to thank all the members of FoWG who have worked so hard to regularly open the windmill and to

organise all the events we have put on in Windmill Gardens. I want to thank the FoWG officers, and our Executive Committee who are standing down at this AGM. Each year we elect an executive committee to be the team carrying forward decisions of FoWG members between our general meetings and to negotiate with Lambeth council via our partnership agreement. The 2013 team all worked extremely hard. In May we said goodbye to Alex Gaffikin, our secretary of five years who moved to a new job in Australia. Anita, who joined the exec at the last AGM, stood down for personal reasons but continues to promote Brixton Windmill at Diverse Gifts, her shop in Brixton.

The four sub-groups of the Friends: Comms, Events, Fundraising and Parks continue to meet supporting the hard work of our Executive Committee and general members. Thanks to all group members.

The Fundraising group successfully applied for a grant from the National Lottery Awards for All programme to help fund our 2014 community events programme. If you have experience of fund raising do consider joining this group, as we need to plan for the long-term future of Brixton Windmill. In particular how to fund the education programme and long-term security of the windmill after current HLF funding ends in 2015.

If you would like to join any of our sub groups let us know by emailing info@brixtonwindmill.org.uk

Volunteers and Guides are extremely important to Brixton Windmill and we always need more trained guides as well as stewards and bakers. Once again we thank Veolia, Lambeth's parks contractor, for supplying us with a volunteer First Aider at all our open days. We also thank them for their very generous and great support for the annual Festival and Parade. This ongoing support is much appreciated.

This year we organised two trips for our volunteers.

If you would like to train as a guide or steward email info@brixtonwindmill.org.uk to book a place on our next training evening.

Outreach and Publicity The Friends' communication group (Comms) have continued to provide brilliant publicity for FoWG and Brixton Windmill. Pressure of work means our PR officer Dee Byrne, had to stand down we thank her for all her support. If you would like to help in this area let the Comms group know.

We have set up stalls at the Lambeth Country Show, Lambeth Archive Day, Brockwell Christmas Fair, and in Brixton Market where we promote Brixton Windmill.

The Comms group also regularly update the Windmill Website at www.brixtonwindmill.org with Friends' news via our blog.

Merchandising Another way to promote and raise funds is selling our growing range of FoWG merchandise. Thanks to Chris Patton this year we have added newly designed Brixton Windmill T-shirts and shopper bags. These are now on sale at Diverse Gifts in Brixton, Pempamsie Brixton Hill, as well as at all our own events and open days.

The Parks Group regularly provide seasonal plants and fresh produce for our stalls. All these sales help boost the funds of FoWG to allow us to organise free community events in Windmill Gardens