

Two major concerns have dominated the past year. First: our preparation for and celebration of Brixton Windmill's 200th anniversary. The second: convincing Lambeth Council that we needed their promised new windmill education building.

The Windmill

Open Days: So far in 2016 guided tours have been better attended than last year. We put this down to the increased publicity the Friends have generated around the windmill's bi-centenary. The new events we have organised to celebrate this very special year have attracted large numbers and introduced this unique building to more, and younger, people. Since the 2015 AGM 1,063 have signed our visitor book. National Mills weekend in May 2016 was a success and once again Paul Sellwood, our millwright, plus volunteers got the sails moving to the delight of visitors.

The monthly Windmill Walks around Brixton Hill led by Liz du Parc have also been well attended this year.

Brixton Windmill's bi-centenary: FoWG have greatly benefitted from the support of our creative ambassador for 2016, Mark Eley, of design company EleyKishimoto. We have held a series of events to celebrate the 200 years since Ashby's mill was built in 1816. All have been successful. We started at Easter with the All-Day Brixton Treasure Hunt, and followed this with the Beer and Bread Festival in May to launch Brixton Flour. For the Saturday of National Mills Weekend two new 'designer' sails were made, donated, and put up by our creative ambassador Mark Eley providing the windmill with a very modern look. We held our first open air film show early in June where we also premiered a new short film the Friends have made about their support for the windmill. These events were all in addition to our usual programme of community events discussed below.

Building: In September 2015 some final improvements were made using up the last of the HLF grant. A cupboard and new box seats were installed on the ground floor providing useful storage space. Mesh grills were added to all windows to allow air to circulate through the mill in the summer months. Currently there is a problem with the Windmill's curb, which needs repair. The council have agreed to this significant repair. However we are waiting to hear if the sails will be painted before the winter. This is essential to prevent further deterioration of the timbers.

Flour Milling regularly takes place and we have trained more millers. On Bank Holiday Monday in May we milled malted barley in public for the first time as part of the Beer & Bread festival. FoWG's flour production was nominated for an Urban Food Award. Unfortunately we did not win in the finals but the online voting helped raise our profile.

Windmill Education Programme

This has not properly functioned since December 2015 because of the end of the HLF funding for our DEO.

The Education Building Last October we were told that Lambeth's decision under their Parks Capital Investment Programme to build a new education centre in Windmill Gardens had been put on hold pending a feasibility study. However, no date for that study was given. FoWG decided at our November General Meeting to petition the council for the decision to be reversed and for the education project to be saved. The petition gained great support from the Windmill

Cluster of schools as well as local residents and, after just one week, Cllr Garden presented 600+ signatures to the Council on our behalf. There were further online signatures and in response the Leader of the Council set up a feasibility study, which met for the first time in December.

The Council stated they still had the £360k available for the building but wanted four different options to be considered. They were particularly concerned that their capital investment would be supported by a robust business plan because they have no money for revenue support.

They also introduced into the discussion securing the future of the Stay and Play project. The feasibility meetings are organised by officers from the Council's regeneration team. FoWG representatives have attended all meetings.

In May Clearview Consultancy were appointed to work on the business plan and the project has benefitted greatly from *pro-bono* design work by architects Squire & Partners. There has been a public consultation about the building type and size and the study is now nearing its conclusion. We are hopeful that we may get the building in 2017.

Windmill Gardens

Last year we reported on Lambeth's 'cooperative parks' management programme and our decision to submit an expression of interest in becoming a 'partnership park'. However, there has been no progress on this for Windmill Gardens. A pilot partnership model is being discussed at Brockwell Park but no further information has been shared with the Lambeth Parks and Green spaces Forum.

In April the parks maintenance budget was cut by 50%. The Council has adopted a new Events Strategy, which they hope will go some way to bringing in more money to spend on Lambeth's parks via a Parks Investment Levy (PIL) on these events. They ended their contract with Veolia in April, and brought the workforce back 'in house' establishing Lambeth Landscape. All this takes place under very harsh financial constraints. One effect of the cuts is that Windmill Gardens' drinking fountain has not been turned on this summer.

Nevertheless there have been some improvements to the park. A fourth wooden bench seat was recently installed in memory of Catherine Black née Ashby a direct descendant of John Ashby's youngest son, Amos. Before she died Catherine did some great research into the family and her daughter Eleanor shared this with us, allowing us to photograph the collection her mother had made.

On our first attempt Windmill Gardens was awarded a Green Flag Community Award, which we hope will be renewed later this year. Our Parks sub-group organise regular gardening workshops and over the last year also benefitted from two corporate volunteer days in the park.

This year we once again had a fabulous display of spring bulbs and the bed by the gate has had a complete makeover. Unfortunately the spring wheat planted next to the windmill failed to germinate but our intrepid volunteer gardeners replanted with buckwheat, which is growing very well.

