



News from Howsham Mill

January 2016

Dear Friend,

A look back at 2015

This was the last year of financial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund for restoration work at Howsham Mill. There was some money remaining after completion of the building restoration and HLF agreed that we could spend it on restoring and replacing the swing bridge over the canal. The stonework was repaired and rebuilt where necessary. A steel frame was mounted on a new pivot to be able to swing the bridge. To make it look like the original timber bridge, oak decking and railings were fitted and the exposed sides of the frame clad with oak. The resulting bridge looks as if it has always been there. The craftsmanship is excellent, matching the quality of the building restoration.

We have also erected a timber shed to store materials, thus tidying up the site. At the far end of the island there is now a bird hide where visitors can sit and watch the river flow and enjoy regular views of kingfishers – even otters.

Education and events

Our diverse craft courses again proved popular, covering painting and drawing, mosaics, wire working, willow weaving and photography.

There were seven visits from school groups to the Mill in 2015, during which the children learned about renewable energy, milling and bread-making and the wildlife on the island. This was not as many as hoped, but having recently significantly increased the education experience on the team, we anticipate welcoming many more school groups in future. Other groups of students came to help as volunteers or came by river and camped on the island. The Mill provided a fantastic base for a Forest School training course for teachers, and we are looking forward to developing our Forest Schools area next year. Six other interest groups were given pre-booked guided tours around the building.

The Mill was a venue for several community film screenings throughout the spring and summer as part of *Cine North*. Attendance varied considerably depending on the choice of film being shown, and we're keen to hear suggestions for future screenings from you all!

In August we held a very well attended Bat-Watching event and were treated to the sight of over 70 of our resident pipistrelles emerging from the roost in the granary roof. In September we opened for a special weekend as part of the National Heritage Open Day scheme and visitors

enjoyed the added attraction of music from several local folk musicians and a traditional Japanese drumming school. It all added greatly to the atmosphere and introduced the Mill to a new audience. In November we held a low key 'No Bangs' bonfire event which proved very popular for families with young children. Our Christmas event was smaller than usual this year, a chance for friends old and new to share a mince pie and mulled wine and hear a fascinating talk about Charles Dickens from a local historian.

Energy and water

Our plans to install a second Archimedes Screw turbine adjacent to the existing one are advancing well. Once operating, this will more than double the output of electricity from the Mill. We've also had to fit a new gearbox to the existing screw. This took longer than anticipated, causing an extended shut-down and consequential loss of income. Flooding at the end of the year has also stilled the wheel and the screw, but is well planned for and the building has weathered the inclement conditions without any damage.

Come on down!

The Mill remains open (river levels permitting) every Sunday and on public holidays and casual visitors are always welcome. We are keen to hear from all our friends, and especially those living locally, as to how you'd like to see the Mill used. Special rates are available for use of the buildings for any broadly educational purpose, and we hope to soon be able to offer it as a venue for other meetings.

Comings and goings

In September we bade farewell to Jen Wakefield and welcomed experienced science educator Helen Minnikin-Spring as Education Officer. Our long-serving Treasurer Chris Fawdington also stepped down, leaving a vacancy for the post. We have taken on one new Trustee, Sarah Moore, who is also the Headteacher of two local primary schools. There is always room for more, and we remain eager to recruit further Trustees and volunteers.

Annual General Meeting

Our AGM will be held on Saturday 6 February at 2pm, and you are most welcome to attend. There will be an opportunity after the meeting for questions about the Mill's future, so if you would like to know more or become involved, we'd be delighted to see you.

In the event that the island remains flooded, we will publicise an alternative local venue. Refreshments will be served.

All best wishes from

*Mel, Martin, Dave, Paul, Val,
John, Amy & Sarah*

The RHT Howham Mill Board of Trustees