

Friends of

Upminster Windmill



News Bulletin 2016

50p
Where
So...

Friends of Upminster Windmill

is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) managing the windmill on behalf of the London Borough of Havering.

Chairman: Dennis Coombs

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Visiting. The mill continues to remain closed during its restoration, which is scheduled to last until 2018.

The news Visitor and Education Centre will open in April 2017.



News Bulletin

During June and July the Restoration Project continued at a rapid pace, so once again our regular newsletter has been set aside in favour of a news bulletin. Dennis gives an update on progress at the mill site, and provides the first report on work being undertaken at Willem Dijkstra's workshop in Holland.



Diary.

Sunday 31 July at 3pm. Coffee Afternoon at the Old Chapel. Please confirm attendance to gsmith@upminsterwindmill.co.uk.

Sunday 21 August 2pm-5pm

Upminster Windmill Update at the Old Chapel.

An opportunity for the public to talk to FUW members about the history of the site, the current restoration project, and the progress being made.

Showcased will be FUW's work on interpreting the site.



UPMINSTER WINDMILL UPDATE

SUNDAY 21 AUGUST, 2pm-5pm

The Friends of Upminster Windmill will be on hand to talk about the history of the site as well as the current restoration project. They will be showcasing their work around interpreting the mill site.

The Old Chapel, St Mary's Lane, Upminster, RM14 2QR
www.theoldchapelupminster.co.uk

Dennis Reports

The restoration gets underway

At long last, we are seeing real progress on the restoration of Upminster Windmill. The millwright, Willem Dijkstra, arrived on the site on 24 May and began the task of preparing for the removal of the cap and sails.

