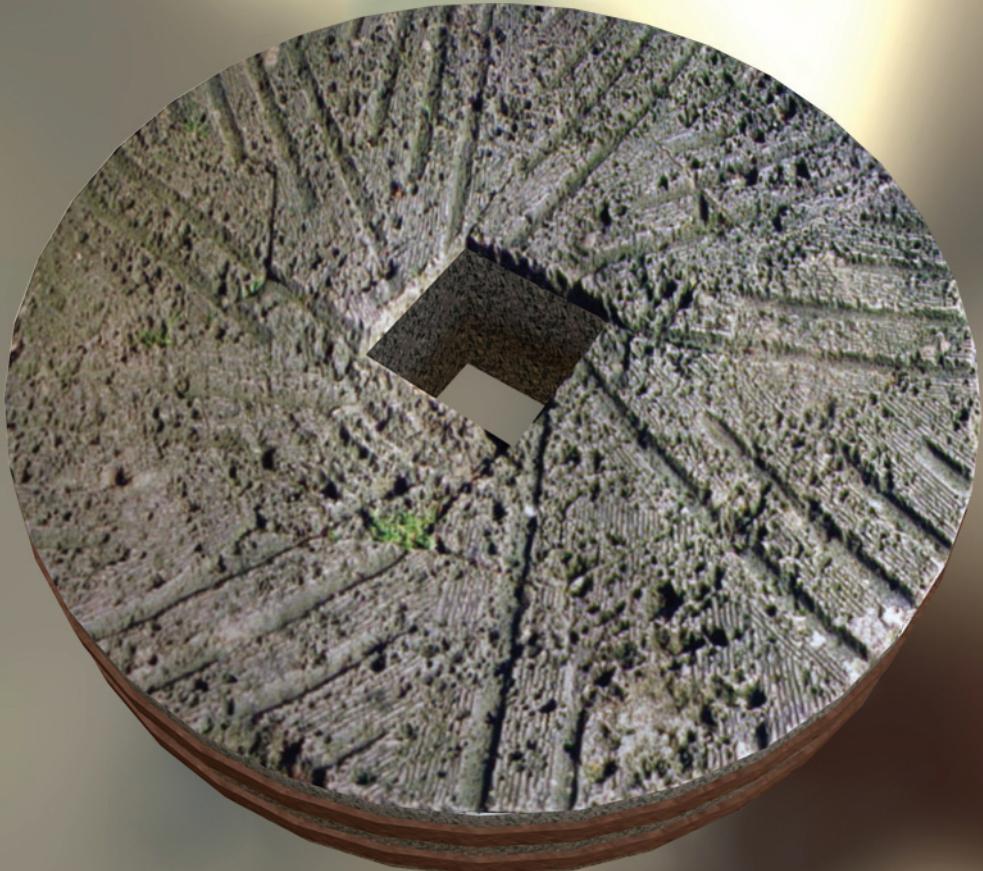


*Friends of*

# Upminster Windmill



**News Bulletin May 2016**

# **Friends of Upminster Windmill**

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

**Chairman:** Dennis Coombs

**Vice-Chairman:** Martin Withers

**Secretary:** Paul Sainsbury

**Membership Secretary:** Ian Ross

**Treasurer:** Jean Webb

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**Visiting.** The windmill is closed to the public whilst major work is carried out to restore the structure to full working order. The work is scheduled to last until 2018, from when it will re-open for everyone to enjoy as a fine example of an English Smock Mill. A new Visitor Centre is also being built, and it is planned to open this in 2017. We will keep you informed of progress.



## **News Bulletin**

In the March edition of the Newsletter the basic plans and timetable for the Restoration Project were outlined, and we promised to keep you informed of significant events, especially those that may provide rare spectator opportunities.

Developments on site are now moving at a considerable pace, so often exciting stages are only known at short notice. Such is the case with the removal of the sails, fantail and cap of the mill, which it is planned to be carried out in a few days time. To give you the opportunity to see the dismantling work take place we are distributing this bulletin in advance of our regular full newsletter.

In the following report Dennis explains the progress on site and will give more details of what is taking place, with an estimate of timing for those who wish to spectate.

## Dennis Reports

### Education and Training Centre

Work is progressing well on the building of the new Education and Training Centre. The main structure is now in place and the roof has been covered. Completion of the building is still expected during the summer, after which we will equip the training area and install the education equipment. Formal opening to the public will be in April 2017.