I hope you have noticed the lovely wild flower area behind the windmill which this summer has added colour to the park. The various soft fruit bushes planted along the boundary beds of the park are now fruiting well. Later in the summer there will be a jam-making workshop using this fruit.

We have continued with the 'Bat Walks' in the park led by Dr Iain Boulton although for some reason the bats have been rather shy this year. Tai-Chi sessions beside the windmill continue. With the ending of the second grant award for this activity we now ask for donations to pay the tutor.

Last year I reported on a consultation by Brixton City Farm about their proposal to site some small farm animals in Windmill Gardens. The results and plans for the project were rejected by BGRMO residents. We await further information.

Improving Windmill Gardens for all users is a key objective of the Friends and we see the construction of the Education Building at the Windmill as an important addition to the park. The building will provide toilets for park users when it is open as well as the means to raise revenue to expand our community projects and enable further improvements to the park. We know that improvements to the children's play area are needed and we know the Council will not have the money for this so it will have to be raised by the community. There is a pressing demand for more sports facilities for young people. Again, money for outdoor gym equipment or any other sports facility will need to be raised in the future. FoWG see a successful and well-used education building as a means to lever in more money for such projects.

The Friends

We distribute our monthly e-newsletter to almost 900 supporters. Following our AGM last July the Friends held General Meetings in November and April.

Our paid membership is slowly increasing – you will see this reflected in the financial report. We have benefitted from Donna Lister taking on the role of membership secretary.

During the past 12 months FoWG has responded to Lambeth Council's consultation on the future of the Lambeth Archives. This public consultation is still on going so I hope you will respond online. Thanks to Friends who have already done so.

We attend quarterly meetings of Lambeth Parks and Green Spaces Forum where we closely follow progress of the Council's new parks maintenance plans. We also attend meetings of SPAB Mills Section, Lambeth Local History Forum as well as meetings of the Brixton Neighbourhood Forum and Brixton Hill Partnership

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 all 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 2015 team have worked extremely hard. After the last AGM Bianca Smauch was co-opted on to the committee. However she found her paid work was increasing and so reluctantly stood down. She still bakes great cakes for open days! Our secretary for the last 18 months, Sujata, has also decided that an increased workload at her day job means she is not able to continue on the Exec.

I want to thank both for their hard work for FoWG. I also want to thank Dee Byrne who returned to take up the role of PR officer for the windmill when Nuala moved away from the borough. She has done great work raising the profile of the Friends and the Windmill in this bi-centenary year.

Five sub-groups of the Friends: Comms, Events, Parks, Sustainability/Fundraising with the addition this year of the 200th group have met regularly supporting the hard work of our Executive Committee and general members. Thanks to all sub-group members.

If you would like to join any of our sub groups please 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. I want to thank Ann for ensuring we have enough guides and helpers at each open day and also Angela Rouse for so imaginatively encouraging our bakers. We thank Blenheim Gardens Resident Management Organisation for their on going support and Veolia, for their very generous support for the annual Windmill Festival & Parade.

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 on Thursday August 4th.

Community Events at the Windmill: Later in 2015 we held some great events; The Harvest Festival, Hallowe'en and a particularly successful Christmas event organised in collaboration with BGRMO. Thanks to our events team.

The 2016 season started with our annual children's Easter egg hunt and on June 18th local teams competed in our 5-A-Side Football tournament for children and youth.

Due to funding issues we did not hold our Summer Festival and Parade in 2015 but it came back in full strength this year. The different trades workshops at the Trades Festival were very warmly received and the survey we carried out at the event confirmed to us that local people really do appreciate the community events FoWG organises in the park

Outreach and Publicity: The Friends' communication group (Comms) have continued to provide brilliant publicity for FoWG and Brixton Windmill. We have had stalls at Lambeth Archive Day, and Brockwell Winter Fair. However, due to the increased number of events we organised for the bi-centenary we decided not to have a stall at the Lambeth Country Show this year.

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

Merchandising: An important way to promote and raise funds is by selling our growing range of FoWG merchandise. Thanks to Chris Patton this year we have added lovely tea towels to our range, which are selling very well.

Our merchandise is on sale at Diverse Gifts, Brixton, Pempamsie, Brixton Hill, and The Old Post Office Bakery, as well as at all our Windmill events. The Park group also organise bric-a-brac sales to raise funds and provide jam and fresh produce for our open day stalls.

All these sales boost our funding for the free community events we run in Windmill Gardens.

Finally in November, at our end of HLF Thank-You Party, we said "Goodbye and good luck" to our Education Officer, Stephen Lawlor. Fortunately for us he did not leave Brixton. He agreed to continue to attend our Exec meetings and he remains a firm supporter, guide and miller. I want to take this opportunity to say how much all of us enjoyed working with Stephen and how much FoWG appreciated everything he achieved when he was our HLF education officer.