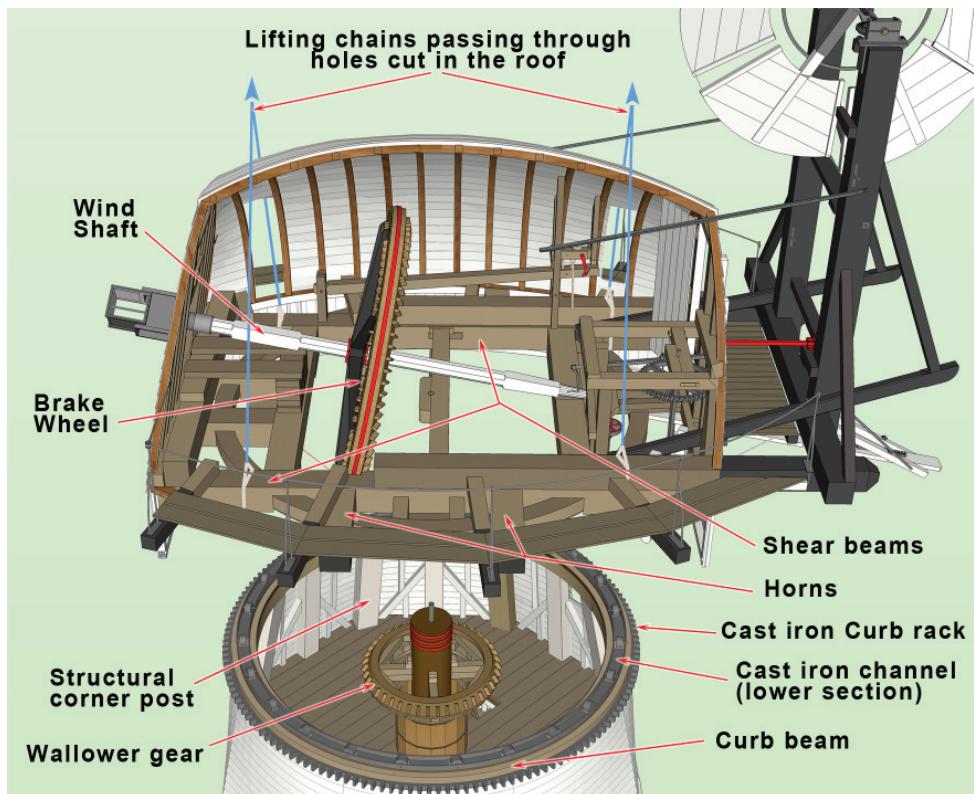


The sails of the mill were removed on Thursday 26 May. The pair of sails on the inner stock have done good service. These were made by Chris Wilson of Over Mill for Philip Lennard and Vincent Pargeter who installed them in 1972. The outer pair came to grief when the stock snapped in a storm in January 2007. These sails were replaced by Bob Self and Vincent in 2008, and remain serviceable.



The cap lift took place on Friday 27 May in perfect weather conditions. Although a new windshaft was installed in 1901, this is thought to be the first time the Mill has been without a cap in 212 years.

Removing the cap involved cutting away areas of the cladding to permit the lifting chains to reach the sheers. Fabric slings were passed around the sheer beams at their front and rear ends, to which four lifting chains were connected, separated by a spreader beam slung from the crane hook.



With the weight of the cap taken by the lifting chains, the cap and tower parted company. Although the wind speed was very low, the six-bladed fantail which had been left in place acted like a weathervane, rotating the cap almost 180 degrees over a period of a few minutes. Once facing the oncoming wind again, the cap (weighing in at 10.5 tons) could be lifted clear of the Mill and brought to rest on its supporting metal framework. Although the cap's flight took about four minutes in total, preparations had begun at 7.30am and the operation was completed just after 1.00pm.



The second major lift of the day involved the removal of the upper section of the Mill's central drive shaft, complete with the wallower attached. This wooden gear wheel, its compass-arm design now rare in this country, is complete but in poor condition. It requires re-cogging and substantial repair if the Mill is to work again.

Willem was assisted by English millwright Paul Kemp, a long standing Friend of Upminster Windmill. Volunteers were able to help in the preparation for the lift and the dismantling in readiness for shipping to the millwright's workshop in Holland. Everything arrived there safely.



The removal of the cap provided some unique views of the top of the Mill, as in the following scene captured by Andrew Conway. and the cover image of this new bulletin.



© Andrew Conway Photography

The work continues in the Dutch millwrighting shop. The current position is:

- All dismantled items are stored under cover in the workshop apart from the sails, stocks and windshaft which are securely stored outside.
- The curb woodwork has been reassembled, measured, and its condition assessed. Suitable timber for the curb repairs has been located and the upper and lower channels of the cast-iron curb have been cleaned and their condition inspected. Patterns are under construction for new upper and lower curb channel castings and the curb rack (toothed ring) is being cleaned and its condition inspected.
- The left and right sheers are being separated from the horn timbers, measured and their condition assessed. Suitable timber for the sheer end repairs has been located.
- A small number of cogs have been removed from the brake wheel and the wallower so the timber can be ordered for their replacement.
- Suitable timber for the new corner posts of the smock has been located and purchased.

The reassembly of the curb in the workshop on a flat surface revealed several unknown problems:

- Several areas of insect infestation.

- The upper and outer faces of the curb, which had been hidden from view by the attached castings, have suffered from decay due to moisture trapped between the timber and the cast iron sections.
- The curb sections all lean outwards to an extent that is visually obvious. Close inspection of the extent of wear on the curb channel castings and rollers provided an explanation for this. The location of the track on the outer edge of the curb had caused it to become compressed. This caused the track segments to tip outwards, exacerbating the problem.



The Curb being inspected



Curb decay where moisture was trapped



Willem selecting pine logs for the replacement corner posts



Giant saw that will be used to cut the pine logs down for the corner posts



Sheer beams after disassembly



Sections of the iron curb channels and gear rack

Work will continue in Holland for another couple of months. We expect Willem to return in October and start work on the restoration of the smock tower.