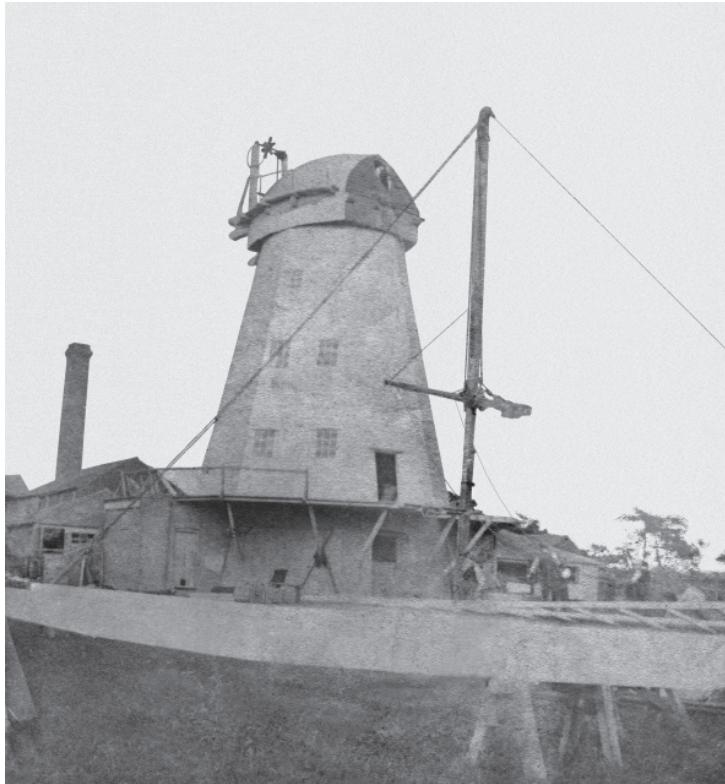


### Windmill

Work on the restoration of the Mill is also imminent. The millwright, Willem Dijkstra, has been busy preparing for the first key task, removal of the sails, fantail and cap for refurbishment in his workshop in Holland.

The sails and fantail are scheduled to be removed on Thursday 26 May, followed by the removal of the cap on Friday 27 May, though both are dependent on weather conditions. The combined weight has been estimated at some 15 tons so this is clearly a formidable task. The sails and the fantail have been removed and replaced several times but this will be the first removal of the entire cap since the Mill was built in 1803.

Removal of the cap will include the removal of the long windshaft and the large brakewheel. We know that the windshaft was replaced in 1901 as we have a photograph of the work in progress. This is probably the earliest photo of such work, which was undertaken without the benefit of a crane.



1901

The heavy cast iron windshaft being hauled up by  
manpower - not a safety helmet in sight

During the following week, probably on Tuesday 31 May, the curb (the large circular rim at the top of the smock tower) will be removed and a temporary roof added to the Mill.

The field will be open to enable viewing of the activity, though it will be necessary to restrict this to a safe distance.

During the following two weeks, all the removed components will be dismantled at ground level ready to be shipped to the workshop for refurbishment. After that, we will not see major activity on the site until the autumn, when the gallery will be removed and scaffolding will be erected to enable repairs to the Mill's structure.



## **Membership reminder**

A few members have not yet renewed their membership for 2016/2017. Where this is the case, a reminder letter is enclosed with this newsletter. We hope you will continue to give your support.

**Dennis Coombs**



### **Trip to Wimbledon Windmill Museum**

With our mill closed for the restoration a series of weekend visits has been organised to give us guides our mill-related fix. On Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup> the first trip saw a group of 12 windmill volunteers making a visit to one of our fellow select group of four windmills that standing within the M25 circle. It was a sunny day and the windmill museum is set on Wimbledon Common, a short bus ride from Wimbledon Station, so aside from not seeing a Womble on the way from the bus, it was idyllic.



Wimbledon Windmill had a short working life of only 43 years, after which the machinery was removed and it was turned into living accommodation, but in 1999 it was restored and became a windmill museum.

We met our guide, Norman Plastow for a private tour. He is a long standing windmill, local conservation and arts supporter, and we learned that he was the driving force in the conservation and setting up of the windmill museum. An architect by profession, he has also made all the museum's immaculate and detailed scale models of many different styles

of mills.

We had an explanation of the exhibits showing millwrighting and grain harvesting. There was a room full of beautiful tools and I spotted a few Upminster fellows with slightly misty eyes when surveying the array.

Norman then took us to the model room, housing a wide selection of scale mill replicas, with a model of Upminster Mill taking pride of place in the main display case to illustrate the smock mill. Norman explained that he was familiar with our mill, having done duty as a guide on the stone floor at Upminster years before. He had come across Upminster when he was stationed at Hornchurch while in the RAF.

He showed some of us the tools 'he had used to make the models,' in actual fact a tiny handmade tool box, produced from his jacket pocket and filled with an array of perfect little tools made in miniature; saws; screw drivers and even wood planes made in the perfect size for a Lilliputian carpenter or millwright.

The upper floors of the museum has detailed exhibitions showing aspects of milling, including a set of mill stones turning, a variety of sails, and an ancient mortar and pestle. Our David gave milling some grain on the quern a really vigorous go, and declared it much harder to turn than the one at our mill.

We saw a room set up to give a flavour of the era when the mill building accommodated six families on each floor. Baden Powell wrote part of *Scouting for Boys* in the mill cottage and there is a small exhibit to mark this.

Very interestingly there is a large model of how this unusual hollow post mill would have worked in its heyday.

We were then able to ascend to the body of the mill above the first floor, and some of the more intrepid climbed all the way to the top.

A lovely spot and well worth the long run on the district line with a good book. Sadly we didn't see a Womble on the way back either, but apart from that, a wonderful trip.

**Alison Taffs**



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