

Committee:	BURSLEDON WINDMILL JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	14 Feb 2017
Title of Report:	CURATOR'S REPORT
Author:	Cerian Trevan

Purpose:

Report on activities at or relating to Bursledon Windmill
Covering period Oct – Dec 2016

1 Providing a Welcoming and Well Maintained Site

1.1 Windmill Service Delivery

The winter period at Bursledon is much quieter than other months due to the outdoor nature of the site and generally poorer weather at this time of year meaning visitors are less inclined to visit. However, we have run a number of smaller events that have been very well received and used the time to concentrate on maintenance tasks.

The events this period started with our Pond Dipping Special Sunday in Oct which was led by the Curator of Natural Sciences. Children could borrow nets to see what they could find in our pond with lots of interesting discoveries made, and then in the barn they had the opportunity to make their own Water Beetle. For half-term the BLC put on a drop-in event on Weds for families called Woodland Shadows that allowed children to learn about the woodland creatures that might be found on site.

In Nov the volunteers led a Craft with Corn Special Sunday showing visitors how to make their own corn creations. Unfortunately this was a very quiet weekend but one young couple went away with a number of corn designs, and the volunteers got busy and made lots of beautiful Christmas tree decorations which sold well in the shop.



Figure 1: Volunteers making Christmas tree decorations - an excellent team building activity!

At the end of Nov our final event of the season was Spooky Mill. We were blessed with a beautiful, clear and starry evening even if it was very chilly! The whole team really pulled together to get the site decorated for the event with the Curator of Natural Sciences

providing lots of animal specimens and bones, a number of the volunteers getting into costumes and the Miller and Visitor Assistant doing an amazing job of decking the mill and outside of the site in lights. While numbers to the actual event were disappointing those that did come stayed for longer than expected really enjoying the spooky tour, ghost stories and activities in the barn including a bone trail! Feedback was excellent and a number of people had seen our posts online about the event. We think running this event closer to Halloween next year would improve numbers as most people were already thinking about Christmas activities by the end of Nov.



Figure 2: The Mill getting lit up



Figure 3: Barn with spooky lighting and hidden animals



Figures 4 & 5: Costumed characters in the Barn and Mill

Towards the end of this period we also had contractors on site completing the works taking place as a result of the Tesco Bags of Help Grant Scheme. The pond has had the boardwalk around it extended across the entire exposed section to improve safety and access to the pond for people with mobility issues. Sections of this fence are removable to allow people to access the pond for pond dipping activities, making this a much more flexible usable area.



Figures 6 & 7: New pond boardwalk

These works also mended all the broken fencing on site, vastly improving the look of the site on entrance and allowed us to add another raised bed on site which we are looking forward to planting up in the spring to provide some colour to the front of the barn.



Figures 8 & 9: New fencing and raised bed

For the time when the site is closed we have developed a Winter Maintenance Plan and Windmill Training Plan. The priority when Mill Assistant volunteers are on site will be continuing their training, but at other times we have cut back all the hedges on site, given the mill a thorough deep clean and will be painting the office area, prepping the site for opening and installing new retail units in the shop area in Jan/Feb time. I have also been in touch with Eastleigh Men's Shed and will be discussing with them how they might be able

to support us with some larger tasks on site including painting the inside of the mill and creating rodent proof storage.

1.2 Visitor Figures

Year	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Totals
2011 – 2012	581	645	389	435	408	244	261	258	86	159	227	173	3866
2012 – 2013	385	285	227	251	332	316	433	253	188	62	228	364	3314
2013 – 2014	252	299	278	388	489	784	275	215	95	85	227	332	3719
2014 – 2015	252	422	318	362	0	121	90	290	72	390	332	503	3152
2015-2016	298	383	315	282	563	274	431	129	24	109	142	263	3213
2016-2017	170	124	150	142	309	160	148	59	Closed	Closed	Closed		

In line with the rest of the year visitor numbers in Oct and Nov were down on last year. This is the first year we have trialled closing over the winter months (and increasing opening in the summer) so for Dec, Jan and Feb the site will be closed to the public with staff coming in on alternate Sundays to complete maintenance. A pre-season team briefing is planned for Feb and the site will re-open with a Cogs and Gears themed Special Sunday. Improved local marketing will aim to drive visitor numbers this year, we have already featured in Scene magazine with a feature on the first page and our events in their listings.