In the meantime, work on the new building continues

Although a little later than first planned, construction of the new building is progressing well.

The building is watertight, the roof completed and the external features largely completed. Inside the building, plumbing and electrical work are in progress though the provision of incoming services (gas and electricity) has had to be delayed until the start of the school holidays as the road closure would have caused too much congestion. Plasterers, painters and other craftsman are also in evidence.



The photographs show the wildflower roof and the elm cladding of the outside of the building. Most of the scaffold has now been removed.

Completion of the building is now forecast for 19 August. This will include some of the hard landscaping (ie pathways) though other areas will be deferred until the restoration of the windmill is completed as heavy cranes will be on the site from time to time. Fitting-out the training and education rooms will also be undertaken after the builders leave, though we remain on target to open to the public in April 2017.

Our next newsletter, in September, will carry a full feature article on the new building.

Dennis



Activity Update

Gemma Smith reports

Alongside the build of the new Visitor Centre, activities have been progressing well for volunteers and also local people.

So far, the display banners have been to four locations. They started in Upminster Library and were there until mid-April. They then went to the beautiful barn at Thames Chase and were on display for several weeks followed by Hornchurch Library. They are currently in the foyer area at Queen's Theatre - a good chance to spread the word outside Upminster.

As well as the banner display at Upminster Library, I was able to give a Community Update talk there on 15th April. I have since visited a Women's Group at Romford United Reformed Church and a Pop-In group at Moor Lane Church to give them an update on the project. In late July I will be visiting the Upminster Probus group.

I was really pleased to welcome the Beavers to the Old Chapel back in April to take part in a workshop about the Windmill. They spent an hour learning about the history of the Windmill, how flour is made and how the Mill works. Goodrington School then visited in May to take part in a workshop. I also had the opportunity to do some outreach sessions at Upminster Infants School. The workshops were great fun and will assist me in developing the education

offer at the Windmill.

Thanks to those that have been coming along to the coffee afternoons and mill visits. It has been a good opportunity to inform people about the developments with the project and also to get together and catch up. A big thank you to Jean Kerrigan from Brixton Windmill who gave a really interesting talk about their project back in May. Our next Coffee Afternoon will be at the Old Chapel on Sunday 31 July at 3pm at the Old Chapel. Please confirm attendance to gsmith@upminsterwindmill.co.uk

Gemma



Doffing the Cap to Fate

Reeve Burrell, poet and grandson of Alfred Abraham, Upminster's last miller, witnessed the removal of the mill cap and composed the following poem, reminiscing on the day and his days at the mill.

Doffing the Cap to Fate

*They are lifting-off the heft of the mill cap today.
Like I got rid of my school cap's suffocation –
gratefully, after all of those laborious lessons...
to freely go out, to innocently play.*

*They lifted-off the sails into a thin air
yesterday, with a delicacy of intent;
though with such noisy hammering...
then carefully carried them all off to repair.*

*Tomorrow it'll all look too strange, and bare,
bleak as school lessons ever were,
odd in the realisation
of immortal despair.*

*Yet in two years it will look even more strange still,
restored as neat as human will
ever endeavours, until
the end of mortality, moving still.*

*

*They're lifting-off the cap...
to sling it aside,
flaunting its fantail
like a cat that's never died,
swaying her wild tail.*

*Drops it in the bushes,
like a load of rubbish,
as a scavenger
gull, pallid with relish,
rages savage anger.*

*A ghost engaging gears
of stones whirled-about –
to grind grain down to flour
for a body, obese with no doubt,
to support the passing hour.*

*As has never been,
the mill remains the same,
standing there...now naked,
awaiting blinded blame –
like a cap-less schoolboy, aching!*

*I was never allowed among the machinery
as a child, while the mill was still working:
it was much too dangerous;
When it's restored to working
a single pair of stones, will the produce be glorious!*

*Reeve Burrell
2016*



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Front cover illustration: Bird's eye view after the Curb removal