2 Caring for Collections, Promoting Access, and Providing Specialist Knowledge and Advice

2.1 Caring for collections

Our Curator of Natural Sciences prepared over 30 suitably spooky specimens for the *Spooky Mill Halloween Event*, which she also attended. Visitors were encouraged to take part in activities to learn about nature's autumnal creatures. Bats, rats, rooks, crows, owls, foxes and badgers were hidden around the barn waiting for visitors to discover them with the use of torches. Skulls of a cow, horse, badger, fox and pig were illuminated with battery-operated tea lights to add to the creepy effect and to challenge visitors to work out which skull was which!



A Short-eared Owl and a Long-eared Bat – two of the spooky animals which made an appearance at the 'Spooky Mill'



3 Inspiring Learning and Community Engagement

3.1 Formal Education Provision

Visitor Figures

147 pupils took part in museum led workshop programmes in October, which was our priority period for schools before Bursledon Windmill underwent building work. We also welcomed a home educators group to the site who brought a group of 16 young people, taking an overall total of visits to 163.

Forward Planning

On the 6 & 7 October the BLC schools team attended the Primary NQT Teachers conference in Winchester, promoting the two learning programmes available at Bursledon Windmill. We are also in the process of recruiting casual Museum Learning Facilitators to ensure we have a satisfactory level of casual support to deliver on site at the windmill during March-November. Interviews will be taking place in due course and training will be on-going in the New Year.

We have already received a numbers of enquiries for school workshops in March, and have a confirmed booking from Clatford School, who will be bringing a class of Year 4 pupils for a 'Flour Power' session.

3.2 Better Life Chances

Families: The Better Life Chances team ran the Woodland Shadows event in half term for local families. There were lots of fun activities for children to get involved with including mask making, and lots of animal specimens to meet plus our woodland to explore! This event was supported by our long-serving volunteer Andrea who help prep the beautiful masks.

Adults: The museum has become part of the local Dementia Action Alliance in Bursledon representing the heritage sector within the group which includes local businesses and volunteer organisations. An on-going ambition of the Better Life Chances team is to develop a network of dementia friendly museums across the Trust by offering staff and volunteers Dementia Friends training.



Out of hour's bookings: Due to the time of year there have not been any out of hours bookings for the mill in Oct – Dec. However, we have received several enquiries for next Spring from Scout/Guiding groups and a couple from local history groups too. In addition we have had two wedding enquires as well.

4 Marketing and Communications

4.1 Print material

A new edition of What's On covering the period Oct – Dec and featuring Bursledon Windmill (Autumn Pond Dipping, Woodland Shadows, Craft with Corn and Spooky Mill) was delivered at the beginning of October. 12,500 copies were printed and it is now in circulation via our new distributors, Culture Calling, to TICs, libraries, museums, accommodation providers, educational establishments, attractions, arts centres, theatres etc. We did a review and decided to change distributors, so we hope to see an



uplift from this change and more leaflets out and about across the region.

We also created a special “What’s On for Families” for the half term period which featured Half Term and Halloween activities. 10,000 of these were professionally distributed across the region, and this featured Spooky Mill at Bursledon and had a focus on hands on activities to be done at our venues.

4.2 Online marketing

The e-newsletter Museums Monthly, featuring exhibitions and events from Bursledon, has been sent to sign ups on a new database. Subscribers now number over 3500. We have promoted features such as the Craft with Corn and the Spooky Mill activity in the newsletter and on the website.

4.3 Research

Postcodes are now routinely collected from visitors at Bursledon on an ongoing basis. These are profiled annually using Mosaic software and provide ongoing information on which groups of people are using and not using our services and how individual visitor profiles compare to the local area. This feeds into the service and marketing planning processes.

4.4 Social Media

HCT Facebook now has over 2900 “likes” and twitter nearly 4,500 followers. Events at Bursledon Windmill are promoted on both social media sites on an ongoing basis. Those we have promoted during the period include Spooky Mill, Craft with Corn and Woodland Shadows both on Social Media and the website.

Big Theme: Royal Blood 2016/Jane Austen 200 (2017)

The Royal Blood website and project is now coming to a close.

We are now working on the 2017 big theme Jane Austen, which will see supporting activity at those venues which will receive the exhibition.

Cerian Trevan
Jan 2017